

Fuel up on self-care and healthy digital boundaries

You only live once, so make the most of it. Humorously speaking, I'm sure that even cats would agree with this, despite their own mythical nine lives. I thought about this on my way to work recently, while listening to the usual grumble from my carpool buddies about what a long, difficult week it was going to be.

Why? Boiling it down to just one trigger word: "Monday." And the more they spoke, the more I felt emotionally brainwashed by the contagious power of depressive thinking. Instead of focusing my attention on the wins from the prior week, the losses painfully dug their claws into the forefront of my mind. Congested thoughts about how much I still had left to do quickly hit me with a viral form of Monday Misery.

Understandably, Monday is often the dreaded day over which our metaphorical whiskers tingle with anxiety. Even if we love our career, the urge to champion every project that hits the road, while steering around innumerable personal obstacles at home, can leave us feeling underappreciated and overwhelmed. The topic stirred up a vital question, which we pensively kneaded while sharing opinions and constructively reshaping the conversation: "Are you taking tech breaks?"

A few of us chuckled because our mobile devices are never far from reach, and we felt pressured to work around the clock for various reasons. But the question inspired a moment of truth about why we were running on empty. And constant connectivity was a factor, resulting from either an overactive sense of responsibility that urged us to continually respond (e.g., emails, texts, instant notifications) or excessive personal behaviors (e.g., playing video games, binge-watching a TV series late into the night).

It brought to mind this pertinent quote by best-selling author Anne Lamott: "Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a minute, including you." This is a valuable reminder to schedule time for self-care—away from screens and headphones—so we can absorb the world around us and charge up our mood and motivation.

Psychology Today agrees, "Taking time to discover new hobbies, interacting with friends face to face instead of over text, and reacquainting yourself with long-forgotten interests is critical." Whether we walk the dog, exercise with friends, read paper books, cook, craft, play instruments, or do other things that bring us joy, self-care can take many deserving forms. And our wellness depends on them—occupational, emotional, spiritual and otherwise.

The National Sleep Foundation makes another poignant revelation, "Artificial blue light emitting from screens increases alertness and suppresses the hormone melatonin by up to 22%, which negatively impacts sleep" and threatens mental endurance, immunity and physical fitness.

Prioritizing self-care benefits our relationships too. When we invest in activities that improve our energy, it enhances the way others might perceive and respond to us—yes, even during those scowling Monday morning commutes.

Truth is, Mondays have been getting a bad rap all along. And while technology tools can inarguably increase

company productivity and revenue, healthy habits built into daily living are what really keep our engines purring and drive the team’s success.