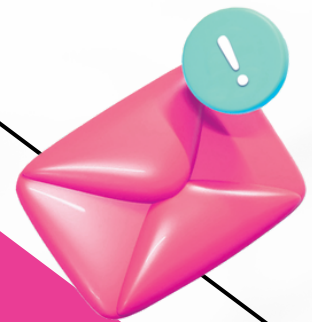




# Digital Wellbeing



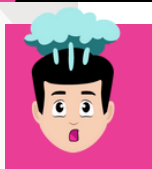
DR KRISTY  
GOODWIN

# Digital Wellbeing

Optimising how we use digital technologies to support mental wellbeing, physical health and performance.

DR KRISTY  
GOODWIN

## Have you been OUSTED?



### OVERWHELMED

We have ancient, Palaeolithic brains, biologically designed to go and forage and hunt for information. We're not designed to have information constantly thrust at us. It tricks our brain into thinking that everything is urgent and important. We're processing more information, today, than ever. It's estimated that the average adult will process 74GB worth of data every day, which is more than our ancestors consumed in an entire lifetime. This is referred to as 'infobesity'. The hippocampus, the memory centre in the brain, has not evolved to cope with processing this extra information. As a result, we feel overwhelmed and often revert to multi-tasking to cope.



### UNDER THE PUMP

Many people describe feeling constantly 'busy'. We feel like there's not enough hours in the day to accomplish all we need to do. Our digital habits, both professionally and personally have created the 'urgency fallacy' where we feel compelled to respond at all hours of the day (and night). Are you exhausted because you're constantly putting out fires? Are you constantly dealing with crises and feeling like you're never able to make any real progress because you're so busy jumping from one thing to another thing to another thing? Many people report feeling like they're 'always on' and our digital tools have fuelled this feeling because many of us now experience 'availability creep'.



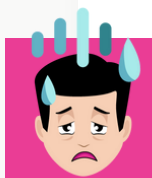
### STRESSED

Our tech habits have introduced a range of micro-stressors to our days and annihilated some of the biological buffers that were once naturally baked into our days, that helped us manage our stress response. As a result, many people are operating with chronic levels of stress. Whilst we're biologically designed to cope with stress, we're designed to cope with short bursts of stress and to resolve the stress cycle. Being in a perpetually stressed state, as many people are today, has adverse consequences on our mental wellbeing, physical health and productivity. Micro-stressors include alerts and notification, video meetings, multi-tasking, working for long periods without a break and having a narrow gaze. Some of the biological buffers that help us to naturally bring us back to a stress baseline include sleep, movement, connection, sunlight, breathing and building our stress tolerance.



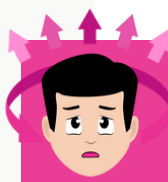
### TIME POOR

It's estimated that the average adult spends 4,866 hours a year staring at screens per year. This equates to around 34 years of our lifespan. It's been estimated that we'll spend around 17 years of our lives on our phones, alone! There are a range of persuasive design techniques that have been deployed to make the digital tools we use professionally and personally, appealing. This includes the use of intermittent, variable rewards, push notifications, red notification bubbles, metrics and the bottomless bowl technique. Many of us acknowledge that inordinate amount of time we're spending online.



### EXHAUSTED

Working longer hours doesn't lead to higher impact; in fact, working long hours can impair performance. The prefrontal cortex – the part of our brain that helps with problem-solving, complex thinking and working memory – is prone to fatigue. It only has a maximum battery life of approximately six hours per day (not 12 hours, as many of us try to do). We cannot expect that we can work for continuous stretches of time without adequate rest periods; that's working against our biology.



### DISTRACTED

It has been studied that the average knowledge worker can spend just minutes of focused work before a digital distraction diverts their attention. Being able to manage our attention is the SUPER-SKILL of the 21st Century. I call this our FQ (focus quotient). We are now living in the attention economy, where there are a multitude of things now vying for our attention. Being able to orient, direct, control and sustain our attention will be the most critical skill we can cultivate in the digital world. Many knowledge workers now lament that they don't have the time and energy to do their work because of the constant barrage of digital distractions.

# Science of rest

DR KRISTY  
GOODWIN

We need to see rest as a responsibility, not as a reward

## Pillars of Digital Peak-Performance

Take my Digital Peak-Performance Assessment [here](#).



“ You can't outperform your biological blueprint. Your brain and body are not machines. We need to work (and live) in ways that are congruent with our human operating system- our hOS. ”

### WHY WE NEED TO REST

The pre-frontal cortex, which is the part of our brain that's recruited to help us solve problems, think critically, use our working memory and manage our impulses, only has a 4-6 hour 'battery life' per day. We're not biologically designed to consistently work for 10+ hours/day doing mentally-taxing work. Working this way will lead to stress, exhaustion and often burnout.

When we rest and allow our mind to meander, we often find we solve complex problems that we may have spent months agonising over, or we come up with creative ideas. This is called activating the 'default mode network'. We switch off our pre-frontal cortex we provide time for subconscious incubation. When we fully immerse ourselves in something other than the problem- high quality leisure like a hike, or deep work on another unrelated problem. Allow conscious mind to rest and allow subconscious mind to kick in and get to work.

We need to take regular breaks throughout our days, weeks and months. As knowledge workers, we need to act like racing drivers – who also strive for peak-performance – by taking regular pit stops. If you want to thrive in the digital world, you need to be intentional about taking breaks.

There are three types of breaks that people need to plan for to optimise their health, wellbeing and performance. Research has proven that piccolo breaks are by far the most effective type of break at beating burnout.

PICCOLO



Short, daily breaks

DURATION- 2-10 minutes  
FREQUENCY- multiple times/day

TALL



Predictable time off each week

DURATION- 1-2 hours  
FREQUENCY- once daily

GRANDE



Predictable time off each week

DURATION- half to full days off  
FREQUENCY- weekly

# Micro-Habits for Digital Wellbeing

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Tame your tech habits so they support, rather than stifle your wellbeing and performance

## FIVE TO THRIVE

Identify five micro-habits, from the list below that will help optimise your wellbeing. Air navigation experts use a rule of thumb called the '1 in 60 rule'. It suggests that for every 1 degree a plane veers off its course, it misses its planned destination by 1 mile for every 60 miles that you fly. What I think this rule also shows is that even small adjustments (1-degree turns are miniscule) can yield big differences further down the track. The same is true with your digital habits: making small, seemingly insignificant changes can have huge implications over time.

My suggestion is to start with a micro-habit that will have a ripple effect. Go back to each practice and select a few that you want to implement. I don't suggest that you make radical shifts and plan a complete digital overhaul. Start small. Implement one or two micro-habits at a time, and once they become embedded, pick a couple more to try.

What lever can you pull that will have most impact? Remember, as humans we have some basic biological constraints that we simply cannot outperform. Our most basic needs are that we sleep, move, connect, breathe, eat and have sunlight exposure. Which of your tech habits would have the greatest impact on these basic needs?

## *Digital Wellbeing Cards*

We're much more likely to retain information that we've read off-screen, than on. I've published a set of 60 cards containing a range of micro-habits that people can apply to their professional and/or personal lives to bolster their physical health, mental wellbeing and attention span, in the always-on digital world we're in. More information can be found [here](#).



## DIGITAL BURNOUT

One of the biggest threats to hybrid work and distributed teams is 'digital burnout'. Why? Our digital load has increased substantially in recent years thanks to advances in digital technologies (especially emails, virtual meetings & digital communication tools like Teams and Slack), we're working in ways that are incongruent with our neurobiology (multi-tasking, having constant virtual meetings, working for long stretches of time) and we've perpetuated an 'always on' culture, where employees feel they need to be seen to be instantly responsive to emails and messages, as they see this as a marker of productivity. Digital burnout is fatigue, frustration, or apathy resulting from prolonged stress, overwork, or intense activity from overuse of digital devices. Digital burnout can result from excessive or unsustainable digital habits. This is why it's imperative that teams establish their digital guardrails- explicitly stating the norms, behaviours and principles around digital tool usage and hybrid habits. Take Dr Kristy's [Digital Burnout Barometer Assessment](#).

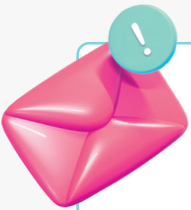
# Micro-Habit Menu

Record your five-to-thrive. What are the five micro-habits you want to commit to that will better support your focus?

**Micro-Habit 1**



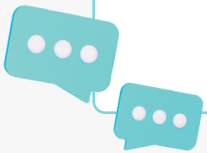
**Micro-Habit 2**



**Micro-Habit 3**



**Micro-Habit 4**



**Micro-Habit 5**



# Establish digital borders and boundaries



## Practice 1: Set your digital guardrails



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Establish your digital curfew

- Set up a sleep reminder
- Give yourself some digital-free time before bed
- Create a predictable wind-down ritual
- Do a screen swap before bed
- Establish a landing zone in your home
- Invest in blue-light-blocking glasses for use at night
- Dim the brightness



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Identify your no-go tech-zones

- Get an alarm clock
- Activate driving mode
- Have a digital depot for mealtimes
- Put it on silent and out of sight
- Use a phone storage box



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Rest your eyes

- Follow the 20-20-20-20 rule
- The elbow rule
- Hook this habit onto other habits
- Dilate your gaze throughout the day
- Close your eyes throughout the day
- Shrink the size of your meeting windows



## Practice 2: Boost your focus and reduce technostress



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Increase your green time to balance your screen time

- Shift some of your virtual meetings to walking meetings
- Aim to get 20 to 30 minutes of natural sunlight within the first hour of waking up
- Aim to get 90 minutes of sunlight each day
- Get some afternoon light



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Take micro-movement breaks

- Walk-and-talk meetings
- Set a timer
- Keep some prompts nearby
- Compile a micro-movement list



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Breathe better

- Use the physiological sigh when you're feeling stressed
- Make your exhalations longer than your inhalations
- Set a reminder on your phone's lock screen

## Practice 3: Optimise your workspace



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Sit-stand-switch

- Set a 1:1 ratio for sitting and standing
- Set a timer
- Invest in a stand-up desk (or make your own)
- Plan three or four ten-minute walks each day
- Stand up for your phone calls
- Stand-up meetings
- Engage in a step challenge



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Set it up right

- Light it up in the day
- Dim it down in the late afternoon and night
- Set it up
- Location, location, location
- Limit your view
- Have designated spots
- Personalise your space
- Eliminate background noise
- Work in a café
- Add some greenery
- Marie Kondo your workspace



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Declutter your digital space

- Remove your tech temptations
- Declare email bankruptcy
- Don't be a tab hoarder
- Declutter your desktop
- Audit your downloads



# Disable Digital Distractions



## Practice 7: Manage your digital load



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Activate Do Not Disturb mode

- Mute notifications on communication tools
- Set up DND mode on your phone
- Do the same for your laptop or desktop



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Manage your notifications

- Prune your non-essential notifications
- Batch or bundle your notifications
- Create VIP notifications
- Mute conversations or chats



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Disable auto-play

- Manage auto-play settings
- Check when you update



## Practice 8: Create more friction



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Out of sight, out of mind

- Put your phone out of sight when doing deep work
- Put your laptop or tablet away at the end of the workday
- Replace your tech temptation with another visual cue



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Log out

- Logging out rules
- Log out of social media accounts
- Log out and change your password
- Shut down your devices



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Use tech-prohibition tools

- Screen Time or Digital Wellbeing features
- Use Freedom
- Use RescueTime
- Use Inbox When Ready

## Practice 9: Minimise your tech temptations



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Go greyscale

- Put your laptop or tablet away at the end of the workday
- Quickly activate greyscale mode



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Maximise your windows

- Go full-screen mode
- Hide your toolbar
- Close all tabs



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Hide your tech temptations

- Delete troublesome apps off your phone
- Remove your tech temptations off your phone's home screen
- Keep only functional apps on your phone's home screen
- Remove tech temptations from your toolbar



# Unplug for Rest and Recovery

## Practice 10: Take peak-performance pit stops



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Take piccolo breaks

- Close your eyes
- Do exhale-emphasised breathing
- Do rapid, deliberate breathing
- Hum or sing
- Mammalian diving reflex
- Engage in non-sleep deep rest
- Connect and laugh
- Drink water at your desk
- Undertake deliberate cold-exposure protocols
- Create a piccolo-break chart



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Schedule tall breaks

- Ring-fence your time
- 'Don't touch your box @ night'
- Reframe a tall break as a peak-performance tool
- Start small



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Add grande breaks

- Plan your grande breaks
- Schedule them in your calendar
- Plan and protect your weekends
- Plan your holidays



## Practice 11: Establish power-down rituals



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Clear cognitive associations

- Have a designated workspace
- Create a hard stop to your workday
- Close your tabs
- Create rituals to transition into your evening



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Close down the day

- Set aside time to wrap up and plan
- Close open loops
- Plan for tomorrow
- Specify your success



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Create digital depots

- Have a phone basket or drawer
- Have a device landing zone

## Practice 12: Enjoy mind-wandering mode



### MICRO-HABIT 1

#### Leave white space in your calendar

- Block out mind-wandering time
- Leave margin room in your calendar
- Follow Google's '20 per cent time' habit
- Look for incidental moments



### MICRO-HABIT 2

#### Have screen sabbaticals

- Have a tech sabbath
- Cut it down, don't cut it out
- Capture moments to your personal hard drive
- Use tech tools
- Go for a walk without headphones
- Communicate your tech-spectations



### MICRO-HABIT 3

#### Meditate for 12 minutes per day

- Start small
- Use tech tools
- Self-directed hypnosis as an alternative



# Dear Digital, We need to talk...

If you want to put an end to constantly feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and distracted the best place to start is... with a good old-fashioned book. [Dear Digital, We need to talk...](#) in fact!

Dominate your digital distractions and stop screens from adding to your stress.

Learn brain-based strategies to tame your toxic tech-habits and thrive in the digital world. And no, don't worry. You don't need to cancel your Netflix subscription or take Slack off your phone. Grab your copy [here](#).



## About Dr Kristy

Having personally experienced how our always-on digital culture is compromising people's wellbeing and is counter to optimal and sustainable performance, award-winning researcher and speaker Dr Kristy Goodwin is on a mission to promote employee wellbeing and bolster workplace productivity in an always-on digital world.

As one of Australia's digital wellbeing and productivity experts, she shares practical brain-based hacks to tame tech habits and the latest evidence-based strategies to decode the neurobiology of peak performance in the technological era.

Senior business leaders and HR executives from the country's top organisations engage Dr Kristy to help them promote employee digital wellbeing and performance. Her roster of clients includes Apple, Westpac, AMP, Deloitte, Bank of Queensland, DLA Piper, Westfield, Randstad, the Reserve Bank of Australia, NSW Health, Cuscal, State Street, National Broadband Network and Foxtel.



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