

LEADING SUSTAINABLE HIGH PERFORMANCE

Your Personal Productivity and Wellbeing Plan

Your name:

Your coach (if you have one):

Date of plan:

Set yourself (and your teams) up for success by being intentional in **how** you operate, **where** you place your energy, **what** you choose to give your attention to, and **when** you allow it to happen by recognising what you can control and accepting what you cannot. Become more focused in identifying and pursuing your priorities, which should include self-care at the very top of your list.

This is part of good team leadership, part of what's needed for success in today's constantly changing and disrupted world to sustain performance and success. If you follow these suggestions you will be an inspiring role-model, a leader of these times and an influencer in shaping what's needed for systemic cultural change.

Instructions

- 1 If you have completed the GLWS, look back at your GLWS Personal Wellbeing Report and think about what's improved (or got worse?).
- 2 Review the suggestions in this document and identify those which resonate most for you.
- 3 Self-audit to evaluate how you are currently operating, professionally and personally. Solicit input from your colleagues, family and friends where you are not sure.
- 4 Consider how some (or all?) of these suggestions could be applied to your work, family or personal circumstances.
- 5 Our best guidance is to adopt the broad aim of building your awareness by being more mindful and conscious of the patterns and habits that characterise your thoughts, feelings, choices and actions.
- 6 Become more intentional and deliberate about choosing your actions, and try to be more purposeful about the aspects where you are motivated to see change.
- 7 Experiment with changing any habits that are not serving you well. Gradually nudge yourself along until you are successful in embedding the new patterns of behaviour which are more closely aligned to what you want/need at this stage in your life and career. Don't give up! False starts are not failures, they are to be expected. Just reset and keep being aware.
- 8 Review your progress and challenges (ideally with a professional executive or wellbeing coach), and using this document as your template, formulate your own recipe for success, health and happiness.
- 9 Be accountable for what you can control and influence. Come back and look at this regularly. Talk about it with your coach, team, colleagues, family.

Annually:

1 Visualise and define what success will look like for you, professionally and personally.

- ▶ Consider what you want to achieve at work and in your home-life over the year ahead.
- ▶ At work, how aligned and aware is your manager and team of your goals. What level of agreement and shared understanding is there about what needs to be achieved?
- ▶ If this year is to be better than last, what or how might you want to change?
- ▶ What are you going to select as your top priorities, at work and at home?

2 Plan into your schedule:

- ▶ 1-2 major holidays. Strike a deal with a peer or one of your team members to be a backstop in providing first-line cover for you during these periods. Offer to reciprocate when they might need the same.
- ▶ 4 regular minibreaks / long weekends – organise and book them ahead of time. Being able to anticipate and look forward to our breaks far in advance provides us with pleasure, relief and a strong psychological boost.
- ▶ All important dates such as birthdays, anniversaries, school, family and social commitments.
- ▶ Team meetings, management meetings, review meetings and quarterly career/personal catchups (ideally over breakfast, lunch or dinner) with each of your direct reports.
- ▶ Key client, industry or professional events and deadlines (e.g. when business plans or matters are due).
- ▶ Health checks/medicals.

Your thoughts / ideas

Quarterly/Monthly:

1 Manage your devices

- ▶ Go to your phone Settings and set your Downtime, App Limits and Communication Limits to put good boundaries in place.
- ▶ Ensure you delete or tightly limit access to the apps/social media which are at risk of consuming unwarranted amounts of your time; unhelpful distractions from what really matters.
- ▶ Communicate these boundaries to your family and work colleagues, signalling your desire to be more focussed and selective.
- ▶ Review, manage and amend the above until you get it right.
- ▶ Develop a set of “rules” around your phone, computer, screen time that achieves the balance that will be best for you and those who need or rely on you e.g. leaving phone out of the bedroom, not having phone on as you come through the door from work, or on desk during meetings.
- ▶ Communicate and actively role-model these protocols as being a central tenet of good mental health and for living a balanced life.

2 Hit the pause button

Allocate a ‘coffee with yourself’ to sit down with a notebook and make time to reflect on how your work and personal circumstances are travelling. Where do you anticipate the biggest opportunities and challenges over the next few months and what adjustments do you want to make happen?

- ▶ How are you feeling?
- ▶ What’s dominating your thoughts?
- ▶ How have you been behaving / performing? Be honest with yourself.
- ▶ How is your business performing? Your team? Challenge yourself to look at this through others’ eyes not only your own.
- ▶ What about your sleep, exercise, eating, technology and family trends?
- ▶ How might you alter the rhythm of your day to better meet your needs? Think particularly about how you travel to and from work, how you use this time and what your start and end of day daily habits are, what takes up your time that you resent and where are you not adding value?

3 Ensure your most important non-work commitments and priorities are being progressed and not ignored.

- ▶ Make a time to sit down with your family or partner to discuss and exchange views about how the past few months have been, what's coming up that's important and any changes or requests that you have of one another.
- ▶ Organise any specialist appointments, identify and book ahead of time where 'last minute' won't work.

Your thoughts / ideas

Weekly:

1 Get your schedule out every Sunday afternoon / evening, plan and allocate specific times into your calendar where you can:

- ▶ Achieve a minimum of a 30-minute fast paced walk per day through to one hour of intense daily exercise. Morning? Through the day? Gap between travelling? After last meeting of the day? Before bed?
- ▶ Do something nice for yourself, by yourself at least once a week that you find relaxing, fulfilling, fun, uplifting. Something that makes you feel good, that isn't work and isn't the usual run of the mill home-based chores.
- ▶ Be sure *everything* that's in your schedule for the week ahead is a valuable use of your time and energy; decline, cancel or delegate *anything* that's not relevant to your goals and is neither important nor urgent.

- 2 Identify your ‘big ticket’ items or goals for the week. The most important things (deadlines, problems, people) you want to focus on and not get distracted from.**

- 3 Decide who, when and in what way you want or need to prioritise to invest in your personal relationships with your family and friends this week, and make sure you earmark time in your schedules.**
 - ▶ 5 minutes of a heart to heart with a child, an overdue apology to a friend? Things that may not necessarily take long but which affect our equilibrium.

- 4 Hold a regular (same time same place) family meeting to share plans for the week ahead, ask and offer help where needed, set expectations and make agreements about any changes to the usual workings of the household/family.**

Your thoughts / ideas

Daily – Morning:

Establish a personal routine that you can enjoy, and which sets you up well for the day ahead. This is an area of great personal variation, what matters is to consider and select yours carefully, experimenting until it feels great.

Some of the key components might include:

1 Take 30 seconds 'me time' whilst still in bed

- ▶ Upon waking, before even getting out of bed or sitting up, do a 30 second self-check-in (instead of reaching for your phone).
- ▶ Reset your posture, stretch, look for your breath and follow it in and out of your body, and sense how your body feels, where your mind is at.
- ▶ Visualise the day ahead and remind yourself of your intentions for the day ahead.

2 Meditate

- ▶ For some people, the 30 second check-in will extend naturally into sitting up and making space to meditate or practise mindfulness.
- ▶ 3-5 minutes of just sitting and focussing on your breath is recommended (and doable) for even the busiest of professionals and family lives.
- ▶ Apps can be useful, but not a necessity and come with the obvious risk of premature interaction with technology which most of us don't have the self-control to resist.

3 Re-engage with the world on your terms

- ▶ Firstly, with your life partner, family or pets in a loving, kind and patient way. It only takes seconds, minutes at most.
- ▶ Then, mindfully choose when to let the external world and technology back into your life.
- ▶ Consider who or what will determine the course of your day today. How much do you intend or need to be in control of driving your agenda and priorities? How much will you be at the mercy of your emails, phone or other people's needs and expectations? Who and what do you want to dictate the pace and direction of the path that will evolve?

4 Exercise

- ▶ For many (but not everyone), getting your exercise in as a priority before anything else in the day is the only sure fired way to guarantee it happening.
- ▶ Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes fast paced walking and ideally 45-60 minutes of higher intensity exercise 3-5 times per week.
- ▶ Do something you enjoy. If necessary and you can afford it, spend big to make sure it happens. A personal trainer or good gym might save your life.

5 Your non-work roles and responsibilities

- ▶ Most of us have only brief interactions with our family members in the mornings. Oftentimes they can be fraught.
- ▶ Be mindful about how you 'show up' for your family in the small amount of time you are together in the mornings before the day takes hold, and make sure they get the best not worst side of you.
- ▶ Think about the shadow you cast in those short minutes. What are you projecting? Your work identity or how you want your **family** to experience you?

6 Your commute

- ▶ Use this time to consciously recap on your intentions, plans and priorities for the day.
- ▶ What might your team and colleagues need or want from you today? How can you better serve or help them perform better? What leadership shadow will you cast today?
- ▶ The commute is an ideal opportunity for some 'strategic slacking' – some quiet time to think and reflect, to step back and consider the bigger picture and what you might be missing, or place a call to a colleague or manager seeking advice or support.
- ▶ Commuting also presents a good time to place some social calls e.g. calls to elderly parents, siblings or close friends; or attend to personal/school administration.
- ▶ Try not to do 'work' emails, document reviews in transit as error rates are known to be higher, and it's often a false economy. The risk of a confidentiality or data breach is also significant.

7 Positive affirmations

- ▶ In its simplest form, an affirmation is the act of choosing deliberately positive and encouraging thoughts for yourself which, when repeated regularly, help create the new neural pathways necessary for bringing about change that feels hard.
- ▶ Thoughts shape our subsequent feelings and experiences, and that's why it is important to 'mind your mind' i.e. be careful about what "stories" you tell yourself.
- ▶ Negative, pessimistic or unhelpful thoughts have been shown to trigger the sympathetic nervous system (i.e. the stress, anxiety and increased cortisol reaction chain). They can hold us back and make us feel worse.
- ▶ Even if you don't necessarily always believe your self-affirmations, the science tells us to say them anyway. Honest!
- ▶ Affirmations help keep the voice of the inner critic at bay, they are a way we can show self-compassion and ensure we talk to ourselves as though we are someone we like and respect; they challenge the imposter syndrome and for those prone to self-doubt (as many high achievers are) they are essential.

Your thoughts / ideas

Gee, all this before work!

Daily – At work / in the office:

1 Show-up mindfully

- ▶ When you come through the doors, think 'leadership shadow'. Greet your team and colleagues with a smile. Ask after them, consider what might be going on for them, try not to be preoccupied with the first item on your to-do list.

2 Establish a rhythm

- ▶ Act on the information life has already taught you, about when you are at your best and worst naturally throughout the day.
- ▶ Learn about your personal circadian rhythms and dominant chronotype. Put more simply, identify when your mood, energy, concentration or performance tend to peak and drop. Align your challenges and schedule to be in step with your biological disposition – as far as your schedule can possibly accommodate. As the saying goes, 'where there is a will there is a way!'
- ▶ Sure, there will be days you can't manage this, but the key point is to try and set up an operating rhythm that is at least somewhat predictable.
- ▶ You'll feel and perform better, and your team will thank you for greater consistency and predictability.

3 Use distraction and strategic slacking to your advantage

- ▶ Heed your 90-110 minute recurring 'Waking Rest Activity Cycle' – that's your ultradian rhythm. Human beings cycle through a trough and peak of energy every 1-2 hours all day during waking hours.
- ▶ Deliberately plan distractions or mini energisers into your day and use these as small strategically placed interventions to avoid sapping your willpower or draining your batteries completely. Give yourself regular (even if tiny) mental breaks from the intensity and pressure of your daily cognitive load.
- ▶ Before starting back on task, check how you're tracking against your intentions and priority goals for the day. Adjust as required. Be realistic.
- ▶ Organise a meeting over lunch, coffee or walk – you need all these things anyway, so incorporating them with a colleague makes sense.

4 Befriend (evidence-backed) productivity hacks that work for you

- ▶ Keep lists on a brightly coloured pad or somewhere you will see them – the secret is your lists or actions need to somehow stand out, not blend into your other files.
- ▶ Make your alarm clock on your phone another personal exec assistant – set end times, not just start times for all your activities.
- ▶ Find a system that stops interruptions and distractions when you need to focus, and where their impact is most damaging to your concentration and productivity. Move offices, floors, close doors. Hide if you must.
- ▶ Establish boundaries with your team, partners and even clients about when you are, and are not available or interruptible.
- ▶ Delegate early, empower and be clear about what you want in the way of progress updates and outputs from those around you upon whom your success is dependent.

5 Incorporate regular pauses

- ▶ Set reminders on your phone; get into the habit of taking regular 30 second self-check-ins. Catch your breath, exhale deeply, belly breathe for slow counts.
- ▶ Take a few minutes to 'Reflect, Rest and Reset' in the moments before you need to move from your current emotional state and level of preoccupation with what has come previously in your day and the markedly different contexts that lie ahead.
- ▶ Make a deliberate choice to transition your mental and emotional state before catapulting straight into your next commitment.
- ▶ Be conscious of where you want or need to show up differently and have a different tone or impact from the previous interactions in your day. For example, pausing long enough to adjust and settle after coming out of a disappointing client meeting or a difficult staff conversation, before jumping straight into a team celebration, interview, giving a presentation or even arriving home to family.
- ▶ Get up and move every 30-45 minutes. Walk round to see a colleague, take some stairs, do some desk stretches, fill up some water. Take a bathroom break!
- ▶ Make time for a proper break to eat lunch. Eat it mindfully. Choose wisely.
- ▶ Take 15 minutes to get out of the office at least once a day, see the outdoors.

Your thoughts / ideas

Daily – Evening:

Establish a simple rhythm with some routine and rituals that reflect what you need and what is important to you in life at this present moment.

Consider incorporating the following:

1 Winding down and switching off

- ▶ As your workday comes to an end, practice similar techniques for transitioning (along the lines above) on your commute and/or when at home.
- ▶ Get into the habit of regularly taking a few minutes to ‘Reflect, Rest and Reset’ to help you be more mindful about how you are thinking, feeling and behaving.
- ▶ Be mindful of trying to be less distracted when you are with family, and able to bring your attention and focus once more to matters other than those in your professional life.

2 Positive reflection and gratitude (something as simple as keeping a running 'Note' on your phone or use one of many apps). Do this even on the bad days!

- ▶ What's gone positively for you today?
- ▶ What are you thankful for today?
- ▶ What was pleasant or fun today?

3 Intention setting (as above, writing it down somewhere will be more effective)

- ▶ How do you want to show up at work tomorrow?
- ▶ Is there an insight, thought bubble, an interaction or worry from today you want to follow up on tomorrow?
- ▶ If tomorrow is to be a good day, where will you choose to place your energy and focus?
- ▶ Write down your priorities somewhere obvious – reminder, brightly coloured sticky etc.

4 Device addiction/FOMO discipline

- ▶ Ask yourself if you are using your technology out of mere habit or because there is genuine cause to justify it being the focus of your attention in this moment.
- ▶ Consciously plan and choose when you want to switch off, relax and go to bed this evening.
- ▶ Be mindful of your plan for technology downtime and the need for limits to protect against mental ill-health, burnout and loss of perspective.

5 Plan for tomorrow

- ▶ Look out what you need for tomorrow, the evening before: clothes, gym gear, files, reminders, travel schedules, key contact details/phone numbers etc.
- ▶ Consider and plan tomorrow's non-work roles and responsibilities and how best to attend to these or get more help if required to stop work overshadowing everything else.
- ▶ Go to bed having set yourself up for an easy and smooth start.

6 Bedtime ritual

- ▶ Do something pleasant for yourself every evening as part of your ‘wind down and get ready to sleep well’ ritual; even if this is just for a few minutes.
- ▶ Identify all the constructive/healthy options that appeal.
- ▶ Try ‘habit bundling’ to help nudge your behaviours in the right direction e.g. take something you have down pat (e.g. brushing teeth) and use this as the trigger to introduce something else positive (such as a positive reflection or affirmation).
- ▶ Focus on creating some tranquillity – a warm shower, a foot soak, phone a friend, light a candle, watch a favourite TV show, cuddle up with your children or partner, speak to the dog, play with the cat, meditate in your favourite part of the garden/house, get to bed 10 mins early and pick up a non-work book.
- ▶ Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep.
- ▶ If you can’t settle or are restless and sleeping badly, one of these may work for you:
 - **Visualisation.** Go to your ‘happy place’. A favourite holiday or place where you feel most relaxed and at peace, and gently call it up in your mind, savouring the details – the visuals, the sounds, smells etc.
 - **Belly breathing.** Follow long breath exhalations all the way out of your body. For some people, counting the inhalations and exhalations, holding to a count of 4, 7 or longer works. But not for everyone.
 - **Write it down then keep it tight shut.** Get up and write down what’s bothering you, what’s on your mind. Don’t DO anything about it, just write down your thoughts, capture your feelings and head straight back to bed. Put a lid on it, batten it down until the morning and keep it tight shut. If your mind wanders back and tries to pick at it again, gently escort your mind back to your breath/happy place/counting.
 - **Simply focus on being comfortable,** warm and safe in bed, enjoy the sensation of stretching out and just try to accept that it looks like it may not be a great night’s sleep. It happens. Not the end of the world.
 - **Don’t lie there panicking** over the clock ticking down.
 - **Get up,** move rooms, make a herbal tea and read an easy book. When you feel yourself sleepy again, head back to bed and see what happens.
 - **Cuddle up** to your partner/dog/cat and focus on the sensation of being close and loved.
- ▶ For chronic sleep issues, go and see your doctor. Hormones may be an issue, or perhaps there’s something else physical going on – reflux, blood pressure, pain. A short course of sleep medication can help break the cycle and re-establish better patterns. Melatonin prescribed in the right dosage and quality can be enormously effective in ensuring we ‘stay under’ as we go through the sleep cycles in and out of deep sleep.

Your thoughts / ideas