SwitchOff Training Programme – Module 5

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Training Programme

Module 5
Evidence-based recovery activities

Module 5	
Module 5	Evidence-based recovery activities – HAPPSY
Short description of the module / abstract	In this chapter we will learn about the evidence-based recovery activities through which managers and HR professionals can support their workers' efforts to disconnect and refrain from engaging in work-related activities, during non-working hours
Learning Outcomes	LO1: Learn about the best evidence-based recovery activities that are crucial for employees' well-being, motivation, and productivity LO2: Practicing body scan LO3: Practicing self-compassion LO4: Practicing savoring LO5: Practicing micro breaks during work hours
Learning Units	*Unit 1*: Overview of evidence-based recovery activities and their impact on well-being and performance. *Unit 2*: Mindfulness *Unit 3*: Self-compassion *Unit 4*: Savoring Unit 5: Micro-breaks or Mini - Breaks
Learning core material	

Chapter	Learning Material
1. Overview of evidence-based recovery activities and their impact on well-being and performance.	Text, practical activity
2. Mindfulness	Text, practical activity
3. Self-compassion	Text, practical activity
4. Savoring	Text, practical activity
5. Micro-breaks or Mini - Breaks	Text, practical activity

Assessment method		
	Chapter	Assessment method
	1. Mindfulness	Multiple choice questions
	2. Self-compassion	Multiple choice questions
	3. Savoring	Multiple choice questions
	4. Micro-breaks or Mini - Breaks	Multiple choice questions
Workload (Estimated study time) (min)	180'	
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Abstract:
Given the widely recognized detrimental effects of work stress on health, productivity and well-being, scholars are increasingly interested in understanding how individuals can optimally recover from work stress during their nonwork time. In recent years, a wealth of research has documented that the quality of recovery experiences during nonwork time is key to successful recovery from work stress. Moreover, unwinding and recovering from everyday work is critical for employees' well-being, motivation, and productivity. In this chapter we will learn about the best evidence-based recovery activities through which managers and HR professionals can support their worker's efforts to disconnect and refrain from engaging in work-related activities, during non-working hours.

Learning outcomes
LO1: Learn about the best evidence-based recovery activities that are crucial for employees' well-being, motivation, and productivity
LO2: Practicing body scan
LO3: Practicing self-compassion
LO4: Practicing savoring
LO5: Practicing micro breaks during work hours

Keywords
recover from work, well-being, motivation, productivity

LEARNING UNIT 1 - OVERVIEW OF EVIDENCE-BASED RECOVERY ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON WELL-BEING AND PERFORMANCE

Unwinding and recovering from everyday work is critical for employees' well-being, motivation, and productivity. In this chapter we will learn about the best evidence-based recovery activities through which managers and HR professionals can support their worker's efforts to disconnect and refrain from engaging in work-related activities, during non-work hours

In the organizational literature, recovery is defined as "unwinding and restoration processes during which a person's strain level that has increased as a reaction to a stressor or any other demand returns to its pre-stressor level" (Sonnentag et al. 2017, p. 366). Typical psychological short-term strain symptoms that emerge as a result of job demands include negative states defined by high arousal, such as distress, anger, and anxiety, as well as negative states characterized by low arousal, such as fatigue, exhaustion, and a depressed mood. These strain symptoms diminish when the exposure to job demands is over, with this recovery process dependent on specific healing activities (e.g., physical exercise) and experiences (e.g., psychological detachment from work).

Research on recovery has used two distinct, but interrelated, approaches to study the core process of recovery. One approach focuses on activities during which recovery occurs; the other focuses on the underlying psychological experiences. The activity approach refers to what people are doing during non-working time, that is, what kind of activity they are pursuing. Such recovery activities include, for instance, physical exercise, engaging in a hobby, and socializing with friends and family. Recovery activities usually have a low-duty profile and can therefore be differentiated from other off-the-job activities that have a high-duty profile, such as household activities or childcare (Sonnentag, 2001; Steed et al., 2019). Overall, recovery activities such as physical exercise, social activities, and low-effort activities are associated with well-being and feelings of recovery, whereas activities with a high-duty profile show the opposite pattern of findings (Sonnentag, 2001; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker 2012; Ten Brummelhuis & Trougakos, 2014).

The experience approach refers to people's psychological states during non-working time, namely how they live through and experience their non-working time. Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) defined recovery experiences as psychological detachment from work, relaxation, mastery, and control. Psychological detachment involves refraining from job-related thoughts and gaining mental distance from one's work during non-working time. Lack of psychological detachment from work is empirically related to, but conceptually distinct from, rumination (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Relaxation is the experience of having low sympathetic activation, which can be obtained by meditation or breathing practices, as well as through ordinary activities that quiet the body and mind. Mastery relates to the experience of growth, such as successfully overcoming problems and engaging in learning experiences. Control entails some degree of self-determination and agency (Ouyang et al., 2019) in determining what to do and how to do it during non-working time.

LEARNING UNIT 2 – MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is an effective method for encouraging psychological detachment from one's job. It entails deliberately focusing one's attention on the present moment while maintaining a non-judgmental and accepting attitude toward one's own thoughts and feelings. Employees can acquire a heightened awareness of their mental and emotional states by practicing mindfulness, helping them to detach from work-related stress and create a healthy work-life balance.

For remote workers, practicing mindfulness can be particularly beneficial in helping them to switch off from work and create a clear separation between work and personal life. Consistency and intention are required for mindfulness practice. As a remote worker, you may build the ability to switch off from work, foster a healthier work-life balance, and nurture your general well-being by adding mindfulness practices into your daily routine. Employees who devote time to cultivating mindfulness can develop the skills and mindset required for psychological detachment from work, resulting in increased overall well-being and performance.

Body scan

Bringing attention to different parts of the body, fostering awareness of physical sensations, and promoting calm are all part of this exercise.
A body scan exercise can assist workers in developing a greater sense of bodily awareness, releasing stress, and promoting relaxation. It can be especially beneficial during breaks or at the conclusion of the workday to promote psychological detachment from work-related stress and a stronger sense of well-being.

1. Choose a comfortable position: sit comfortably on a chair or lie down on a comfortable surface. Close your eyes or maintain a gentle concentration on whatever in front of you.
2. Bring your attention to your breathing: take several deep breaths to relax and settle into the present moment. Take note of how your breath enters and exits your body.
3. Begin scanning from head to toe by focusing your attention on the top of your head: take note of any sensations, tensions, or regions of comfort in your scalp, forehead, and face. Move carefully along the body, paying attention to the muscles, joints, and feelings you encounter.
4. Observe without judgment: practice observing any sensations that come as you scan each portion of your body without judgment. Recognize regions of tension, discomfort, or even relaxation without attempting to change anything.
5. Cultivate relaxation and release: when you feel tense or uncomfortable, consider sending your breath to those areas with the purpose of releasing any tightness or holding. As you continue the body scan, let the breath to softly soften and relax those spots.
6. Stay present and focused: focus on the sensations of each body part during the body scan. If your mind wanders or thoughts arise, gently bring it back to the bodily part you are currently studying.

7. Finish the scan and reflect: continue scanning down your body, from your head to your toes. When you've finished, take a few seconds to sit or lie quietly and observe the sensations in your body.

8. Return to the present moment by gradually returning your attention to the room, the sounds around you, and the sensation of your breath. If your eyes were closed, gently open them.

LEARNING UNIT 3 – SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion is an effective method for fostering psychological detachment at work. It entails treating yourself with love, tolerance, and acceptance, particularly in difficult or stressful times.

Workers who practice self-compassion can create a pleasant and supportive work environment, improve their general well-being, and contribute to a healthier and more productive workplace. It enables employees to bring their entire self to work, generating feelings of contentment, satisfaction, and resilience.

Self-Compassionate letter writing

Find a quiet and comfortable place where you can concentrate without being distracted.
To anchor yourself in the present moment, take a few deep breaths.
Consider a recent professional situation in which you were self-critical or encountered difficulty.

Assume you're sending a letter to a close friend or loved one who is going through a similar experience.
Offer your friend words of compassion, support, and understanding in the letter. Write with warmth and compassion.
Consider what you would say to a friend to soothe and encourage them.
Change your perspective and pretend you're writing this letter to yourself.
Begin drafting the letter to yourself, using kind and understanding language.
Recognize the difficulties you encountered or the blunders you made.
Express compassion for your struggles and difficulties.
Remind yourself that making mistakes is part of being human and that you are worthy of compassion.
Write the letter with care and sensitivity, treating yourself with the same degree of support and understanding that you would extend to a close friend.
After you've finished drafting the letter, set it aside for a few moments.
Take time to dwell on your words of self-compassion. Take note of how they make you feel, as well as any changes in your perspective or self-perception.
When you're ready, reread the letter, this time allowing yourself to thoroughly absorb the self-compassionate words and intents.
Remind yourself that you are deserving of kindness, compassion, and understanding.
If you like, you can retain the letter as a reminder of your self-compassion or read it on a regular basis as a source of support.

LEARNING UNIT 4 – SAVORING

Savoring can be described as paying attention to, appreciating, and enhancing positive experiences. It is a process in which people become aware of positive experiences and engage in thoughts and behaviors that help create and amplify positive emotions.

For remote workers, practicing savoring in their everyday life can help them amplify positive emotions. Positive emotions, in turn, will broaden their capacity to switch off from work and will create a reservoir to buffer stress.

Savoring: awe moment

1. Go out to fresh air. This could be the balcony of your office or home, the terrace in the last floor of the building, or completely outdoors in the neighbourhood. Switch off your cell phone.
2. Take a deep breath in. Count to ten as you inhale and ten as you exhale. Feel the air move through your nasal passages and hear the sound of your breath.
3. Shift your awareness now so that you are open to the surroundings, to things that are vast, unexpected, things that surprise and delight.
4. Look up in the sky. Dive in the clouds. Watch out for the transformations created by the clouds. Observe the colour of the sky and the colour of the clouds.
5. Breath in again. Feel the vastness of the sky.

LEARNING UNIT 5 – MICRO-BREAKS OR MINI - BREAKS

Micro-breaks or Mini - Breaks at work are short discontinuities in one's tasks and they are no longer than 10 minutes. In this strategy, workers will be invited to reflect on the differential impact of each type of micro break they choose at work.

Research highlights the importance of "momentary recovery" at work or else the importance of taking micro-breaks "in the moment" as needed. Examples of microbreaks at work include drinking a caffeinated beverage, doing some form of physical activity, surfing the web, listening to music etc.

Remote workers must learn how to manage their micro breaks during work hours in order to maintain their energy levels, especially since working from home might be difficult.

Establishing new habits for micro breaks

1. Take the indicated hand out below. In each column, try to find ways to have a micro break at work (no more than 10 minutes), that fits into each category. Try to find new ways to entertain yourself. Search the web if needed.
2. Be creative and bold. For example, you could write down something like "Get to Know better, Mary, the new secretary with whom I have never interacted before on a personal level". Or, "I will start a chair yoga class and exercise during my breaks"
3. Do not put censorship on your ideas. The point is that you feel free to write as many ideas as possible
4. After looking at what you wrote, decide which new micro–break idea you will start implementing in real life.

On the table below, in each column, you can see four themes of tactics that are related to the sustenance of human energy at work.

(1) physical, (2) relational, (3) mental, and (4) spiritual.

Physical strategies usually take the form of a break to fulfil basic physiological needs such as drinking water, going to the bathroom, or engaging in any kind of physical activity. Relational strategies include interacting and connecting with people in a positive manner (e.g., showing gratitude to someone at work, offering help to someone). Mental strategies refer to focused, sometimes future oriented behaviour such as making a to-do list for work or making plans for the evening or the week end. Finally, spiritual strategies are used to help see the "bigger picture" of things—for example, through thinking about the meaning of one's work.

Physical	Relational	Mental	Spiritual

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Supporting worker's well being during remote work

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