Your Brain on Gmail

In a study conducted on British government workers, reading and sending messages corresponded with increased heart rate, blood pressure, and levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Do you ever get a sinking feeling when you open your inbox? Email often presents a wide range of stressors: a boss’s urgent request, a family member’s passive-aggressive note, a client’s rejection of a proposal, a colleague who is out sick. Just keeping up with the volume of electronic communication can be daunting. Try these small things to help you from becoming overwhelmed by your technology.

1. Start your day with a routine of self-care. Eat a nourishing breakfast, go for a run, meditate, take the dog for a morning walk.
2. Separate your personal inbox from your work inbox. Consider creating additional folders to keep you focused, and on task so you don’ get pulled in too many different directions.
3. Create a default template for the types of messages you send often. Adopt a style that is friendly but minimalist.
4. Take a breather before you respond to stressful messages. Space them out between the easy ones, or even between a text to a loved one.
5. Step away from your screen often. Take a quick walk, use the restroom, or indulge in a cup of tea or coffee periodically throughout the day.

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