

EVENING SWITCH OFF GUIDE

THE CHALLENGE

- For many leaders, the meetings stop but the body does not. The brain stays alert, scanning for unfinished tasks. Heart rate stays slightly raised. Sleep feels light, thoughts keep looping, and rest does not quite restore you.
- This is not a lack of discipline. It is biology. When your body does not get a clear signal that the day is over, it keeps running on work energy. That is the tired-but-wired state so many describe.

THE SCIENCE

Your body runs on a simple pattern: stress, then recovery.

Every challenge, a meeting, a deadline, a hard call, releases stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol to help you respond. The body is designed to move, breathe, and then settle again once the challenge is done.

Most of us never finish that loop. We move straight from one demand to the next, so the chemistry never clears. That's why, even after you stop working, your body still feels like it's on.

Here's what helps it reset:

1. Complete the stress cycle

After a big day, your body needs a way to release the leftover stress chemicals. Movement does this best, a walk, stretching, or even a few deep breaths. It's less about effort and more about giving the body proof that it's safe again.

2. Work with your body clock

Your system follows a daily rhythm. Cortisol peaks in the morning to get you going and should taper off as evening comes. Too much caffeine, bright light, or late-night emails flatten that curve. Turning lights down, avoiding screens close to bed, and finishing focused work earlier in the night help your body remember what time it is.

3. Sleep is repair

During deep sleep, your brain does its housekeeping, flushing waste and re-setting emotional balance. That process works best when you've truly powered down first. Good sleep isn't just about hours in bed; it's about how ready your body is to let go. Alcohol and late Caffeine delay or even stop this natural cleanse.

WHY IT MATTERS

Human bodies were never built for constant stress. Our stress response evolved for short bursts of danger, followed by safety and rest. Run from the tiger, rest a little....

Modern work flips that pattern. Notifications, deadlines and decisions keep the body in a low-grade “on” state that never fully ends.

When stress stays high for too long, the chemistry that once helped you focus starts to work against you. Cortisol and adrenaline narrow attention, raise blood pressure and suppress digestion and immune repair. Over time, this creates fatigue, inflammation and the kind of background tension many leaders mistake for motivation.

The brain feels it too. Sleep is when neural waste is cleared and memories are stored. When you cut sleep short or sleep lightly, the brain does not get time to repair its wiring. The result is slower thinking, weaker emotional control and poorer judgment. Even one week of restricted sleep can lower cognitive performance as much as being slightly intoxicated.

Long-term, chronic stress and poor sleep erode the very skills leadership depends on: self-control, empathy and strategic perspective. You may still be “on” and productive, but the quality of your thinking drops. Teams pick up on that state quickly; pressure ripples outward.

Recovery reverses this pattern. When you regularly help your body complete the stress cycle, heart rate and blood pressure stabilise, cortisol normalises, and the prefrontal cortex regains bandwidth for planning, creativity and compassion.

Switching off is not a reward for hard work. It is part of the work itself — the maintenance that keeps you capable of leading with clarity, steadiness and presence.

REFLECT AND RESET

- How do I signal that the workday is over?
- What habits keep me in “on” mode after hours?
- What would change tomorrow if I finished today with a calmer body?

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Over the page you’ll find small, practical actions that help your body and mind power down. None of them take long, but each one has solid science behind it. These are simple, proven ways to complete the stress cycle, restore balance and prepare for real rest, the kind that fuels clarity, patience and better decisions tomorrow.

COMPLETE THE STRESS CYCLE

HELP THE BODY FINISH WHAT THE DAY STARTED

GO FOR A WALK AFTER WORK	Physical movement burns off adrenaline and clears residual cortisol (Stanford Psychophysiology Lab).
STRETCH OR GENTLE YOGA MOVES	Slow physical movement activates the parasympathetic nervous system which lowers heart rate (Harvard Health). Simple moves in front of TV at night are all you need.
SING, HUM OR PLAY MUSIC	Vibrating the vocal cords stimulates the vagus nerve, which calms the body (Frontiers in Neuroscience, 2019).
LAUGH!	Laughter releases endorphins and reduces cortisol within minutes (Psychoneuroendocrinology Journal). Switch the thriller Netflix show for a comedy, do something silly with the family, play with pets....
CRY IF YOU NEED TO	Emotional tears remove stress hormones from circulation (Biochemistry Journal, 1981). We often say salt water cures all, whether its sweat, tears or a swim in the sea.... don't be afraid to let that emotion out.
SHARE HOW YOUR DAY WENT	Talking through stress helps the brain integrate emotional memory and lowers amygdala activity (UCLA, 2007).
HAVE A WARM SHOWER	Heat relaxes muscles and signals safety to the nervous system (Sleep Research Society). Get in the spa, use a hot water bottle while you relax
DO SOMETHING CREATIVE WITH YOUR HANDS	Simple repetitive motion such as cooking, sketching or gardening reduces physiological arousal (Occupational Therapy Research, 2018). When we work all day using our minds, being creative with our hands is hugely beneficial

WORK WITH YOUR BODY CLOCK

RESET CIRCADIAN RHYTHM & SIGNAL “NIGHT TIME”

DIM INDOOR LIGHTS AFTER SUNSET	Lower light allows melatonin to rise naturally (University of Colorado Sleep Lab).
AVOID SCREENS AN HOUR BEFORE BED.	Blue light delays melatonin release by up to 90 minutes (Harvard Medical School, 2015).
STEP OUTSIDE EARLY IN THE MORNING.	Morning light anchors your internal clock for better evening sleep (National Institute of Health).
EAT YOUR LAST MEAL AT LEAST TWO HOURS BEFORE BED.	Digestion competes with sleep metabolism (Gastroenterology & Sleep Research, 2020).
LIMIT CAFFEINE AFTER MIDDAY.	Caffeine’s half-life of 5–6 hours keeps alert hormones high (Sleep Medicine Reviews).
KEEP A CONSISTENT SLEEP AND WAKE TIME.	Regularity strengthens circadian stability and hormone balance (Sleep Foundation, 2022).
LOWER THE TEMPERATURE IN YOUR ROOM.	Cooler environments help the body drop core temperature to trigger sleep onset (Thermoregulation Study, 2019).
USE SOFT, WARM LIGHT BEFORE BED.	Amber or red tones reduce alertness and improve sleep quality (Lighting Research & Technology Journal).

IMPROVE SLEEP QUALITY

LET THE BRAIN REPAIR AND RECHARGE

AIM FOR SEVEN TO EIGHT HOURS.	Adults sleeping under six hours show reduced cognitive speed and immune response (CDC, 2021).
AVOID ALCOHOL CLOSE TO BEDTIME.	It fragments REM sleep and impairs memory consolidation (Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 2014).
KEEP THE ROOM DARK AND QUIET.	Darkness increases melatonin and improves deep sleep (Journal of Sleep Research). Consider using sleep noise machines to drown out street noise.
TRY A BREATHING PATTERN SUCH AS 4-7-8.	Controlled breath slows heart rate and promotes parasympathetic recovery (Harvard Medical School).
WRITE WORRIES DOWN BEFORE BED	Externalising tasks reduces rumination and shortens sleep latency (Baylor University, 2018).
INCLUDE MAGNESIUM-RICH FOODS IN DINNER.	Magnesium supports GABA activity, which relaxes the nervous system (Nutrients Journal, 2017). and consider supplementing with Magnesium Glycate
AVOID DOOM-SCROLLING.	Late-night emotional stimulation increases cortisol and reduces REM (Behavioral Sleep Medicine, 2021).
LISTEN TO SLOW, INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.	Music around 60 beats per minute lowers blood pressure and aids sleep onset (Sleep Science Journal, 2019). Check out playlists on Spotify or YouTube designed for this.

CALM SPREADS

SHAPE YOUR OWN STATE SO OTHERS CAN FOLLOW

START WINDING DOWN AN HOUR BEFORE BED	Gradual change from alert to rest improves HRV (HeartMath Institute).
SPEAK MORE SLOWLY AND QUIETLY IN THE EVENING.	Slow speech rhythm synchronises breathing and heart rate with calm (Harvard Social Neuroscience).
END YOUR DAY WITH GRATITUDE.	Positive reflection lowers stress hormone levels and supports better sleep (Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 2019).
PLAN TOMORROW EARLY, THEN STOP.	Closing the mental loop reduces cognitive load before sleep (Organisational Behaviour Journal).
KEEP A CONSISTENT BEDTIME RITUAL WITH FAMILY.	Shared routines build predictability which helps everyone's nervous systems settle (Family Process Journal, 2020)
AVOID EMOTIONALLY CHARGED CONVERSATIONS LATE AT NIGHT.	The brain's prefrontal control weakens under fatigue, increasing reactivity (Cognitive Neuroscience Review).
SLOW YOUR BREATHING BEFORE ENTERING YOUR HOME.	A few calm breaths before walking inside lowers stress markers (University of Wisconsin, 2022).
MODEL REST AS LEADERSHIP.	Teams mirror the state of their leader; visible recovery increases group stability (MIT Human Dynamics Lab).

A NOTE FROM US....

What we've learned about recovery

We've spent years working with leaders under pressure, and just as long experimenting with our own. What we've discovered is that recovery isn't a finish line you reach. It's a rhythm you build.

We haven't scheduled stress out of our lives (let us know how!) but we are getting better at scheduling recovery in. Some days that looks like a lunchtime walk, other days it's just remembering to breathe before the next call. The goal isn't perfection. It's awareness and kindness when you notice you're running on empty.

Our smart watches and rings have helped. We've learned to look for patterns, not numbers. When recovery scores dip, it's usually after a big workshop, a night of poor sleep, or too many tabs open in our heads. Instead of pushing harder, we try to pause, stretch, or step outside before the body makes the decision for us. We're also learning to "power relax" short, deliberate resets that calm the system in minutes. A slow exhale, a cup of tea outside, turning your face to daylight.

They sound small, but the science is clear: the body listens to repetition.

We still have late nights, and days where our patience runs thin. The difference now is how we meet those moments. Recovery starts with self-compassion. If you wake foggy or tense, treat it as information, not failure. Adjust, rest where you can, and start again.

The leaders we admire most aren't the ones who never tire. They're the ones who know how to replenish — who bring a calm, steady presence because they've learned how to find it for themselves.

"Your nervous system is always listening. The question is, what do you want it to hear?"

NEED SUPPORT?

 Book your 90-minute session with Adam or Penny through our online system. No need to be a current client. It is a space to pause, map how you are going, test your thinking, and design practical next steps.

[Now \\$550- Click here to access our booking system.](#)

"I walked away lighter, clearer, and with a practical plan I could use straight away"

"It felt like someone finally helped me make sense of the complexity"