

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Information Overload

It's becoming ever more clear that there is a limit to the amount of information we can effectively process at a given time. Email, social media, websites, and other outlets constantly bombard us with mental and emotional stimulation. While we may feel we're "missing out" if we don't stay on top of what's going on at work and in the media, this chronic disposition can lead to feeling stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, and mentally fatigued, even when things are going well in our lives! We also might miss out on what's happening in front of us.

Often times, this approach to information is not even demanded by our circumstances. We do it because we like the way it makes us feel. When we check email, send texts, and scroll through social media, we get a hit of dopamine, a feel good hormone in our brain, and a sense of accomplishment. And we keep doing it because we'll get another hormonal reward when we do, even if it's wearing us down and becoming unhealthy.

It's important to understand whether or not it is crucial for us to be connected all the time. Some circumstances and jobs may require it, on occasion, but most don't. Our chemistry and culture has tricked us, so we have to be a little strategic if we don't want to suffer the long-term consequences.

- **Don't skimp on sleep.** Can it wait until tomorrow? Adequate sleep is the foundation for every other area of health.
- **Be smart about work.** Work hard, for sure, but take breaks and vacation time as allowed. Just like with exercising our bodies, rest and recovery are important for our minds. The goal is really to be productive, rather than merely busy.
- **Set limits on email time.** When away from work, it can be beneficial to define specific times for checking email, and then take a break in between. There may be a small "withdrawal" period, but the improvement in relaxation, focus, and energy will more than make up for it!

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/expert-answers/control-email/faq-20386507>



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