



## FIRSTCUT

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# Detach — it's refreshing every time

**O**n a recent flight, intent on editing magazine copy, I asked my fellow passenger “What do you do?” intrigued by the pile of work with which he surrounded himself. An hour later, I wished I hadn't asked.

Stress seeped out of his every word, his every pore.

I felt bad for him. I had been there before. Did a stranger on a plane listen to me when I laid out all my stress, disguised under deadlines to meet and tasks to accomplish?

Then I took a moment to look around me.

Stress was everywhere. In tense shoulders hunched over laptops. In fingers rubbing wrinkled temples over furrowed brows. In eyes staring at distant points out of plane windows.

Intrigued, I did some research: 40% of adults report living with raised stress levels today; 68% of employees say they are highly stressed, fatigued and feel out of control; and 44% of workers say stress costs them an hour of productivity a day.

It's easy to become too identified with work — completely absorbed by it. But detaching from it has its advantages. When I've detached — whether it's to read a book to my daughter (inserting voices for characters), enjoy a walk or run or quietly sip a glass of wine — it's not only cleared my head but also brought increased productivity and fresh ideas.

*Harvard Business Review* has more suggestions for controlling stress: Manage your energy, not your time; identify and banish time thieves; find a buddy or mentor at work to vent to; and protect time outside work so you can refresh.

It's not easy to take necessary breaks, particularly when your time is limited, but it's a part of reminding ourselves we are more than just our jobs. As leadership coach Gill Corkindale advises: “Take time to reflect on what you want to achieve in life and think about your definition of personal success. This should help when work gets difficult and pressure becomes unbearable.”

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