

Mental fatigue at work: Six ways to recharge

Adaptive module

~20 min

Mental fatigue is not just a feeling: prolonged cognitive work causes glutamate to build up in the prefrontal cortex, as research at Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris has shown. At a time of constant demands, this module treats recharging as a professional skill, on three levels: six practical, research-backed ways, from micro-breaks to social connection; clarity about what drains energy day to day; and defocusing, moments of reconnecting with oneself outside the mind.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Build in micro-breaks and digital disconnection that make for deeper work, from the Pomodoro rhythm to notification-free time slots.
- 02 Recharge body and mind with a change of scene: walk, rethink your space, breathe—three minutes are enough to calm the nervous system.
- 03 Cultivate social breaks and deep ways of recharging outside work, provided you truly come back restored.
- 04 Go to the source: spot where energy leaks (activities, relationships, thoughts) and practice defocusing outside the mind.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to finish the day with energy to spare, even when it has been a full one.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Pomodoro Technique – Francesco Cirillo
- Flow – concept popularized by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- Cardiac coherence – David O'Hare
- Defocusing / mindfulness – Afthonios method

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Oppezzo & Schwartz (Stanford) – “Give Your Ideas Some Legs” study: walking increases creative output by up to about 60% compared with sitting
- Harvard Study of Adult Development – longitudinal study spanning more than 80 years: the quality of relationships is the leading predictor of long-term well-being and health
- Mathias Pessiglione (Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital) – Current Biology: prolonged cognitive work leads to a buildup of glutamate in the prefrontal cortex, associated with mental fatigue
- PLOS ONE – systematic review and meta-analysis (“Give me a break!”): significant benefits of micro-breaks for vitality and for reducing fatigue