

Worrying about work when you are not at work

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Planning how to resolve incomplete work tasks can help employees switch off from work and enjoy their evenings.

That is one of the conclusions of research by Dr Brandon Smit from Ball State University, Indiana, published in the *Journal of Organizational and Occupational Psychology* today, Thursday 12 November 2015.

In a study of people's ability to detach themselves from work, Dr Smit used an online questionnaire to survey 103 employees pursuing 1127 work goals.

Overall, he observed they had more difficulty detaching from work tasks that had been left uncompleted, especially when these were important to them.

However, one group of employees were encouraged to create plans by writing down where, when, and how they would complete these unfinished tasks. Dr Smit found that they detached themselves from work more effectively than [employees](#) who did not create plans.

Dr Smit said: "If you have an important deadline looming on the horizon, for example, your brain will keep nudging you with reminders, which makes it difficult to get a break from [work demands](#). It seems like we have the ability to 'turn off', or at least 'turn down', these [cognitive processes](#) by planning out where, when, and how goals will be accomplished.

"This is primarily true for people that already have a difficult time forgetting about work during leisure because their job plays a central role in their life. For them, a simple change to their [work](#) routine like task planning near the end of the workday would likely make a real difference."

Provided by British Psychological Society

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