

# Transcript

0:00

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0:00

For so many of us,

0:01

myself included,

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our days feel filled with a million small interruptions.

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And this is true even of our days off.

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Maybe you've taken a call at the beach,

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texted your boss from the grocery store

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or emailed a colleague while on a picnic with your family.

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We've convinced ourselves that these behaviors are no big deal.

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It's just one email.

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But there's a real cost to these interruptions,

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and there are smart strategies we can all take

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to better protect our time.

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(Music)

0:32

[The Way We Work]

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These moments seem so small at the time,

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and yet research suggests they add up to a tremendous loss.

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The constant creep of work into our personal lives

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can increase our stress

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and undermine our happiness.

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So just what is the cost?

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In one study,

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researchers recruited parents who were visiting a science museum with their kids.

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Some parents were told to check their phone as much as possible;

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others were told to check their phone as little as possible.

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After the visit,

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parents who used their phones reported

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that the experience was significantly less meaningful.

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They also felt much lonelier.

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In another study,

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tourists who were asked to have their phones out

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while visiting an iconic church

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remembered fewer details a week later.

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And in my research,

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employees who were paid for their performance

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spent increasingly less time interacting with friends and family,

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and more and more time interacting with colleagues and clients.

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These constant interruptions come at a cost to organizations, too.

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Companies lose 32 days of productivity each year to employee depression,

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which is often caused by the stress and burnout of our always-on culture.

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Despite knowing better,

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I, too, have found myself focusing on “urgent work distractions”

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over important life moments.

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Most recently, I found myself texting a client

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while in the middle of my first child’s first ultrasound ...

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happy client,

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guilty mom-to-be.

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When you add up all of these moments,

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the sum total is a life shortchanged on meaning,

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joy,

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connection

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and even memory.

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As we remake our models of work in the wake of the pandemic,

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now is our opportunity to create a new culture that respects time.

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And the way to make this really big change

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is through small steps that we can take right now.

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The first step that we need to take is to reframe rest.

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Reflect for a moment about what you think about when you hear the word “rest.”

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Sounds amazing, right?

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But in my mind,

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I immediately worry about not being productive enough

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or letting down my colleagues.

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When we do have time off,

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we need to find ways in which we can enjoy the present moment

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and savor the leisure time that we have available,

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as opposed to seeing it as an unproductive barrier to our work.

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One specific strategy we can take

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is to treat our upcoming weekend like a vacation.

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On Friday afternoon,

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jot down how you would act and behave as if you were on a holiday.

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Maybe you and your partner will buy a bottle of wine

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and watch online clips of the Eiffel Tower.

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Maybe you'll visit a local café

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and listen to some live music.

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Or maybe you'll go for a long walk in the middle of the day

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with no phone and no agenda.

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The plan doesn't have to be expensive or extravagant.

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Another strategy you can take is to create clear boundaries

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for your time off.

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Instead of saying, "I'm out of the office.

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Feel free to Slack me whenever,"

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say, "I'll be offline.

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Call me only if it's urgent."

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To uphold these personal goals,

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work together as a team.

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Set team goals for personal time.

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Do it publicly,

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collect data

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and hold each other accountable.

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These goals could sound like,

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"I will not check email between 6:00 and 8:00pm;"

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"I will have dinner with my family four nights a week;"

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or "I will go for a jog midday."

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Check in on your team's progress

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and see how everyone's doing.

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If you or your teammates are unsuccessful,

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work together to help accomplish personal goals.

4:00

Lastly, you can negotiate for more time

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to prevent work from creeping into your personal life.

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In business school, I teach students to negotiate for salary

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but realize I spoke almost nothing about negotiating for more time.

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What does this look like in practice?

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You can ask for more time on adjustable deadlines at work.



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If your client asks for a deliverable Monday morning,

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ask for an extension until Tuesday afternoon

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so you don't find yourself working on your well-deserved weekend.

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And don't worry too much about reputation.

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Quality truly is the metric that matters most.

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In my data,

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employees who proactively asked for more time

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reported lower levels of stress and burnout,

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and were seen as more committed and professional by their colleagues.

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These are small but powerful changes to not only reframe rest,

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but to reclaim it.

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Once you discover the profound impact that these changes can have,

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you'll feel empowered to demand that others respect

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and accommodate your approach to time.

5:01

Maybe they'll even feel inspired

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to piece together the fractured moments of their lives, too.