



Can't Stop Texting at the Wheel?

Work around your brain's natural impulse.

If the public service announcements and dirty looks from fellow commuters haven't caused you to change your behavior on the road, there's a reason. Recent research shows that seeking out and accessing information triggers a release of the neurotransmitter dopamine, providing an addictive high. So even at the most inopportune times, the familiar ding of an incoming text is difficult to ignore.

As it turns out, the same brain signals that brought Pavlov's dogs running for dinner give us an intense urge to find out which hotel our buddy from college will be staying at when he's in town next month. The greater our anticipation for an imminent reply, the greater our compulsions, as dopamine is created in various parts of the brain and overpowers the opioid system, which governs satisfaction.

We can't change our nature, but technology certainly enables us to be more prudent while behind the wheel. Try downloading an app to curb your urge to text and drive, such as AT&T's DriveMode, which automatically sends a customizable message, letting the sender know you can't respond, similar to an out-of-office email.

Use "airplane mode" (offline use only; no calling/no online access) when you need a quiet moment to work.

—J.E.

Learn more about what these folks and others are loving, thinking about or doing

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TOP of Mind



These small steps help me balance work, relationship, fitness, travel, diet and leisure:

1. Allocate time for each area; don't let work take over. Make your time with loved ones sacred.
2. Be present. I get much more out of all my interactions when I'm in the moment—no multitasking with my smartphone or email.
3. To resist junk food, pack healthy snacks for traveling or working late.
4. Develop an in-room hotel workout using your body weight (push-ups, for instance) and things in every room, such as desks and walls. (*Men's Health* offers one: SUCCESS.com/MensHealth.)
5. Take regular vacations; truly unplug except for set times and brief durations for email.

—Dush Ramachandran, CEO of The Net Momentum

Give Stress the Boot

Three Innovative Ways to Shake It Off

A bit of stress keeps you on top of your game, but high levels can have terrible consequences. Here are new ways to combat stress during your workday:

- **Shake, literally.** This is the natural response to stress, but humans have trained themselves to suppress it, says Arizona therapist Dave Berceci. In his Trauma and Tension Release Exercises, patients jiggle their limbs (simulating trembling) to release tension.

- **Squeeze something.** The theory is that stress balls work because they make you

concentrate on squeezing the ball instead of someone's neck. Plus, the physical act releases pent-up energy.

- **Be kind.** In studying compassion and altruism, Stanford University scientists determined compassion decreases stress. A related study showed that physical markers of stress, such as blood pressure, eased

when participants felt compassion for the staffers who evaluated them; researchers theorized that compassionate people could accept support more readily, which reduced their stress. So Proverbs is right: A soft answer turns away others' wrath—and yours, too.

—Betsy Simmacher

