



# Loss Control Insight

## Unplugging After Work

Thanks to technology, a lot of us are “on” all the time—we text people while we are with *other* people, we charge our phones by our heads at night, and for a lot of us, we never escape our email inboxes. They follow us on our commute home, they ping us while we’re eating dinner with friends or family, they beckon us to check them even on vacation.



It's inevitable, and I wouldn't say having the convenience of a smartphone is a bad thing—but always responding to it *is*. For many people, these beliefs created a constant state of anxiety and uncertainty—referred to as “anticipatory stress”—regardless of how often they actually checked in.

You might be thinking, how can one small habit be so detrimental to my health? It's not like I'm actually doing anything. But over time, this kind of expectation to always be available can lead to mental and physical burnout, depression, and decreased productivity (now isn't that counterproductive?). This inability to tune out work can make it difficult to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

Here are some tips to “unplug” after work:

**1. Leave the workplace!** Are you one of those people who see the clock hit closing time but linger to finish up just one more thing, something that will take only a few minutes? But, 90 minutes later, you're still there. At some point, though, you have to decide it's okay to leave it for the next day.

Some long hours are inevitable for most of us on occasion, but doing it regularly can jeopardize your health, among other things. To break this habit, set an alarm on your phone for a specific time every day to remind you to determine if the work you're doing can be done the next day or really must be tackled today.

**2. Don't respond to nonemergency messages after business hours.** Earlier generations didn't have this problem; they couldn't be reached 24/7. It's easy to get caught in the trap of “just checking” your email or texts—but just checking can easily turn into sending replies that eat into your personal time. And that also can give the recipients the impression that you're available on demand.

Make a rule for yourself that you won't respond unless the subject is an emergency. You might find it tough to set such boundaries, but it's essential if you're really going to unplug from work at home.

**3. Plan after-work activities.** It takes more than watching television at night to actually unwind. That's because we check our messages, edit reports or presentations, etc. while “watching.”

It's much easier to disconnect if you participate in some type of physical activity that gets you moving while letting you get away from work. Go for a run or bike ride, play with your children, walk the dog, or do yard work.

**4. Plug in efficiently.** If you want to be able to push work from your mind off-hours, you need to make the most of your time when you're at work. You'll need to eliminate distractions so you can perform your job as efficiently as possible during that time. Smart phones are a distraction.

If able determine the tasks that are the most difficult or time-consuming to accomplish and tackling those first. This will give you more momentum and energy for the rest of the day, while procrastination will drain your energy and lead to even more procrastination.

