

An excerpt from:

Rewired

*How to Work Smarter, Live Better, and
Be Purposefully Productive in an Overwired World*

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Introduction

I love technology. Who doesn't? Can you imagine living in a world where we didn't have information at our fingertips? A world without e-mail, texting, or the Internet? Without smartphones, laptops, cloud computing, and all of the amazing applications and programs we use every day? I can't imagine my life, personally or professionally, without technology. Like many people, I live, work, and socialize in a wired world. I'm always plugged in, always wired (or *wireless*, as is more often the case), always available.

What's wrong with that?

Well, plenty, as it turns out. Why? Because we are overusing technology. We aren't wired; we are *overwired*.

What does being *overwired* mean? It means we overuse technology to the point where we are unable to step away from it or be without it, almost as if we're addicted. We feel stressed and anxious, even when we're unplugged. Even when we are not actually using technology, we still *feel* wired, because we have actually conditioned our brains and bodies to respond as if we are. You know that anxious feeling that there is more to do, or that you should be doing more than one thing at a time? The feeling that you always need your smartphone right next to you, even during meals and on social occasions? The feeling that while you are eating lunch you should also be working on something, or when you are driving you should also be responding to texts, or when you are working on a report in your office you should also be responding to e-mails, or when you are home in the evening or on weekends you should also be available to colleagues or associates at all times?

That's overwired.

Being overwired has real consequences. More and more studies are finding that the way we use and overuse technology is actually hurting our professional productivity, our business and personal relationships, the way we live our lives—and even our brains and our bodies.

True productivity plummets when we're overwired; we may be working, but, increasingly, we aren't *purposefully productive*. Being purposefully productive means we are focused and present, which leads to real results. When we're overwired, the way we use technology isn't necessarily helping us to work faster or better. In fact, being overwired damages our brains, hinders our learning, and causes physical and emotional stress.

I know overwired when I see it: I'm a psychologist, leadership coach, and organizational consultant who specializes in teaching people and companies how to be as productive and effective as possible in a virtual world. And more and more I see clients, colleagues, and associates who are overwired and overwhelmed; who are restless, antsy, and anxious; who feel like they work and work and work, and yet the day never seems to end; who feel they aren't as productive and effective as they should be; and who feel as if they aren't present in their own lives.

My clients say things like:

“I'm overwhelmed all the time.”

“I feel like I have no control over my life.”

“Instead of technology making my life easier, I just feel busier.”

“I feel like I can't focus because there are always so many demands on me.”

“I feel like I should always be doing something.”

“I feel like I can never get away from it. It never ends.”

We see overwired people all around us: the colleagues in meetings or conferences who tap away on their laptops or smartphones; the friend whose eyes are on his screen instead of paying attention to you; the e-mails sent or cc'd to the wrong person because the sender was multitasking; the mom who constantly checks her smartphone at her son's soccer game; the lunch companions who insist on taking calls or checking their texts at the table; people who text and drive; etc.

Some of these examples are annoying, some are sad, and some illustrate how overwiring hurts productivity. But all share a common theme: the inability to do one thing, properly, at a time. Whether it is work or play, business or pleasure, overusing technology and being overwired has led us to feel as if we must always be doing more than one thing; being focused on a single task or being present in the moment isn't enough. Technology is wonderful. But I believe that overusing it has changed us for the worse. It is hurting us professionally and personally. It is hurting the bottom lines of our work and our lives.

So, what can we do about it? Plenty. We certainly aren't going to disconnect from technology. That's impractical and, quite frankly, absurd. We need it, we love it, and we can't “just say no” to it. But we don't have to give up technology completely. What we *can* do is change the way we *use* technology. We can learn to set boundaries, learn to disconnect (yes, disconnect) purposefully to counter the lingering effects and recharge ourselves, and learn to control how, where, and when we use it. By doing so we will be more productive, purposeful, and present, both at work and at home. Whether you are an

executive, an employer, or an employee, you are a person, too, with a life in and out of the office. We all want our work and our personal lives to be purposefully productive. When we are overwired, we lose the ability to set goals, have a clear vision, be productive, efficient, calm, centered, and present in our lives.

By unwiring and rewiring, we can learn to be more productive, more purposeful, more successful, and just plain happier. And who doesn't want that? If you are an employer, you must know that a happy, engaged employee is a productive employee. And if you are a working person, don't you want to be focused and fulfilled, purposeful and productive in your work? And doesn't everyone want that in his or her personal life as well?

Rewired is about learning to keep our focus and intention where it should be, on productive and fulfilling work and personal endeavors. It is about continuing to gain the clarity that leads to real success and happiness. It is about not letting technology lead us from that path, but leveraging it instead to help us along. It is about rewiring ourselves to better choose when and how we use technology, not the other way around.

Rewiring is a process, and I have structured this book in four parts to reflect that. In Part 1: *Overwired*, I explain how an overload and overuse of technology and its lingering effects—being overwired—is damaging our brains, our bodies, our personal and professional relationships, and our productivity. This section of the book explains how and why we got so wired and why we must rethink the way we use technology. In the Part 2: *Unwiring*, we will learn to step back from technology to assess how we use and overuse it. In Part 3: *Rewiring for Wellness*, we will learn simple strategies to establish boundaries and controls, so that we use what we need, when we need it, in order

to be more productive, efficient, and fulfilled. And in Part 4: Success, I will share with you real-life success stories of clients who have rewired for wellness and purposeful productivity.

This book is about waking up to the impact of technology, to the quality of the work we are doing, the lives we are living, and the way we *want* to be living. It is about benefiting from technology while learning to limit the drawbacks. It is about getting back into the driver's seat and reclaiming control over our lives.

Remember, technology is there to serve you. It should be at your disposal. It should make your life better, happier, and more efficient—not control or overwhelm you. You should be able to leverage technology to create the life you want, personally and professionally.

Every day, I work with people to help them improve their productivity and their lives. I wrote this book and developed the *Rewired* protocols to reach out to an even broader audience. *Rewired* offers real lessons for work and for home. These are lessons for life. We need to awaken ourselves to the dangers of overwiring. We need to unwire and then rewire. We can do it. We just need a new strategy.

Here it is.

Camille Preston, PhD