



and metabolic – I self-diagnosed as suffering from at least three – with practical steps to resolve the issues. Time and again Geys returns to the idea that our bodies must be in balance to even consider training. The idea of combating stress with working out is one he takes particular issue. Supposedly it clears your mind but in reality it is “an added assault on the body”.

“When you give an already fatigued body even more stressors, in the long run, you inevitably suffer from exhaustion and burnout,” he says.

Geys is also emphatic about the importance of hormone balance in the body. “When people feel they are not energised enough they go to fitness as a solution. They assume the body is in balance so they start immediately doing a lot of training. There is a misconception that training gives people more energy. In most cases it’s just a rush of adrenaline that they get.

A dearth or excess of any hormone in the body can lead to problems, if you have a lot of adrenaline, your body exists in a fight or flight mode, this slows digestion, you need to eat smaller portions and it may disturb your sleep,” he explains. Sleep is crucial to the method. As a father of two, with a third little sleep thief due next month, Geys he knows first-hand the importance of a good night’s sleep. “The first question I ask when a client visits me is ‘how is your sleep?’”

“Can you fall asleep between 10 and 30 minutes? If people have a problem with that, it’s a sign of mental fatigue. Or that perhaps your body isn’t producing enough melatonin to fall asleep.”

“If you’re lying awake staring at the ceiling at four or five in the morning, restless and unable to go back to sleep, you’re suffering from adrenaline. It means that the load of the day before was too high.”

The sports physiotherapist is big on keeping an eye on our ‘load’ be it physical or mental. He believes that the culture of achieving and pushing ourselves in all areas is depleting our body’s reserves. “Social media is a good motivator for people,” he says. “But it also puts a lot of pressure on people.” The price we’re paying for not allowing ourselves ample time for rest and recovery is severe, after all nearly 70pc of his 8,000 test subjects were suffering



Author and sports physiotherapist, **Jef Geys**, and inset, his book, *‘Rest is the New Sport’*



fatigue of some description.

“Biological cost’ is the phrase he uses to describe how not listening to our bodies is damaging our long-term health.

“When we talk about work or training, it’s not a question of can you

complete the working day or run the 10k, but rather if you do it, what is the impact on the body? What does the effort do to the body?”

“I wanted to make people more aware of their bodies and give them practical solutions,” says Geys, and while *Rest is the New Sport* is full of sound research that backs up his points, it retains a sympathetic tone.

During his years as a competitive cyclist, his motto was “the harder you train, the better you become”. Now his mantra is: “train hard, rest harder”. Definitely a more attractive alternative.

■ *Rest is the New Sport* will be available from November 21. Visit primefit.be for more information.

5 signs of burnout

- It’s taking more effort to do simple daily activities. This is the high biological cost in action. You may also find that your sleep is disrupted.
- You’re more emotional than usual, quick to cry and unable to keep anger in check.
- You may experience a loss of appetite, dry mouth, burning eyes, light sensitivity, and headaches – a perma-hangover basically.
- You are unable to concentrate and find you cannot finish work tasks.
- You are suffering with general apathy.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

- **Eat your way to recovery** – Choose complex carbs as their fibre minimises blood glucose spikes and helps you feel satisfied. Eat regularly and abide by the old adage: ‘breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a beggar’.
- **Sleep your way to recovery** – Taking naps when you can puts the brakes on your stress hormone and help the body to recover.
- **Chill your way to recovery** – Protect yourself from stress by taking regular breaks to allow for mental relaxation.

‘Can one ever really detach from work?’

FOR 36 hours last week I was without any mobile phone contact when mine broke down completely. Well, not any – but let’s say my contact was very limited. Being an emergency situation, I borrowed a pay-as-you-go model belonging to my husband.

There were no contacts listed and the €20 top-up allowed me all of ten phone calls in that time. I was travelling down the country to a conference and normally I take advantage of these journeys to call friends or catch up on work. The office doesn’t fold just because I’m out of town. So my usual habit of dealing promptly with calls from patient, their relatives or members of my team was foiled.

Not only was my work hindered, but it was very lonely time. I couldn’t telephone family or friend to chat about trivialities or even to discuss more serious worries.

I lost my way when I took a wrong turn off the motorway and I had no road-map in the car. And the old phone did not have “google maps” so I resorted to the ancient method of asking directions in garages and from people walking the country roads. This extended my journal time appreciably. The farmers and walkers appeared to want to chat to somebody apparently so quaint that she didn’t have a iPhone.

The problem has now, of course, been resolved with my new upgraded model. But I began to appreciate, perhaps more immediately than ever before, how imperceptibly a modern, technology gadget has changed our lives irrevocably.

They allow us to work when we might otherwise be reading a newspaper during working hours, or even snoozing in a comfortable train en route to a meeting. The possibility of contacting anybody in any country on a car journey allows tremendous flexibility and improves the speed of transactions. This has economic implications.

They also allow us to deal with problems that present in the workplace. In my case, acute mental health issues, or worries that families may have about a relapsing relative. This greatly enhances the service they get and inevitably benefits them in times of crisis.

Modern mobiles also allow us to deal with such basic needs as get-

ting directions or identifying toilets or coffee shops on our journey.

But the downside of such accessibility is that the work-life balance is tilted in the wrong direction. Can one ever detach from work? And even those who have designated work mobiles during office hours will still be contactable on their private devices by at least some of their colleagues. And those with a strong work ethic will inevitably be tempted to use their mobiles outside of routine working hours.

If you listen to conversations on trains or buses it is clear that most of these are trivial and are about the day’s grocery shopping or who you met for tea or what film you’re heading to. And people have an incessant need to talk – hardly surprising since we are social beings. But we should also be comfortable with silence to enjoy the things about us, be it nature, architecture or simply, tranquillity and the contentment found in silence. But our mobiles have stepped into what many regard as a social void and allow us not to “stand and stare”.

Some psychologists suggest that the fear of being out of cellular

phone contact should be regarded as a psychiatric disorder and that it be called “nomophobia”.

Phobia is a misuse of the word since there is no fear of any specific item but rather a type of anxiety at its absence. This, I would argue, is a typical example of the

tentacles of medicalisation extending to what most of us would regard as bad habits, albeit with positive aspects also.

And while psychological factors may be associated with the over-use of the mobile – such as those with low self-esteem using it to obtain reassurance or extroverts overusing it in a social way – the same could be said for landlines. And for some who rely on their mobile for work-related matters being anxious when it is unavailable or lost, this is no more inappropriate than being anxious when ones office diary goes missing.

I still believe that next to the wheel, the mobile phone is one of the best devices “man” has made, and I would not want to be without mine.

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