

Managers : Tips to better disconnect and improve performance and well-being

CHAPTER

FRANCE

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At the beginning of 2022, when working from home has tremendously extended over the last 2 years, I would like to share with you, managers, tips to help you disconnect and improve your well-being.

Who hasn't had an evening or a weekend ruined by ruminations or your phone buzzing with a work notification? Who hasn't heard one of their managers talk about the difficulties of disconnecting?

Surveys show it: 46% of managers consider that the crisis has had a negative effect on their mental load*. To disconnect is becoming more challenging, and this, for main 2 reasons:

- **Lines between home and work lives are blurred:** with working from home extending, work is inviting in our homes, there is no more physical disconnection or fixed hours between the office and home life, and some people are using the same phone for work and personal life
- **The pandemic-COVID19 context challenges companies to adapt and react faster;** continuing to exchange work messages in the evening or on weekends becomes more common: work can seem "endless."

Yet, it is important to disconnect. The benefits of disconnecting are numerous: those who better disconnect have more concentration, creativity, or efficiency than those who remain permanently connected. In private life, the main benefit is to enjoy time with loved ones, family, or friends.

For some people, it is easy to disconnect. For others, not so much. The good news is that you can work on it.

So, what tips do you have for better disconnecting and how can you support your employees in disconnecting?

- 1. Reconnect to yourself ... to disconnect**
- 2. Plan and give yourself breathing moments**
- 3. Set your limits and know how to say no**
- 4. Help your employees disconnect**

All details below.

1. Reconnect to yourself ... to disconnect

My first piece of advice for disconnecting is to reconnect with yourself, your feelings, your emotions. Why should you do this? Do you know the pressure-cooker effect? A stress or not being able to do everything or another emotion invades you and you start to be tense. You follow the rest of the day and, when the end of the day arrives, it is impossible to disconnect, you are under pressure! The 1st tip to better disconnect at the end of the day is to release the pressure as the day goes on, like a pressure-cooker during cooking.

To do this, you learn to identify and release your emotions during the day in 4 steps:

1. Develop your attention to your physical feelings: throat tightening, heart speeding up, mind racing in all directions, stomach ache...etc. These physical symptoms are alerts.
2. Try to name your emotion. Ask yourself: What emotion is related to my physical symptoms? Stress of not doing everything, fear of not being up to the task, anger towards your colleague, disappointment with a project...etc.
3. Look for the cause of the emotion to put it at a distance: What moves me in this situation? Where does the emotion come from? The emotion is an alert: anger indicates a need for respect or a limit to be clarified, fear expresses a need to be reassured, sadness a need for connection etc... Deeply feeling your emotion and seeking to understand its cause will bring it down and limit the emotional and mental load for the rest of the day.
4. Take action: What do you do with your emotion? For example: I verbalize what I need, I go for a walk, I take a few deep breaths...

What if, in order to disconnect, you start by reconnecting with yourself and in particular, with your emotions?

2. Plan and give yourself breathing moments

Facilitate your disconnection by planning your professional AND personal time to free your mental load.

- On the professional side, think about your goals for the day or week, and set aside time for your work when you won't be answering your emails or calls.

You can be attentive to your chronobiological rhythm when you plan your agenda (sequence your work in a day according to your moments of concentration for example in the morning and plan your "easier" tasks after lunch ...)

- Set Personal goals as well : work isn't your whole life. To help you disconnect, fix personal goals (organize a weekend, be ready for a trail ...) will help you plan personal times.
- Plan personal time as well. What is it that makes you feel good? Plan your sports session (running, walking, yoga...), your hobbies (painting...), your 10min meditation or 5 min of cardiac coherence. I recommend meditation or cardiac coherence, which in just 10 minutes regularly reduces mental agitation and allows you to learn to put your thoughts at a distance by observing them, without judging them.
- To counter the pressure cooker effect (see point 1), give yourself breaks and enjoy your breaks "consciously": what does your tea/coffee smell like? how warm do you feel? these little things help you to refocus on the present moment and to disconnect at the end of the day. If you have trouble disconnecting; why not using the breaks to work on your personal goals.
- Finally, try disconnecting your work-related alerts in the evening or on weekends

To the "I don't have time" remark, I prefer "I choose not to do" - What about you, what do you choose to do and not to do?

3. Set your limits and know how to say no

Everyone has his or her imperatives and limits, set your limits by listening to and respecting yourself. You will be more efficient at other times!

If you have difficulty saying no or formulating a limit to your manager, you can use the NVC (NonViolent Communication) method to make requests on a constructive and authentic way:

- O: I share my Observation (When ... I describe the facts as neutrally as possible, without judgment),
- F: I express my Feeling (I feel / I have the feeling ...)
- N: I express the Need behind my feeling (I need to ...clarify and name my need is the key step)
- R: I express my positive request to the pronoun "I" (I would like to shift/adjust ...)

And you, what limit would you like to share to help you disconnect?

4. Help your employees disconnect

As a manager, here are some ideas to support your employees to their right to disconnect to build more caring and performing teams:

- **Develop trust with your employees** : insist on the importance of results rather than time of connexion for work. Trust them : it is not because they are away for 15min that they are lazy and enjoying their work from home conditions not to work
- **Encourage collaborators to organize how it is best for them** to be efficient working from home. You can ask them to share with you their personal organisations proactively (sport sessions...)
- **Define time slots**: no meeting after 5pm or before 9am, no meeting one afternoon each week to keep qualitative time within a team...

- **Give meaning**, clarify what you expect from everyone, especially from managers in terms of team support
- **Specify that emails do not necessarily require an immediate response** and can be dealt with the next day
- **Set an example** by giving yourself time to disconnect.

To go further, you can **train your managers** on how to know themselves, to manage their time and their emotions especially with remote management. You can also set up **sharing circles between managers** in which they can exchange their concerns, in a framework of trust. To do this, you can get **help from professionals** to facilitate this type of practice (HRs, professional coaches, trainers) in a framework of trust, conducive to authentic exchanges! This is the basis of any successful coaching or training.

I hope that these tips to experiment will help you to better disconnect and facilitate the disconnection of your employees! **To put it in a nutshell, disconnection starts with reconnecting to oneself, detecting what works for us and our limits and acting on them as each day goes by.** Encouraging disconnection seems to me to be an excellent breeding ground for the well-being and performance of managers and teams. And you, what are your tips for disconnecting?

**Study "Santé mentale et risques psychosociaux des salariés", june 2021 : French study Harris Interactive for Malakoff Humanis with over 1500 employees – Online data gathering from April 28th 2021 to May 10th 2021*

****NVC method from Marshall Rozenberg,: "Words are windows, or there're walls" book*