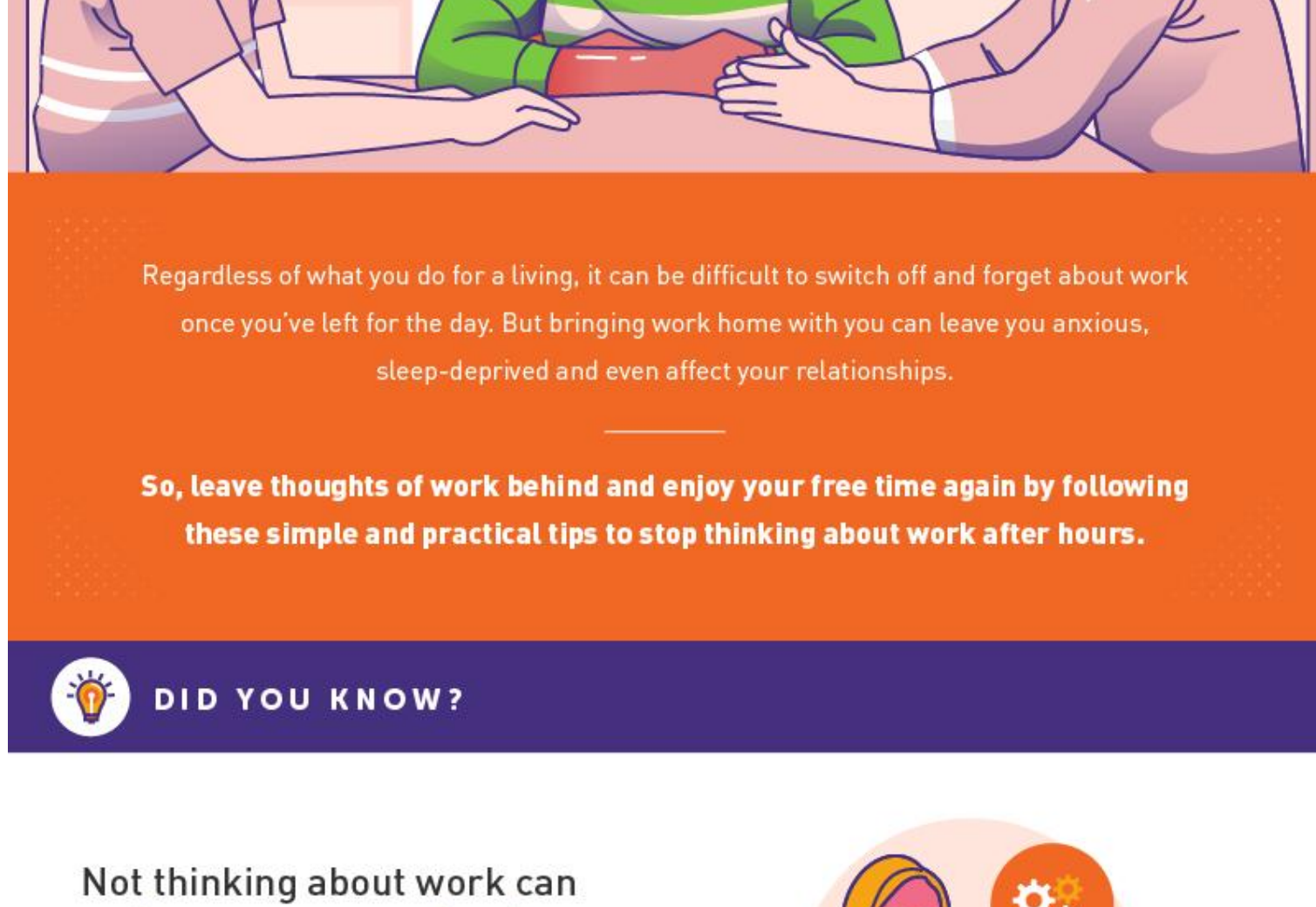


# HOW TO STOP THINKING ABOUT WORK AFTER HOURS



Regardless of what you do for a living, it can be difficult to switch off and forget about work once you've left for the day. But bringing work home with you can leave you anxious, sleep-deprived and even affect your relationships.

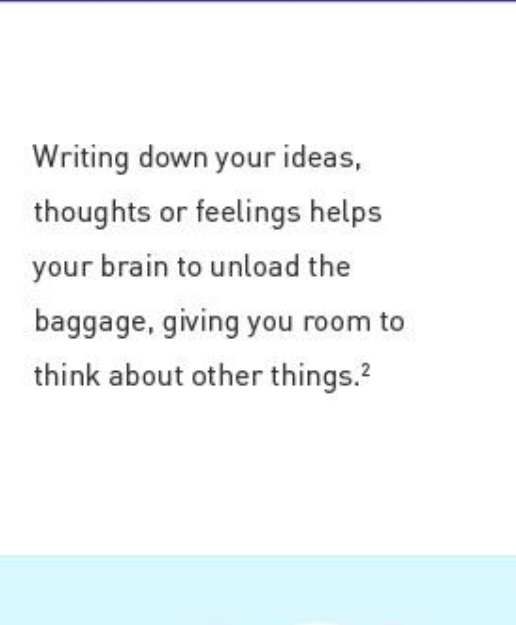
So, leave thoughts of work behind and enjoy your free time again by following these simple and practical tips to stop thinking about work after hours.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Not thinking about work can make you more productive

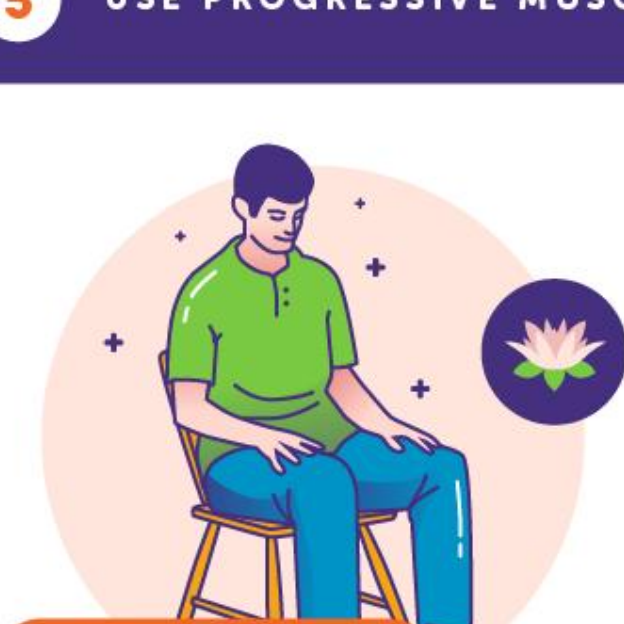
According to a report by Business Roundtable, taking time to relax in a work-free environment helps you tackle tasks with increased speed and creativity the next day.<sup>1</sup>



## HOW TO STOP THINKING ABOUT WORK RIGHT NOW

If you're sitting at home with work thoughts rolling around in your head, try these tips to quickly calm your mind and start enjoying your downtime.

### 1 WRITE DOWN WHAT IS BOTHERING YOU



Writing down your ideas, thoughts or feelings helps your brain to unload the baggage, giving you room to think about other things.<sup>2</sup>

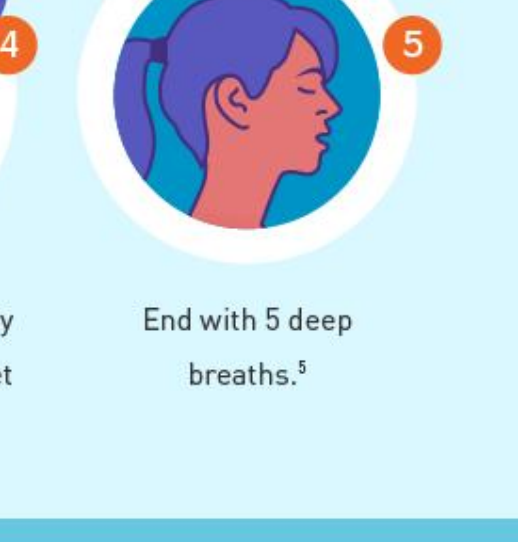
#### WORKS BEST WHEN

A specific work-related issue is bothering you and you can't stop thinking about it.



### 2 PLAY A VIDEO GAME

A study published by the New Jersey Medical School found that the kind of deep focus needed for gaming, known as cognitive absorption, can take your mind off work.<sup>3</sup>



### 3 USE PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)



Re-focusing your mind to the feelings in your body distracts you from work thoughts and puts you in a state of deep relaxation.<sup>4</sup>

#### HOW TO DO IT



1 Sit upright in a comfortable chair.



2 Take 5 deep breaths. In through your nose, out through your mouth.



3 Starting with your feet, tighten and release your muscles.



4 Work each part of your body one at a time from your feet up to your face.



5 End with 5 deep breaths.<sup>5</sup>

### 4 DISTRACT YOURSELF

Diverting your thoughts to something else can quickly and effectively help you avoid intrusive thoughts about work.<sup>6</sup>



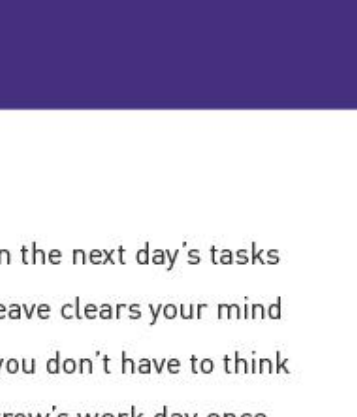
#### TRY THIS



Listening to the ticking of a clock

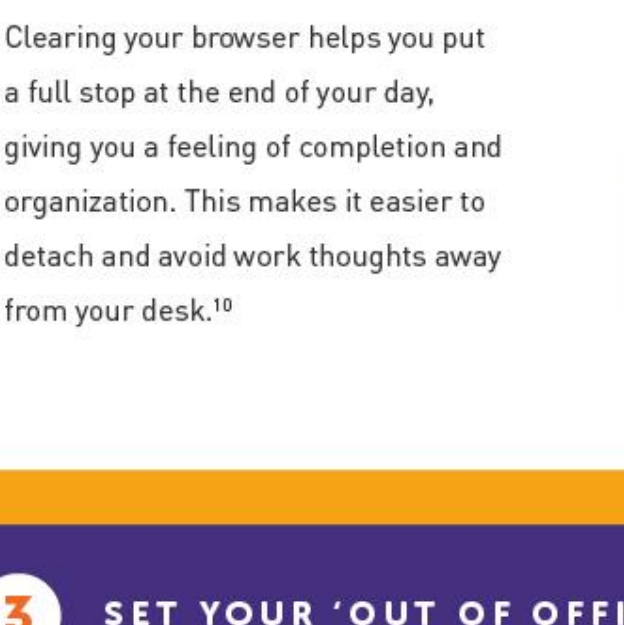


Counting cracks in a wall, lights in a room or floor tiles



Feeling the texture of your clothing

### 5 TRY SAYING "STOP!" OUT LOUD



Saying a word out loud focuses your attention on that word, and will divert you away from thinking about work.<sup>7</sup>



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Not thinking about work can help you enjoy better relationships

A study by psychologist Lisa Neff showed that couples who were stressed about work were less close than those who were able to enjoy their downtime.<sup>8</sup>



### Not thinking about work can make you happier with your job

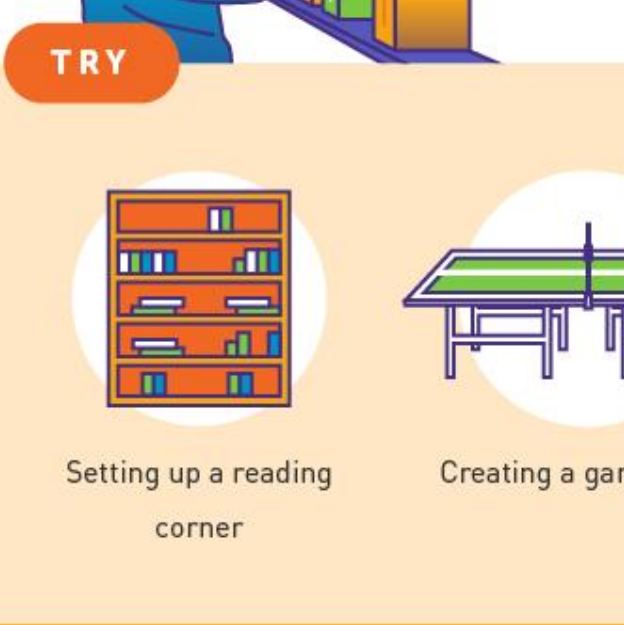
Research from the University of California showed that employees who relaxed during time off work reported greater job satisfaction.<sup>9</sup>



## HOW TO STOP THINKING ABOUT WORK IN THE FUTURE

Creating positive rituals for the end of your work day helps you detach, and how you manage your downtime can help keep your mind off work.<sup>10</sup>

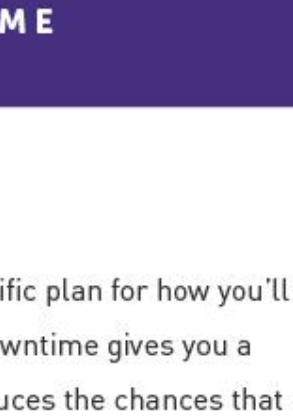
### 1 WRITE A DAILY EXIT LIST



Writing down the next day's tasks before you leave clears your mind and means you don't have to think about tomorrow's work day once you're finished for the day.<sup>11</sup>

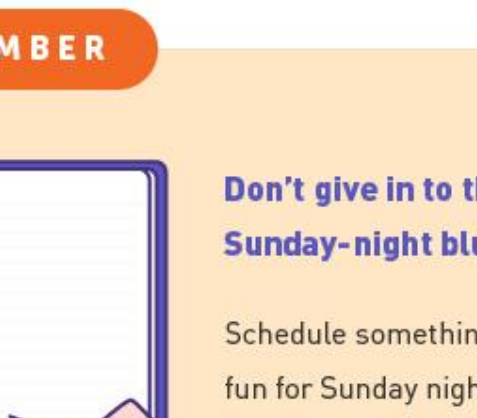
#### TRY

Using a task list manager such as Todoist. This will allow you to add due dates and priorities to your tasks.

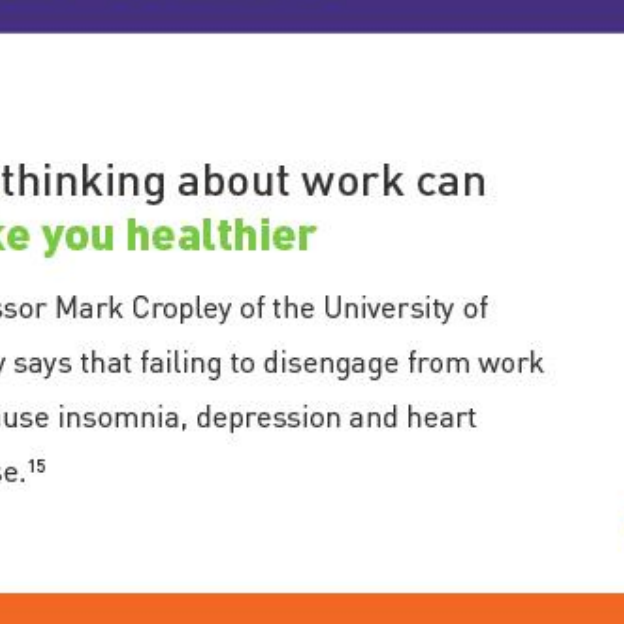


### 2 CLOSE ALL YOUR OPEN BROWSER TABS

Clearing your browser helps you put a full stop at the end of your day, giving you a feeling of completion and organization. This makes it easier to detach and avoid work thoughts away from your desk.<sup>12</sup>



### 3 SET YOUR 'OUT OF OFFICE'



Knowing people will get a response, even when you're not at your desk will prevent you from worrying about emails during your downtime.<sup>12</sup>

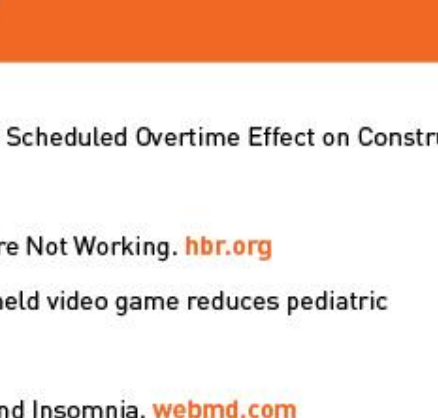
#### PRO TIP

Set your 'out of office' to switch on automatically at the end of every work day, so you won't worry if you turned it on later.

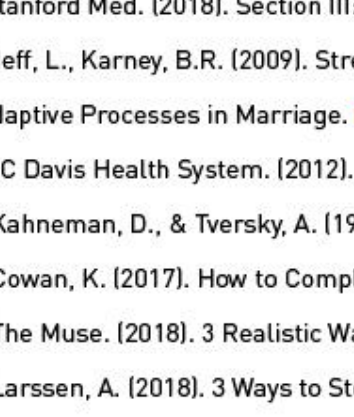


### 4 DESIGN YOUR COMMUTE

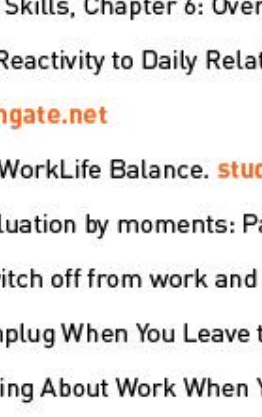
Your commute home is a physical and mental act that separates you from your workplace. Use your trip home to ease into 'not-working' mode.<sup>13</sup>



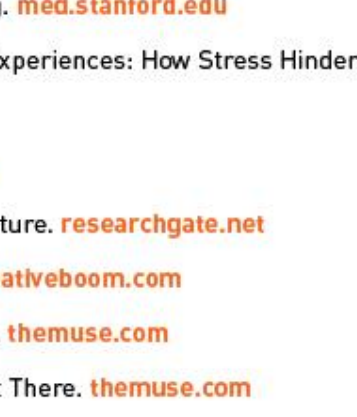
#### DISENGAGE 'WORK MODE' BY



Listening to a podcast



Reading a book



Playing a mobile game

### 5 ESTABLISH A NO-WORK ZONE AT HOME



Your environment can influence what you think about. If you have an area of your home that has no work-related context, you'll be less likely to think about work.<sup>2</sup>

#### TRY



Setting up a reading corner



Creating a game room



Establishing an exercise area

### 6 MAKE A PLAN FOR YOUR DOWNTIME



Having a specific plan for how you'll spend your downtime gives you a focus and reduces the chances that you'll think about work.<sup>2</sup>

#### OVER THE WEEKEND REMEMBER

#### You don't need a minute-by-minute plan

Sketch in three to five "anchor" activities.



#### Don't give in to the Sunday-night blues

Schedule something fun for Sunday night.<sup>14</sup>



## DID YOU KNOW?

Rest and relaxation are vital to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Follow the tips in this guide to ensure you fully detach from your job when you're not there.

It might be a scary prospect, but give it a try – it will increase your productivity, boost your health and improve your relationships.



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<sup>4</sup>Web MD. (2018). Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Stress and Insomnia. [webmd.com](https://webmd.com)

<sup>5</sup>Harvard Health Publishing. (2018). Mini-relaxation exercises: A quick fix in stressful moments. [health.harvard.edu](https://health.harvard.edu)

<sup>6</sup>NetMD. (2018). Using Distraction to Treat Anxiety. [enetmd.com](https://enetmd.com)

<sup>7</sup>Stanford Med. (2018). Section III: Special Skills, Chapter 6: Over-Thinking. [med.stanford.edu](https://med.stanford.edu)

<sup>8</sup>Neff, L., Karney, B.R. (2009). Stress and Reactivity to Daily Relationship Experiences: How Stress Hinders Adaptive Processes in Marriage. [researchgate.net](https://researchgate.net)

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<sup>10</sup>Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1999). Evaluation by moments: Past and future. [researchgate.net](https://researchgate.net)

<sup>11</sup>Cowan, K. (2017). How to Completely switch off from work and relax. [creativeboom.com](https://creativeboom.com)

<sup>12</sup>The Muse. (2018). 3 Realistic Steps to Unplug When You Leave the Office. [themuse.com](https://themuse.com)

<sup>13</sup>Larsen, A. (2018). 3 Ways to Stop Thinking About Work When You're Not There. [themuse.com](https://themuse.com)

<sup>14</sup>Vanderkam, L. (2013). Your Weekend Has 60 Hours—Here's How To Write The Most Out Of Them. [fastcompany.com](https://fastcompany.com)

<sup>15</sup>Sturgis, I. (2015). How to find your brain's off switch. [telegraph.co.uk](https://telegraph.co.uk)



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