

## Downtime over digital overload: how to find the balance when working from home

Remote and hybrid working have brought real benefits, including greater flexibility and easier collaboration across teams. They have also made it harder for many people to fully switch off when the workday ends. Emails, messaging platforms and mobile notifications help work move quickly, but they can also keep work in view after hours. That can make genuine downtime harder to protect.

Time away from work plays an important role in maintaining energy, focus and overall wellbeing. Short bursts of stress are not always harmful and can help people respond under pressure. The challenge comes when stress becomes constant. Staying connected after hours, working longer days and struggling to disengage can gradually reduce opportunities to recover.

Over time, unclear boundaries between work and personal life can drain energy, reduce concentration and leave people feeling less refreshed. Research shows that many Australians work outside their scheduled hours, including during annual leave, suggesting time off does not always provide rest and recovery.



A more sustainable approach is to build habits that support both performance and wellbeing. Small changes to availability, notifications and recovery time can make a meaningful difference. Without those boundaries, stress can begin to show up in several ways:

- ▶ **Physical signs:** increased heart rate or palpitations, fatigue, gastrointestinal upset, reduced libido, and changes in appetite.
- ▶ **Emotional impact:** anxiety, low mood, irritability, frustration, or feelings of overwhelm.
- ▶ **Cognitive effects:** reduced concentration, poorer memory, slower decision-making, and mental overload.
- ▶ **Changes in coping behaviours:** increased reliance on alcohol, medications or other substances to relax or sleep.





## Practical strategies to disconnect

- ▶ **Mute notifications and limit email checking:** set “tech-free” time daily and restrict inbox reviews to specific windows.
- ▶ **Clarify working hours:** communicate availability to your team and use out-of-office messages or delayed send features where possible.
- ▶ **Plan non-work activities:** schedule time with family, friends, or community commitments to create separation from work.
- ▶ **Recharge intentionally:** exercise, read, spend time outdoors, or pursue a hobby—small daily recovery routines can make a meaningful difference.

Disconnecting from work is an important part of sustaining health, performance and long-term wellbeing. By creating clearer boundaries, reducing after-hours digital engagement and prioritising restorative activities, people can recover better, reduce stress and return to work more focused, energised and resilient.



## Sri Lankan Beef Bone Soup

*This hearty Lankan beef bone soup combines protein-rich beef, lentils and vegetables for a satisfying meal full of comforting flavour.*

### Sri Lankan Beef Bone Soup

### For the soup

- ▶ 1/2 tbsp curry powder
- ▶ 1/2 tbsp black pepper powder
- ▶ 1 tsp cumin powder
- ▶ 8 shallots, peeled and roughly chopped
- ▶ 8 garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped
- ▶ 1 inch ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- ▶ 1 sprigs curry leaves
- ▶ 1 tbsp tomato paste
- ▶ 1 tsp turmeric powder
- ▶ 2 tsp coriander powder
- ▶ 2 tbsp coconut oil
- ▶ Prepared soup base
- ▶ 1 kg bone-in beef pieces, with some meat attached
- ▶ Salt, to taste
- ▶ 2.5–3 litres water, or enough to cover the beef well
- ▶ 1 cans lentils, drained and rinsed (400g)
- ▶ 1.5 carrots, chopped
- ▶ 1.5 potatoes, chopped
- ▶ 1 cup green beans, chopped
- ▶ Fresh coriander leaves, to garnish

### Method

- ▶ Add the raw curry powder, black peppercorns, cumin seeds, shallots, garlic, ginger and curry leaves to a mortar and pestle or small food processor. Pound or grind everything into a coarse paste.
- ▶ Cook the ingredients in coconut oil with tomato paste until fragrant.
- ▶ Add beef, turmeric, coriander and salt, brown lightly.
- ▶ Add water and simmer for 1.5 hours.
- ▶ Stir in lentils, potatoes and carrots.
- ▶ Add green beans and other vegetables, cook until tender.
- ▶ Adjust seasoning, garnish with coriander, and serve hot with rice.



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