

## RYP Quarterly

# Everything Works Better Once It Has Been Unplugged

By David Stewart



# RYP QUARTERLY

You need to unplug your laptop, Wi-Fi, and phone every so often, to let it reset, recharge and reboot itself to ensure it performs at maximum efficiency. Everything improves once it has been unplugged. This also applies to humans. No one can work 100 per cent effectively 100 per cent of the time. It is not possible. Being available and accessible 24/7 is a learnt behaviour that has evolved with technology.

## WE HAVE TO STOP & TAKE TIME OUT TO REFRESH

We have all witnessed the family at the next table at a restaurant, all scrolling on their phones, mum, dad, and the kids. It is sad to see no interaction as a family. A night out is a great opportunity to unplug from the world and connect as a family.

*The best things in life are the people we love, the places we've been, the things we have experienced, and the memories they leave.*

Research is revealing how technology is impacting both our cognitive and social functions:

- **Cognitive functions** include thinking patterns, memory, attention spans, decision making, and emotional regulation.
- **Social functions** include communication, collaboration, listening skills, engagement, and emotional intelligence.

Very little is currently known about the long-term impact of the overuse of technology on our brain development. All I know is the overuse of anything cannot be good for you. The body and mind need down time to refresh, renew, and re-energise itself.

*Pure rest involves both the mind and body*

## DOING MODE vs BEING MODE

The human body is designed to operate in short stints. To be the most productive we work in bursts. If we work for too long without meaningful breaks there will be a build-up of fatigue which will eventually lead to burnout. To pace yourself, think of breaking life into "doing" mode and "being" mode.

**Doing mode** is when you must concentrate, work, or apply yourself to a task. It has a start and a finish time. The maximum concentration span of a human is 50 minutes, before our brain starts to switch itself off and take a break.

**Being mode** is when you, relax, socialise, eat, reflect on things, and do the things you enjoy free of distractions and devices.

**Stress is an inherent part of our daily lives.** Unplugging is an important mechanism to keep our stress levels in check.

*We need to value rest as much as we value productivity*

## UNPLUGGING REQUIRES A MACRO AND MICRO APPROACH

**Micro unplugging** techniques are things that can be done each day and week to help refresh and renew our minds and bodies. Some micro unplugging techniques include:

- **Adopt a 24/6 approach to life (rather than 24/7)**, where on one day of the week you unplug from all screen time, social media and use of devices.
- **Minimise blue screen time an hour before you go to bed** (it has been proven to disrupt sleep patterns). Read a book in bed instead!
- **Have lunch away from your desk.** Stop work and take a break (device free).
- **Make a point of socialising with people each day** – just to chat and converse.
- **Ban devices and phones from the dinner table.** As a family sit together and talk.
- **Exercise without a device.** It is amazing what exercise can do for the mind, body, and soul free of distractions.
- **Take time out to reflect on the day.** Either at the start or end of the day. This can simply be having a cup of coffee on the way to work to plan your day, and a walk after dinner to decompress from the day.
- **Share and debrief your day** with family and close friends.
- **Don't read work emails before bed**, or first thing when you wake. If it is urgent they can call you.
- **Limit time spent on social media.** Keep it to a set time (time limits). Parents should role model this.
- **Agree break times** with your work colleagues and adhere to them.
- **Turn your phone off or put on silent** when you are having quality family / friend / personal time. Be clear when you do not want to be disturbed.

*Memories are made of lived moments – not screen time, scrolling on social media, or playing video games*

**Macro unplugging** is about yearly routines that help break the year into a cycle that allows you to refresh and renew yourself. Key is having a formula that works for you. Some macro unplugging techniques include:

- **Having regular planned vacations.** You do not need to go away all the time, a staycation (at home) is just as effective as a planned holiday.
- **Have a long weekend once a quarter** to totally unplug, chill out and rest the mind and body.
- **Attend things that stimulate you.** This could involve sport, entertainment, hobbies, or community events. Put it in your diary so you stick to the routine.
- **Go on family outings.** Family time is important. Cherish it! Life is made up of many moments, which turn into memories.
- **Adopt a “don't miss what you cannot get back” policy.** Which simply means you are there for all the important family events, milestones, and birthdays.

- **Plan your personal unplugging cadence** at the start of the year, so it is regular, structured and scheduled.

***Don't pursue a career and forget to live a life!***

No-one has the perfect formula for unplugging and refreshing themselves. Key is to have your formula. What I do see in leaders who get burnt out is they usually have no formula or mechanism to unplug themselves from their daily grind. They are victims to their busy treadmill of life.

#### **UNPLUGGING YOURSELF REGULARLY WILL HAVE AT LEAST 8 HEALTH BENEFITS:**

1. You will be more productive
2. You will manage your stress levels
3. You will sleep better
4. It will enhance your mood and outlook on life
5. It helps restore your energy levels
6. It will fuel your creativity and innovative thoughts
7. It will improve your relationships
8. It will make you a better version of you!

### **FINALLY: Any fool can be busy, but fulfillment comes with personal life harmony**

We live in a culture that often equates relentless hustle with virtue, where responding instantly to emails and having a packed schedule is a badge of honour. But ask yourself this: does your busyness bring you fulfilment?

Many of us are trapped in the "cult of busy," chasing productivity metrics while our personal lives fall by the wayside. We become fools to the grind, mistaking motion for meaning. We fill every available minute yet feel an underlying sense of emptiness because we are disconnected from what truly matters, our own personal harmony.

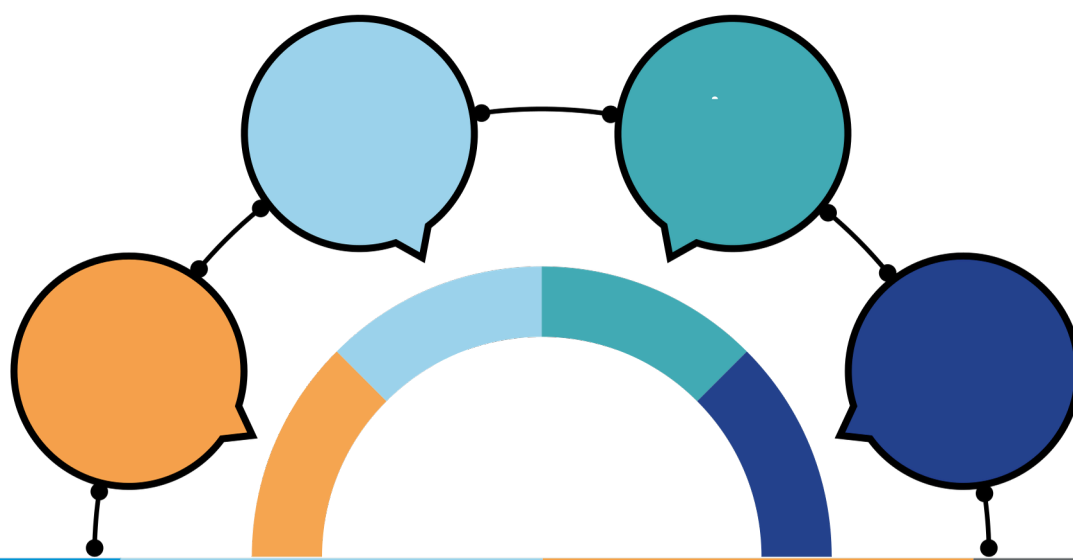
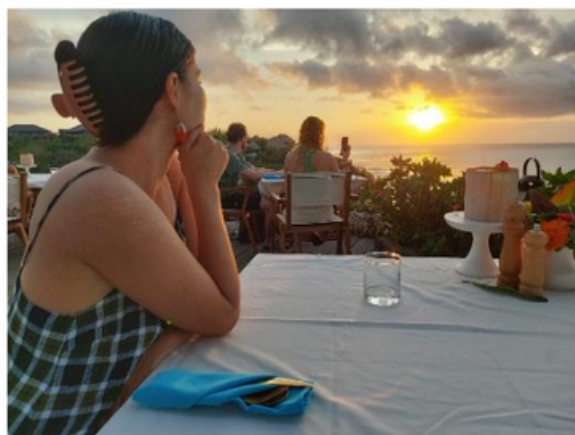
Personal harmony isn't a checklist you complete; it's a deliberate balance between work, rest, relationships, and self-care. It means choosing purpose over mere productivity. True fulfilment isn't found in a packed calendar, but in the quiet moments of connection, rest, and reflection that bring genuine peace and joy

## Leadership Lesson:

Taking regular time out to unplug is not only good for your health, but it is also good for your creativity, productivity, and effectiveness as a leader. Unplugging regularly is important for a leader to role model, and then to endorse and enforce with others.

*Life is made up of many moments. You actually have to stop and live them*

## Facta Non-Verba – Deeds Not Words



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