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A quarterly newsletter of INVEST EAP

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INVEST



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Supporting a Healthy Organization

Volume 16

Issue 2

Spring 2014

FINDING BALANCE IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE

The joys of the electronic age are plentiful indeed – we can watch movies on our phones, have the latest bestselling book immediately in our hands via e-readers, holiday shop without stepping foot in the mall, or bask in countless hours of online games and funny videos.

On the practical side, we can set up automated bill payments, research health issues without visiting the doctor, find great weeknight recipes and other instant-gratification shortcuts that truly make life easier.

But like any good thing, moderation of our electronic and Internet activity is essential for wellness and balance. Read on to learn strategies for more mindful use of your gadgets and time online.

e-Balance at Work...

Your eyes deserve a break. For anyone who works on a computer or electronic screen, it is important to understand that strain sets in sooner than you might think. Utilize the 20-20-20 rule as a means to protect your eyes. Simply take a 20-second break following 20 minutes of screen time, and let your eyes move to view something



at a 20-foot distance. According to the Mayo Clinic, there are eyewear options that may help, too – consult with your eye care professional to

learn more.

Turn off email and phone sounds for periods of time that warrant your focus and full attention.

Email and text messages arrive constantly, creating unpredictable distractions from projects, meetings, and other work tasks. The compulsive feeling to instantly review and reply can generate overall feelings that overwhelm or overstimulate, which in turn have draining effects. Conflict and misunderstandings arise when distracted employees are tuned out, and plugged in, at meetings.

Utilize out-of-office alerts so that you can buy yourself time off-line in order to *really* be productive, while also letting people know when you will be available again.

Focus on people, not devices.

Social interaction with eye contact, active listening, and an open, focused mind allows you to connect meaningfully and create trust, providing a boost to your own wellbeing as well as your work performance and relationships.

e-Balance at Home...

Restore with sensory and physical activity.

Unplugging restores valuable time to your evening and weekend hours. Expand and add value to this precious 'you-time' at home by engaging your senses. Non-electronic activity like cooking a meal allows you to prepare ingredients, savor kitchen smells, and express your creativity. Lighting candles and listening to music invites relaxation. Hobbies like knitting, gardening, non-screen-based reading, and crossword puzzles will fire up your brain in ways that may have been neglected during the draining day.

Physical activity including exercise, walking, and yoga will provide health benefits as well as enjoyable endorphin release.

Once again, focus on people, not devices. As important as at work – if not more – at home

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you should be prioritizing connections with family or with self. Understanding that legitimately there may be homework to do, or work projects to finish, place limits on computer and smart phone activity. Try to keep meals device free, and rediscover the refreshing pleasure of chatting with your family.

For those who live alone, at mealtime try playing music and keeping the focus on the food you are experiencing. Avoiding distractions like TV and tablets while eating will reduce the chance of 'mindless' overconsumption, and also provides an opportunity to focus on yourself: processing your day, thinking about goals and plans, and simply allowing for decompression from the hectic day.

Get your best rest. It may *feel* relaxing to fall asleep while watching a great television show, but your poor brain may think otherwise. Some research has shown that screen time before bed may inhibit your body's ability to regulate the melatonin that helps keep sleep rhythms on track.

Create an e-Inventory

Take a moment to really think about your electronic device usage at home and work. Have you fallen into patterns that may actually be ruts? The initial elation of discovering the fun and efficiency potential of our devices can slowly or quickly devolve into slavishness. The result is actually a toll on our effectiveness and our time management. Use the following questions to inventory your online or media activities.

- **How many hours each day are spent on 'screens'?** Count work and home hours separately, and check the screen hours against the total time in either location.
- **How much time each day is spent on social networking and media?** Think about whether you are missing opportunities to connect and share.
- **Is screen time or smart phone time a part of your commute?** Consider the safety issues as well as the possible missed opportunities for quiet, thoughtful breaks while travelling.

- **How much time do your household members spend online/on-screen?**
- **Do you opt for computer, TV, or iPad time over workouts or physical activity?**
- **Have you tallied the total monthly costs of your electronics and media use, subscriptions, fees, and equipment?**

The right balance is different for each person and each household. Technology advances are so constant and accessible that it is hugely important to evaluate what makes sense for our best quality of life and functionality.

For support and ideas about finding your best balance in any area of work or home life, contact INVEST EAP.



•The tech age provides great opportunities while also making it easy to lose touch with non-electronic life and media

•Work and home have both become highly stimulating multi-screen zones

•There are physical and health considerations related to electronics use and over-use

•Balance is needed between electronic communication and one-to-one, undistracted personal interactions at work and home

•Without taking time to reflect on how we spend time, we may be missing out on healthy and enjoyable activities

•An inventory of media and screen activity can help to reprioritize balance

REMEMBER...

- **EAP is free of direct cost to you**
- **EAP is confidential**



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