

Those Late Night Work Emails Are Hurting You and Your Family, Says New Research

Research proves what we all know: Checking email after-hours makes us unhappy

Even as workers physically leave their offices, as long as their smartphones are nearby, they are always just a tap and a swipe away from their jobs. The expectation that employees will be always-on and available – even after hours – is ingrained in many companies' culture.

5 A new study co-authored by William Becker, an associate professor of management at Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business, shows that expectations around responding to email after normal work hours result in anxiety, which adversely affects the health of employees and their families.

10 Their new study demonstrates that "employees do not need to spend actual time on work in their off-hours to experience the harmful effects. The mere expectations of availability increase strain for employees and their significant others – even when employees do not engage in actual work during non-work time."

15 By requiring time away from home, "the insidious impact of 'always on' organizational culture is often unaccounted for or disguised as a benefit – increased convenience, for example, or higher autonomy and control over work-life boundaries¹," Becker said in a press release.

"Our research exposes the reality: 'flexible work boundaries' often turn into 'work without boundaries', compromising an employee's and their family's health and well-being."

20 So what should employers do to mitigate the effects of after-hours email expectations? Becker suggests companies should consider reducing expectations to monitor email outside of work and build them into their policies, if possible.

Becker also recommends clearly communicating organizational expectations. "If the nature of a job requires email availability, such expectations should be stated formally as a part of job responsibilities."

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1. *boundaries: limits*