



North West &
Northern Ireland

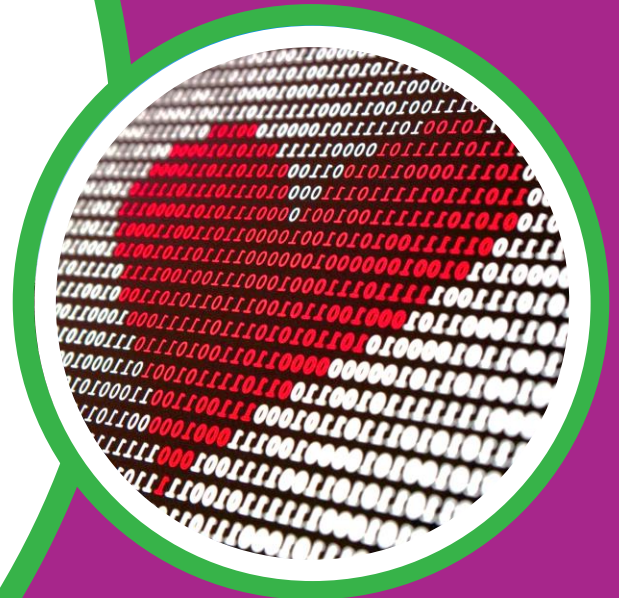


UniTasterDays

Wellbeing at work

How to protect your
health and happiness
during your busy seasons

Simon Fairbanks
Head of Community Engagement



About Simon

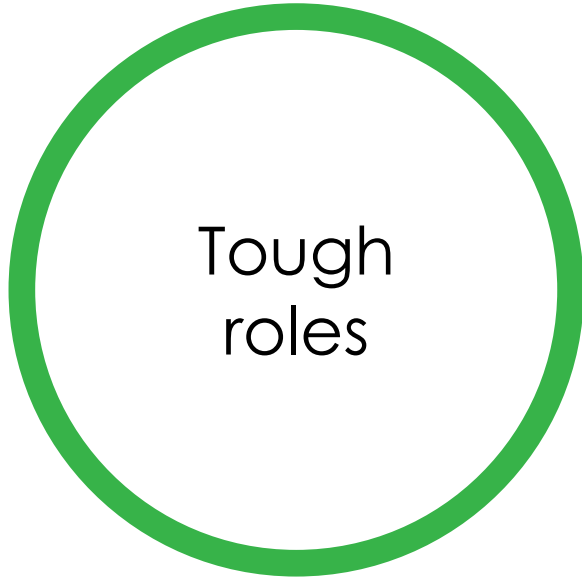


Wellbeing

The education sector is powered
by people... and people are
powered by their wellbeing



The problem



Constantly fluctuating...

- Cities
- Hours
- Methods
- Audiences
- Environments
- Bases

Mad March

The period in March when student recruitment professionals are required to travel the UK to attend a high number of university exhibitions



Mad March 2025

UCAS

- Manchester
- Exeter
- Lisburn
- London
- Worcester

UK University Search

- Surrey
- Birmingham
- Leeds
- Leicester
- Sheffield
- Bristol
- London
- Brighton
- Manchester

Just-As-Bad June

The period in June when student recruitment professionals are required to travel the UK to attend a high number of university exhibitions



Just-As-Bad June 2025

UCAS

- Maidstone
- East London
- Sheffield
- Norwich
- Ipswich
- Colchester
- Newcastle
- Hartpury
- Bedford
- Liverpool
- Leeds
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Birmingham
- Hull
- Lincoln
- Bournemouth

UK University Search

- London
- Oxford

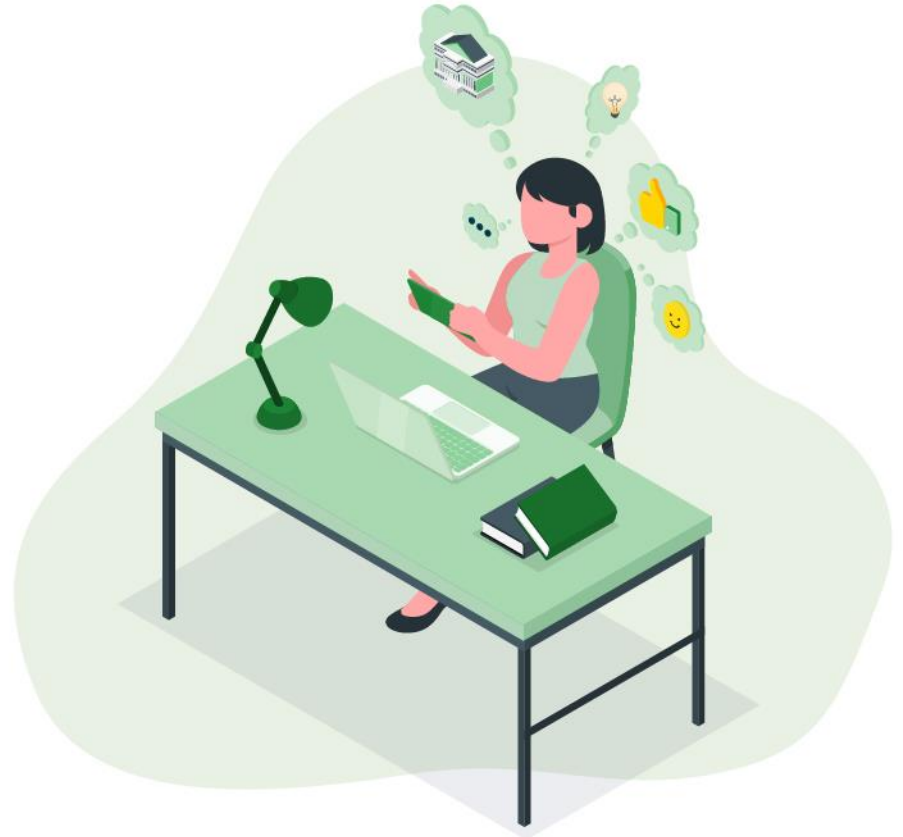
Meanwhile...

It's not just those of us on the road.
Our colleagues back on campus
have their own busy seasons



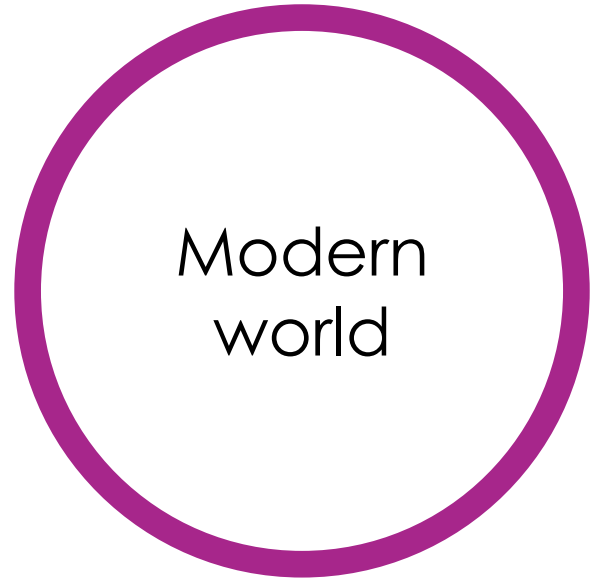
Busy periods

- Joyless January
- Spiralling Spring
- Jaded July
- Awful August
- Exhaustion Autumn
- No-No-Noooo November
- Devastating December



The other problem

- In 2024, we are surrounded by temptations and limitations which impact on our wellbeing
- These are hard to recognise, harder to escape, and even harder to overcome



Low-grade addictions

Sugar

Caffeine

Late nights

Streaming

Scrolling

Posting

Shopping

Vaping

Snacking

Gossiping

Browsing

Gaming

Boasting

Venting

Gambling

Emails

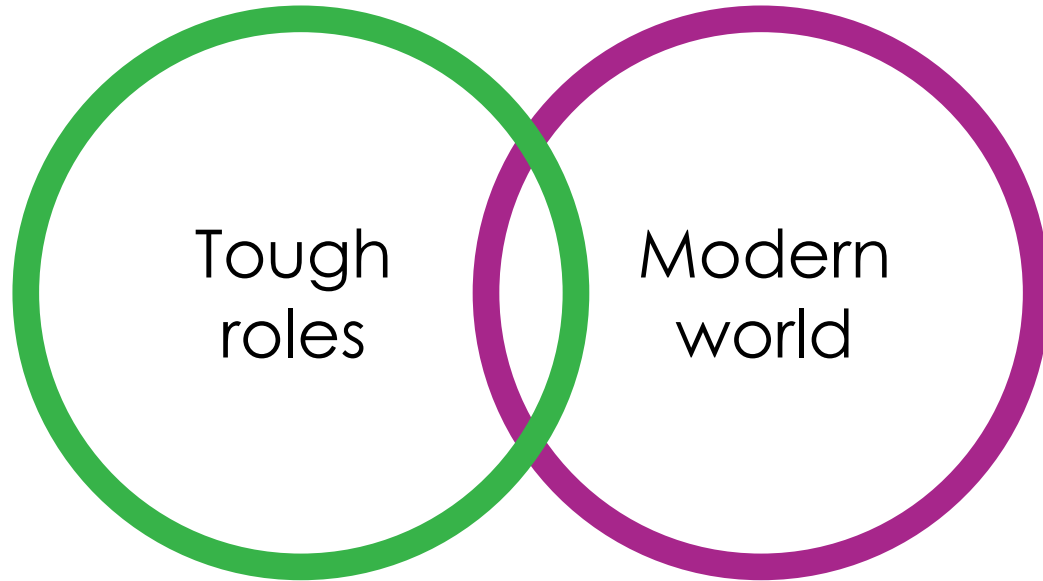
Takeaways

UPFs

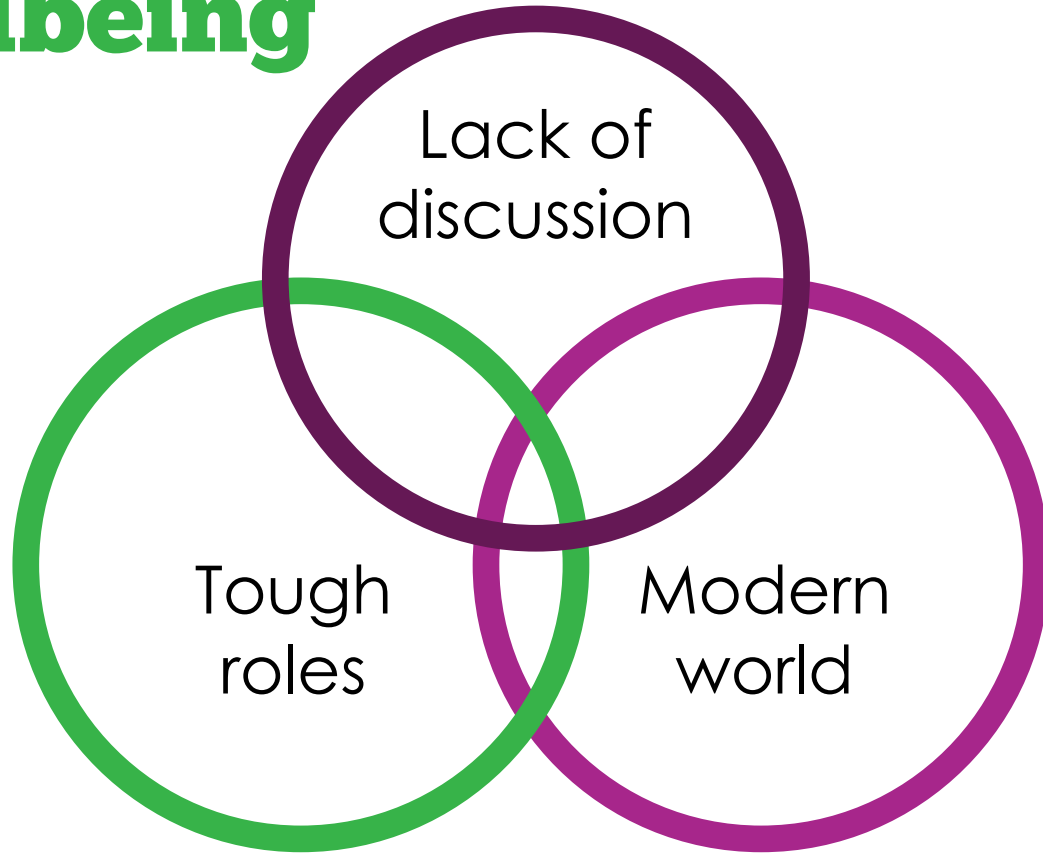
Casual drinks

Vanity

Unwellbeing

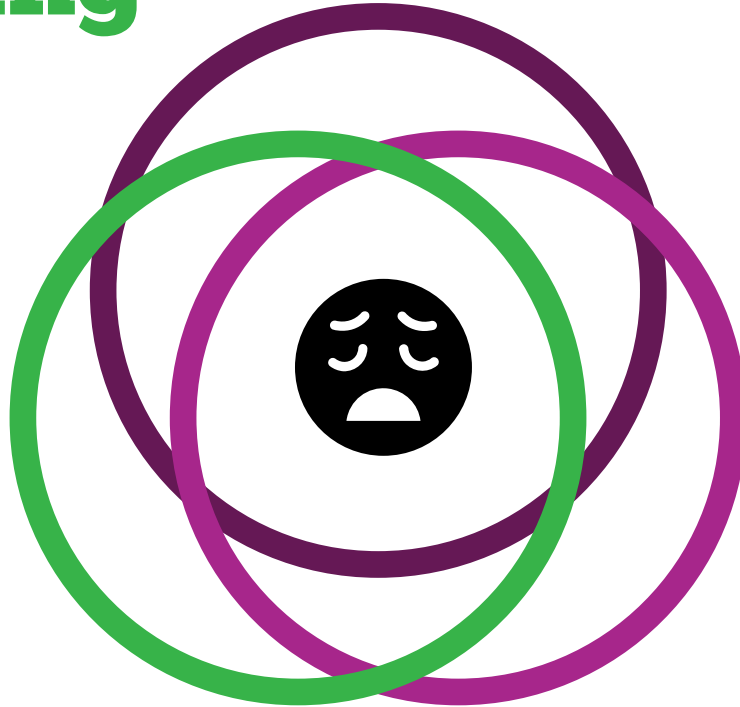


Unwellbeing



Unwellbeing

- Stress
- Panic
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Burnout
- Depression
- Overwhelm



Overwhelm

The fact or state of being overwhelmed,
for instance, “I took sick leave for 6 months
because I was suffering from overwhelm”



Let's take control



We can't
change
our roles



We can't
change
our world



We can
discuss our
wellbeing

The plan for today

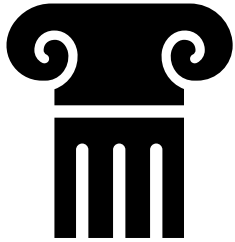
- The four pillars of health
- Understanding each pillar
- Evaluating your own pillars
- Setting yourself a wellbeing goal
- Achieving your wellbeing goal



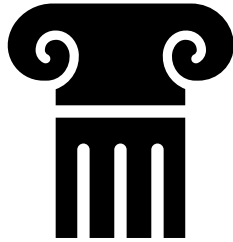
The four pillars of health



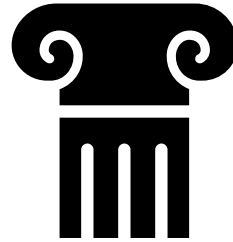
Sleep



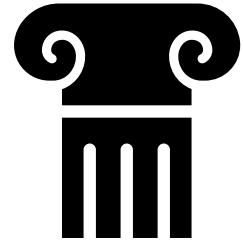
Food



Movement



Mind



1 Sleep

A foundational pillar of good health, which in turn will improve all other pillars





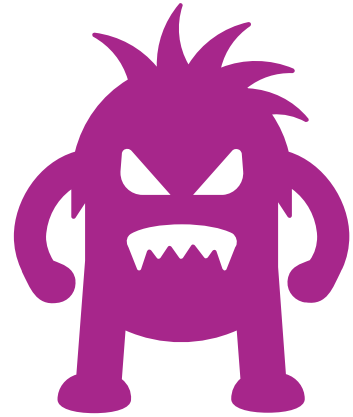
“

Sleep is the elixir of life. It is the single most effective thing you can do to reset your body and brain

**Professor Matthew Walker
University of California**

If we don't sleep...

- Less empathy
- Increased irritability
- Reduced cognitive performance
- Lower capacity to form memories
- Inability to pick up on social signals
- Failure to process information accurately
- Reduced sense of humour 🤪





“

If you want to come up with innovative solutions to complex problems, a night of sleep achieves that

Professor Russell Foster
University of Oxford

Sleep disruptors

- Stress
- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Eating late
- Exercising late
- Cognitive stimulation
- Artificial light



Too blue

The blue light pouring into our eyeballs tricks our brains into staying awake or half-awake





“

Sleep is
our only
competitor

Reed Hastings
CEO, Netflix

Digital detox deep dive



Answer Yes or No to the following questions.
Keep a record of your number of Yes answers
and you'll end up with a score from 0 to 10

Answer Yes or No

Do you look at a screen before getting out of bed?

Do you access more than 5 social media platforms a day?

Do you spend most of your working day at a screen?

Do you spend most of your leisure time at a screen?

Do you growl when the Wi-Fi goes down?

Answer Yes or No

Do you look at a screen after getting into bed at night?

Do you use a device whilst watching TV?

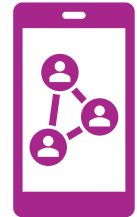
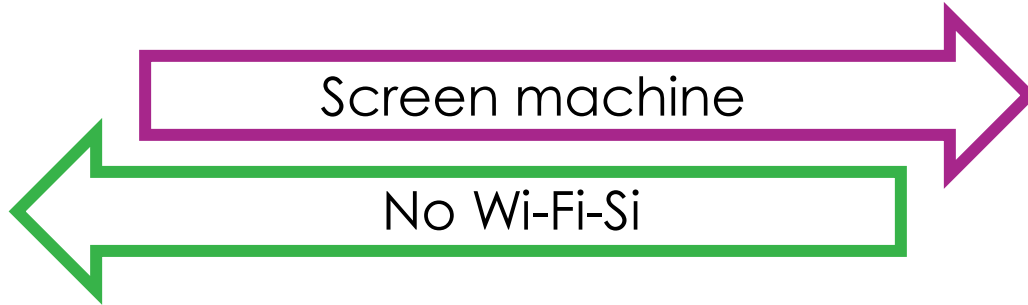
Do you check work emails in the evening?

Do you check work emails on holiday?

Has it been more than 30 days since you read a book?

Your digital habits

How many times did you answer yes?



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Sleep health



Avoid late night disruptors like food, drinks, exercise, screens, inboxes



Allow yourself a sleep opportunity of 9 hours, including drifting off time



Establish a sleep routine and replicate the same conditions every night

2 Food

Every meal is an opportunity to fuel your wellbeing or send it crashing in the wrong direction





“

You can't
out-train
a bad diet

Joe Wicks
The Body Coach

Diet deluge

Atkins

16/8

Vegan

Vegetarian

5/2

Keto

Plant-based

Omnivore

Pescatarian

Paleo

Whole foods

Gluten-free

Warrior

Low carb

No carb

Ultra-low fat

Tee-total

High protein

Carnivore

No sugar



“

I'm a Level 5
vegan. I won't eat
anything which
casts a shadow

Jesse Grass
The Simpsons
Episode 252

Food health

Good practice

- Whole foods
- Lots of water
- Balanced diet
- Sensible portions
- Vices in moderation
- Careful with caffeine

And yet...

- We're all built differently
- Try varying what you eat
- Try varying when you eat
- Reflect on your energy
- Reflect on your mood
- Find what works for you

3 Movement

Exercise is a catalyst for a positive chain reaction of chemicals throughout your mind and body





“

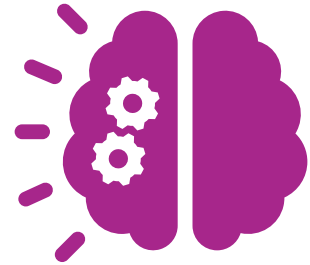
Sitting in front of a computer all day is killing you and killing your work. We need to move, to feel like we're making something with our bodies, not just our heads

Austin Kleon
Author of *Steal Like An Artist*

Movement magic

30 minutes of exercise a day will give you...

- Better focus
- Greater energy
- Higher motivation
- New neural pathways and brain cells
- Better short-term memory: pre-frontal cortex
- Better long-term memory and imagination: hippocampus





“

Exercise releases a bubble bath of feel-good chemicals

Dr Wendy Suzuki
New York University
Author of *Healthy Brain, Happy Life*

Movement



Walk in nature

Escaping into natural surroundings improves our physical and mental wellbeing



Sweat in buckets

Movement and exercise floods our bodies with endorphins, and develops focus



Delight in play

Rediscover the joy of playing and goofing around to nurture our heads and hearts



“

**Who doesn't have
five minutes?**

**Dr Rangan Chatterjee
GP, author, podcaster**

Hotel HIIT workouts

- Minimal space
- No equipment
- Low impact
- Intense
- Short
- Fun



4 Mind

Our mind powers our personality, creativity, and ability. It need ongoing maintenance like any complex tool



Pillars assemble!



Sleep

Sleep will improve your mood, empathy, memory, humour, and cognitive function



Food

Every meal is an opportunity to improve your energy and emotional state



Movement

Exercise releases feel-good chemicals and helps form new neurological pathways

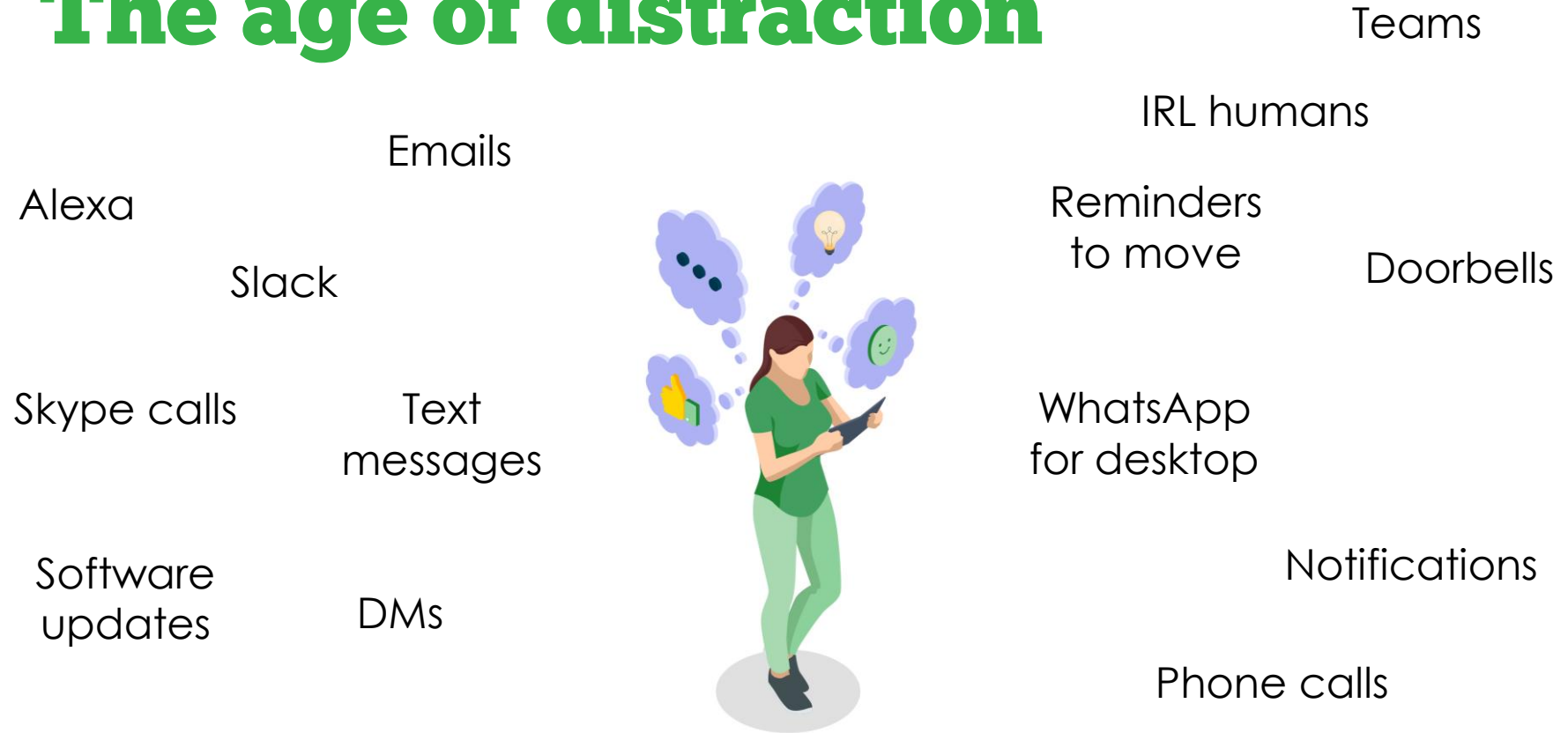


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We're living in
a culture that is
constantly pouring
itching powder on
us all the time

Johann Hari
Author of *Stolen Focus*

The age of distraction



Digital detox



More focus

Reducing the barrage of emails, messages, and notifications allows us deep focus



More memory

The constant switching between feeds, tabs, apps stop our minds forming long-term memory



More creativity

We need deep focus on a single task to connect ideas into original creative thoughts

Mind health

- Plan your time
- Practice self-care
- Make time for things that recharge your battery
- Surround yourself with close friends and family
- Ask for support if you need it
- Be honest



“Protect your wellbeing during Mad March”
by Faye Davenport, Practitioners’ Guide 2025

Negativity bias

As a species, we are predisposed to look for the worst in any situation. It's a survival skill that now manifests as toxic negativity



Journalling

A reflective conversation with yourself

Settle down with a notebook each evening

Answer these 3 questions:

- What went well today?
- What could I do differently tomorrow?
- What did I do for someone else today?

Journalling before bed reduces worries, allowing better sleep



Reclaim your wellbeing

A model to help us take control of our wellbeing in the workplace (and every other place)



Reclaim your wellbeing

1. Evaluate your pillars
2. Set yourself an objective
3. Establish a routine to support your objective
4. Practice your routine before your busy period
5. Continue with your routine during your busy period

Evaluate your pillars



Imagine a typical day during your busy period at work. List everything you do during that day in order. Reflect on how you feel at each step. Finally, rate each of your pillars from 0 to 5.

For example...

Activity	Mood
Arrive at Premier Inn after a long drive	Exhausted
Late night dinner and two beers	Bloated
Catch up on emails before bed	Wired
Fall asleep watching TV on my phone	Disturbed
Wake up after disrupted sleep	Irritable
HIIT workout in hotel room	Energised
Breakfast (x2) of coffee, pastries, fry-up	Sluggish

For example...



Sleep

2/5



Food

1/5



Movement

4/5



Mind

3/5

Set yourself an objective



Identify your weakest pillar based on your evaluation. Set yourself a single SMART objective to improve that pillar.

For example...

Food
1/5



SMART

Ask yourself...

Specific

Is it detailed? What, who, how?

Measurable

Is it possible to measure success?

Achievable

Is it feasible, actionable, realistic?

Relevant

Is it relevant to your wellbeing needs?

Time-Bound

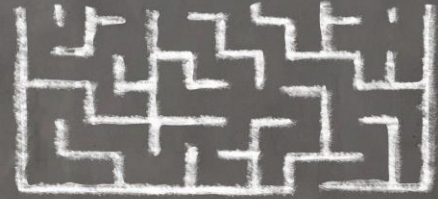
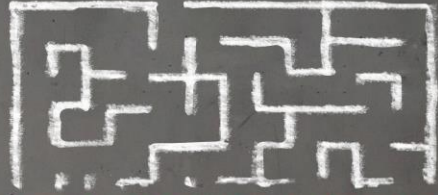
Is it accountable with set times and deadlines?

I will eat a small healthy breakfast of porridge, fruit, and decaf coffee each morning before a HE fair.

Establish a routine



Remember your SMART objective. Remove barriers, distractions, excuses. Make it easy for yourself. No convenience is too small.



“

Keep it simple,
so you'll keep
doing it.

Steve Krug
Author of Don't Make Me Think

Practice your routine



It needs to become a habit before your busy period begins, otherwise you are facing two challenges at once. Embrace consistency. Never miss a day. Sticker charts help!

Continue with your routine



When busy season arrives, keep going with your routine. Take your sticker chart with you. Start an accountability WhatsApp group. Promise yourself a reward for getting through it.

Takeaways

- Prioritise sleep
- Eat the food that works for you
- Move, explore, sweat, play
- Escape your screens
- Set one objective
- Build a routine
- You got this



Intentional

Be intentional with your habits,
your relationship with the four pillars,
and your priorities around wellbeing



Thank you

**Questions, comments, ideas,
suggestions, criticisms, stories,
applause, standing ovation,
LinkedIn connection requests**

