

How to Work With Your Energy, Not Against It

Relationships Australia WA has developed a range of tip sheets to help support you during difficult times. This guide is for anyone wanting to improve focus, productivity, and well-being by working with their energy rather than against it.

Many of us are told that we need to learn how to manage our time better. We plan our days in hours and minutes, set targets and work to deadlines. Yet there is far less conversation about our natural energy rhythms and how to work with them effectively. While time is a fixed constraint, our energy is not constant. Like seasons in nature, it moves in cycles. Nothing is in full bloom all the time, and we are no different.

When we expect ourselves to always feel motivated or energised, we can end up working against our natural rhythm rather than with it. When we learn to notice and respect these patterns, we can work in ways that feel more sustainable, focused and balanced.

Understanding the Different Types of Energy

Before adjusting how we work, it helps to recognise that energy is not only physical. We draw on different types of energy each day:

- **Creative energy** – used for ideas, problem solving, innovation and fresh thinking.
- **Physical energy** – linked to movement, stamina, daily tasks and alertness.
- **Social energy** – needed for conversations, meetings, collaboration, family time and social connection.
- **Emotional energy** – required for empathy, listening, supporting others and managing energy.
- **Mental energy** – used for focus, decision-making, organising and complex tasks.

Different responsibilities draw on different types of energy. Noticing what is required, whether at work or at home, can help you plan more realistically and respond with greater flexibility.

8 Steps To Working in Harmony With Your Energy

1. Notice Your Energy Patterns

Everyone has unique rhythms. For example, some people think best in the morning, while others feel more creative in the afternoon.

For one week, observe:

- When do you feel most alert?
- When does your concentration dip?
- After which tasks do you feel drained or energised?

This awareness helps you make small but meaningful adjustments.

2. Manage Your Energy, Not Just Your Time

Instead of asking, “Do I have time for this?” ask, “Do I have the right energy for this?”

For example:

- Schedule complex thinking when your mind feels clear.
- Plan routine or administrative work during lower-energy periods.
- Avoid stacking emotionally demanding meetings back-to-back.

Aligning tasks with your natural energy patterns can improve focus and reduce strain.

3. Practise Energy Pacing

Energy pacing isn't about productivity hacks. It is about sustainability and using your energy in ways that support your long-term wellbeing.

Rather than pushing through fatigue:

- Break large tasks into smaller, more manageable stages.
- Build short recovery pauses between demanding activities.
- Alternate high-focus work with lighter tasks.

Pacing your energy helps protect your well-being and reduces the risk of burnout.

4. Adjust Expectations

We often expect ourselves to perform at the same level all day - but this isn't realistic.

Some days your creative energy will be strong. On other days, you may have more social capacity than mental focus. Motivation and energy will shift from day to day. This is part of being human, not something to fix.

Allow flexibility where possible and adjust your priorities when energy is low. Remember, progress doesn't need to look the same every day.

5. Protect Emotional and Social Energy

Roles that involve supporting others can be emotionally demanding.

To help manage this energy:

- Avoid overloading your schedule with back-to-back support conversations.
- Build in reflection time after complex interactions.
- Set clear boundaries where appropriate.

Caring for your emotional energy supports resilience and effectiveness.

6. Build Recovery Into Your Day

Recovery is not a reward for finishing your work. It is part of the natural rhythm that allows you to keep going. When you begin to see rest as part of your rhythm, not something you have to earn, it becomes easier to care for your energy in a sustainable way.

Simple actions can help restore your energy in between tasks:

- Brief movement or stretching
- Stepping outside for fresh air
- Short screen breaks
- Quiet time between meetings

Small resets can prevent larger energy drops later in the day. It can also help to block out time in your calendar as “busy” to protect your well-being. When this time is scheduled in advance, it becomes easier to prioritise your energy and maintain boundaries.

7. Redefine Productivity

Productivity shouldn't be measured by constant output. Real productivity is about meaningful contribution over time. It values quality, focus, and sustainability over busyness.

When you rethink productivity, you can:

- Focus on what truly matters, not just what is urgent.
- Prioritise quality over quantity.
- Set realistic expectations for yourself and others.
- Recognise rest as part of effective performance.

Sustainable productivity benefits individuals, teams and workplace culture.

8. Know When to Ask for Support

There will be times when your energy is consistently low or stretched too thin by too many demands. Consider seeking support when:

- You feel drained most days.
- You struggle to recover after time off.
- Tasks that were once manageable now feel overwhelming.

Asking for support is a proactive step. It reflects self-awareness and strength, not weakness. Consider:

- Talking with a manager about workload or expectations.
- Adjusting timelines or priorities
- Accessing wellbeing services like RAWA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Sharing tasks within a team.
- Speaking with a trusted friend, family member, or health professional.