



## Invest in Your Wellness with Wellness Works®

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### Managing Digital Fatigue in the Always-On Workplace

Constant connection has become the norm and is quietly reshaping how employees experience their workdays.

From back-to-back meetings to nonstop notifications, the modern work environment often leaves little room for mental recovery. While technology has improved efficiency and flexibility, it has also introduced a new kind of strain: [digital fatigue](#).

[Studies suggest the average employee checks email or messaging platforms dozens of times per hour, often without realizing it.](#)

Over time, this level of cognitive switching can drain focus, increase stress, and make it harder to sustain energy throughout the day.

#### Why Digital Fatigue Matters for HR

Digital fatigue isn't just about screen time—it's about the mental load that comes with constant responsiveness.

Employees may feel pressure to reply quickly, stay visible, and keep up with a steady stream of information. This can lead to:

- Mental exhaustion and reduced attention span
- Increased stress and irritability
- Lower quality of work due to fragmented focus
- Difficulty disconnecting after hours
- Higher risk of burnout over time

Because this fatigue builds gradually, it often goes unnoticed until performance or well-being begins to decline.

## What's Driving the Overload?

Multiple communication platforms, overlapping meetings, and blurred boundaries between work and personal time all contribute to the overload. Remote and hybrid environments can amplify this effect, where visibility is often tied to responsiveness rather than outcomes.

In many cases, employees aren't overworking intentionally. They're simply navigating systems that reward constant availability.

## Signs Your Workforce May Be Experiencing Digital Fatigue

The indicators can be subtle at first.

- Employees struggle to focus during meetings.
- Response times fluctuate between immediate and delayed.
- Multitasking increases, with reduced effectiveness.
- Teams report feeling busy but not productive.
- Employees have difficulty unplugging at the end of the day.

These patterns don't reflect a lack of engagement; they often signal cognitive overload.

## How HR Can Support Healthier Digital Habits

Reducing digital fatigue doesn't require removing technology. [It requires using it more intentionally.](#)

### Set clearer communication norms.

Define expectations around response times so employees don't feel pressure to be constantly available.

### Create space for focused work.

Encourage meeting-free blocks or designated "focus hours" where interruptions are minimized.

### Audit meeting culture.

Not every discussion needs a meeting. Streamlining invites and shortening durations can reduce cognitive strain.

### Encourage boundaries at the end of the day.

Leaders can model behavior by logging off at reasonable hours and avoiding after-hours messaging when possible.

### Simplify tools where possible.

Reducing platform overlap helps minimize the mental load of switching between systems.

## What You Can Expect

At first, slowing communication or reducing meetings may feel counterintuitive. But over time, employees often experience improved focus, more consistent energy, and better-quality output.

When attention is less fragmented, work becomes more sustainable, and often more effective.

## Getting Started

Choose one area to simplify – communication, meetings, or daily structure – and make a small adjustment. Even a single protected focus block or clearer response guideline can begin to ease the load.

The goal isn't to disconnect from work. It's to create a work environment where attention is protected, energy is sustained, and employees can engage more fully without feeling constantly "on."

## Book Review | Navigating Burnout in a Culture of Constant Demand

In *Burnout in the Age of Overload: In Support of the Workforce*, Dr. Jane Yip examines one of the defining challenges of modern work: the persistent strain created by unrelenting demands, blurred boundaries, and the expectation of continuous availability.

As organizations grapple with rapid change, digital acceleration, and rising performance pressures, conversations about burnout have often centered on resilience, self-care, and individual coping strategies. This book reframes the issue, shifting attention from personal endurance to systemic design. It asks not just how employees can manage stress, but how workplaces contribute to—or alleviate—the conditions that create it.

### Book Highlights

One of the book's most compelling contributions is its rejection of burnout as an individual failure. Dr. Yip positions burnout as a structural outcome shaped by workload expectations, organizational norms, and leadership behaviors. The problem is not simply that people cannot keep up; it is that the pace and volume of work are often unsustainable by design.

Rather than treating overload as an inevitable byproduct of ambition or growth, the author challenges organizations to examine how work is distributed and prioritized. Efficiency and productivity are not dismissed but are reframed through the lens of sustainability.

The book also resists overly simplistic solutions. It moves beyond surface-level recommendations such as encouraging time off or promoting wellness programs, and instead emphasizes alignment between values, policies, and day-to-day practices. Without this alignment, even well-intentioned initiatives risk becoming performative.

Importantly, burnout is linked to broader organizational outcomes. Chronic overload is associated with diminished creativity, lower engagement, increased errors, and higher turnover. In this sense, burnout is not just a human cost but a strategic risk.

Technology plays a nuanced role in the discussion. While digital tools enable speed and connectivity, they also contribute to the erosion of boundaries between work and personal time. The book questions whether constant access truly enhances performance, or whether it perpetuates a cycle of urgency without reflection.

### A Key Takeaway

Burnout is not simply the result of working too hard. It is the result of working in systems that demand more than people can sustainably give.

Addressing burnout requires more than individual resilience; it requires intentional choices about how work is structured, measured, and led. Organizations that treat capacity as a finite resource rather than an endlessly expandable one are better equipped to support both performance and wellbeing.

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