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Happy, Healthy, and Productive: The Role of Detachment From Work During Nonwork Time

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Mentally distancing oneself from work during nonwork time can help restore resources lost because of work demands. In this study, we examined possible outcomes of such psychological detachment from work, specifically well-being and job performance. Although employees may need to mentally detach from work to restore their well-being, high levels of detachment may require a longer time to get back into "working mode," which may be negatively associated with job performance. Our results indicate that higher levels of self-reported detachment were associated with higher levels of significant other-reported life satisfaction as well as lower levels of emotional exhaustion. In addition, we found curvilinear relationships between psychological detachment and coworker reported job performance (task performance and proactive behavior). Thus, although high psychological detachment may enhance employee well-being, it seems that medium levels of detachment are most beneficial for job performance.

Keywords: recovery, well-being, job performance, health, detachment

Do successful organizations need employees who are available 24/7? Should employees accept work-related phone calls after hours and check their work e-mails before going to bed? Should employees reflect on work-related problems after leaving the workplace to solve them the same or next day? The increasing number of hours people work, plus the amount of time they spend on work-related activities (e-mails, phone calls) during off-work time results in a lack of time available for other activities. It also leaves little opportunity to "distance oneself from work" in psychological terms. How does a high level of "availability" and lack of "detachment" translate into employee well-being and job performance?

Not being able to take time to rest and recover from work demands may impair individuals' health and well-being (Eden, 2001; Meijman & Mulder, 1998) and reduce performance capabilities. However, certain experiences outside of work can help in alleviating reactions to work demands (Eden, 2001; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005, 2006; Sonnentag, 2001). In this study, we examined associations between "getting away" from work (i.e., psychological detachment) and employee well-being and job performance. Doing so, we expanded research on psychological detachment in several ways. In addition to well-being, we examined job performance as a possible outcome of psychological detachment. Moreover, we tested these associations beyond linear relationships by examining curvilinear relationships between detachment and job performance. Lastly, we attempted to overcome one common criticism of previous research—common source bias—by using significant other reports of employee well-being and coworker reports of employee job performance.

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What Is Psychological Detachment?

Etzion, Eden, and Lapidot (1998)—in the context of respites from work—described detachment as an "individual's sense of being away from the work situation" (p. 579). Psychological detachment is further characterized by not being involved in work-related activities—such as phone calls, e-mails, or other work-related tasks—during off work time (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Thus, psychological detachment is defined by not being involved in work-related feelings or thoughts. Although Etzion et al. examined the role of detachment as a moderator, we propose direct relationships between detachment, employee well-being, and performance outcomes.

When employees leave their workplace they transition from a work role to a nonwork role. Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate (2000) suggested two concepts to better understand this transition process, namely *segmentation* and *integration*. High levels of segmentation between life domains (work and nonwork) decrease role blurring and make boundaries between roles less flexible and less permeable. Boundaries low in permeability make the transition between roles more difficult. High levels of integration increase the permeability of boundaries between life domains and increase blurring. By disengaging from their work role, employees psychologically detach from work-related issues, indicating segmentation of both life domains.

At its core, psychological detachment is conceptualized in terms of a specific cognitive–emotional state (e.g., the absence of work-related thoughts and feelings). Although research on attitudes toward work (i.e., job involvement, job commitment, job satisfaction) may appear to overlap with psychological detachment, the concepts differ in one particular way: Detachment is described more in terms of specific experiences during nonwork time, and

the latter concepts refer to attitudinal connections with work. Factor-analytic findings from Sonnentag and Kruel (2006), for example, indicate that job involvement and detachment seem to be empirically different concepts. In the next sections, we further explore the relationship between psychological detachment and two specific employee outcomes: well-being and job performance.

Detachment and Employee Well-Being

Unfavorable work environments can impair employee well-being and health (Leitner & Resch, 2005; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001); however, experiences during nonwork time may help in replenishing individual well-being (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). For example, Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) found significant relationships between reported psychological detachment and several indicators of well-being, such as emotional exhaustion ($r = -.56$) and life satisfaction ($r = .37$). Similarly, Sonnentag and Bayer (2005) found that psychological detachment after work was associated with better mood at bedtime.

Why is psychological detachment associated with higher levels of employee well-being? One reason may be that when employees leave work they exit their work role and enter a nonwork role (Ashforth et al., 2000). This transition removes work demands and, in turn, allows the individual to unwind (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). If work demands consume individual resources (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), such as the capability to focus attention, then being away from work allows the restoration of such resources. More specifically, because psychological detachment refers to distancing oneself from work demands (or any work-related thoughts or actions), it helps restore depleted psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). The restoration of resources then should become apparent in increased positive mood, a feeling of regeneration, higher levels of life satisfaction, and lower levels of emotional exhaustion.

Although research clearly supports relationships between psychological detachment and measures of employee well-being (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005; Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Sonnentag & Natter, 2004), studies have mostly relied on self-report data of the predictor (detachment) and outcome variables (well-being). Thus, common method bias may have accounted for at least part of the relationships identified. A recent study by Sonnentag, Kuttler, and Fritz (2009) indicates the usefulness of spouse reports by showing that relationships between psychological detachment and employee exhaustion were similar for spouse ($\beta = -.28$) and employee ($\beta = -.37$) reports of detachment. Accordingly, we included significant other reports of well-being to reduce effects of common method bias (Ilies et al., 2007; Song, Foo, & Uy, 2008).

For this study, we chose two indicators of well-being, namely *emotional exhaustion* and *life satisfaction*. Emotional exhaustion is an indicator of employees' work-related well-being. It is characterized by a sense of emotional strain, tiredness, and exhaustion related to work (Demerouti, Bakker, Kantas, & Vardakou, 2003). We measured life satisfaction as an indicator of the global perception of one's quality of life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). We hypothesized that higher levels of psychological detachment during nonwork time would be associated with higher levels of employee well-being.

Hypothesis 1a: Psychological detachment is negatively associated with emotional exhaustion as perceived by others.

Hypothesis 1b: Psychological detachment is positively associated with life satisfaction as perceived by others.

Detachment and Job Performance

Although research on psychological detachment and well-being clearly seems to indicate positive linear relationships (Sonnentag et al., 2008; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007), research on detachment and job performance is lacking. As discussed previously, we assume that psychological detachment from work allows the restoration of resources depleted during work. If individuals do not unwind enough from work, depleted resources, such as lower ability to focus and lower levels of attention, may become apparent in lower levels of job performance. Thus, we assume that low levels of detachment are associated with low job performance.

In contrast, very high levels of detachment may indicate higher boundaries between nonwork and work roles (Ashforth et al., 2000). As a result of these boundaries, employees may need longer to get back into "working mode." The implication, of course, is that at the start of a work day, employees will not be as productive as they could have been had they spent some time prior to work thinking about the upcoming day. For example, they may need time to plan which tasks need to be done and which may have priority over others. In addition, employees may need time to think through a work-related problem that needs to be solved. If some nonwork time had been used to think about the problem, they may have found a solution in a shorter period of time once they got back to work. Thus, we suggest that very high levels of detachment may be associated with lower levels of performance.

In summary, we propose that very high and very low levels of detachment will be detrimental to job performance. As a result, medium levels of detachment will be associated with the highest levels of performance. Accordingly, we propose a curvilinear relationship between detachment and job performance.

In this study, we explore two performance-related outcomes, namely *task performance* and *proactive behavior*. Task performance refers to behaviors "that are recognized by formal reward systems and are part of the requirements as described in job descriptions" (L. J. Williams & Anderson, 1991, p. 606). High levels of task performance indicate that the employee fulfills the work tasks that are expected of him or her. For example, a secretary would make phone calls, send e-mails, or make copies regarding his or her specified work domain.

Proactive behavior includes an employee's self-directed actions to anticipate or initiate change in the work system or work role (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007) and to support personal or organizational effectiveness (Watson & Clark, 1992). An employee may develop ways to fulfill tasks more efficiently or improve procedures within the work group. Again, to reduce common method bias, we used self-reports of psychological detachment and other-reports of job performance, namely coworker ratings of employee task performance and proactive behaviors.

Hypothesis 2a: There is a curvilinear relationship between psychological detachment and task performance, such that task performance is highest under medium levels of detachment.

Hypothesis 2b: There is a curvilinear relationship between psychological detachment and proactive work behavior, such that proactive work behavior is highest under medium levels of detachment.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were administrative employees from seven U.S. colleges and universities. After schools agreed to participate in the study, we drafted a recruitment e-mail that was then sent out through the school to potential participants. Survey packets were sent out to 299 employees who consented to participate. Each survey packet consisted of an information letter; three clearly distinguishable surveys; and three stamped, preaddressed return envelopes. A flier for a lottery raffle was also included; participants were entered into a raffle for restaurant gift certificates for each survey that was returned, with up to three entries possible per participant (one each for the self-report, the significant other report, and the coworker report). This study was also part of a larger data collection effort. The first survey booklet was to be filled out by the primary participant/target individual and included, among others, measures of detachment as well as negative affectivity, with the latter being used as a control variable in the analyses. The target employee was supposed to choose a coworker that knows his or her work well. The second survey was then filled out by that coworker and pertained to the target's job performance. The third survey was to be given to the target's significant other or close friend, and it contained measures of the target's well-being as well as the significant other's negative affectivity. To protect confidentiality, each of the respondents returned their survey directly to the researchers using the provided prepaid envelopes. The surveys were matched upon return via a code created by the researchers. Out of the 172 participants who returned questionnaires (response rate 57%), 65 had to be left out of the analyses because of missing data or missing coworker or significant other reports. The final sample of 107 participants included 91 women (85%) and 16 men (15%). The average age of participants was 45 years ($SD = 10.71$). Mean job tenure was 10 years ($SD = 8.96$). Of the participants, 45% held supervisory positions; some of the many jobs represented were administrative assistant, coordinator of programs, director, web developer, and library associate. Of the participants, 39% were college graduates, 30% held a master's degree, and 5% had obtained a doctoral degree.

The majority of the participants worked full-time (94%), and mean time worked per week was 40 hr ($SD = 2.46$). Forty-three participants (40%) had at least one child. A comparison between the 65 "unmatched" participants and the sample we finally used for our analyses did not reveal any significant differences for the main variables or the demographic variables we measured, with one exception: The unmatched participants worked 1.6 hr less per week than the matched sample.

Measures

Detachment. The Detachment Scale (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007) consisted of four well-validated items that referred to the target's views of his/her nonwork time over the past few weeks ("I got a break from the demands of work"; "I forgot about work"; "I didn't think about work at all"; "I distanced myself from work"). The rating scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .84.

Outcome variables. Well-being variables were reported by the target's significant other or close friend and pertained to the experiences of the target individual.

Emotional exhaustion. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) was used to assess exhaustion in the past few weeks as reported by the target's significant other. A sample item from the scale is "After work, he/she needed more time to relax than in the past to become fit again." The scale consisted of eight items on a 4-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 4 (*totally agree*). Cronbach's alpha for emotional exhaustion in this sample was .84.

Life satisfaction. The significant other report of the target's life satisfaction in the past few weeks (e.g., "In most ways his/her life was close to his/her ideal"; Diener et al., 1985) consisted of five items on a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .87.

Performance-related outcomes.

Task performance. The target person's coworker rated task performance using a seven-item scale (L. J. Williams & Anderson, 1991). Responses were given on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*always*). The coworkers were instructed to rate behavior over the past few weeks, with a sample item being "He/she adequately completed assigned duties." Cronbach's alpha was .79.

Proactive behavior. Personal initiative—that is, taking an active and self-starting approach to work (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996)—was used as an indicator of proactive work behavior and was also rated by the target's coworker. We used a seven-item scale (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997) that included such items as "During the past few weeks, he/she attacked problems actively" and "During the past few weeks, he/she took initiative immediately even when others didn't." Although the scale was initially developed to measure a rather stable behavioral pattern, recent research has indicated variability in personal initiative over time (e.g., Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009; Sonnentag, 2003). Therefore, we adapted the scale to refer to the past few weeks. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*always*). Cronbach's alpha was .90.

To test the factor structure of our outcome variables, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses. For emotional exhaustion and life satisfaction, we examined whether a two-factor model was superior to a one-factor model. We used a chi-square difference test to compare model fits. The two-factor model provided a fit superior to that of a one-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 107) = 171.81$, $p < .01$. Confirmatory factor analyses including task performance and proactive behavior items revealed that a two-factor model fit the data better than a one-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 107) = 304.18$, $p < .01$.

Control variables.

Negative affectivity. Previous research has found relationships between negative affectivity and well-being (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, & Webster, 1988; Burke, Brief, & George, 1993). Therefore, we controlled for both the target and significant other's general level of negative affectivity in the analyses involving well-being as the dependent variable. We measured negative af-

fectivity using 10 items from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Participants were asked to rate how they felt "in general" regarding 10 adjectives that tapped negative affect (e.g., upset, irritable) on a scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). The scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .84$ for target, and $\alpha = .90$ for significant other).

Work characteristics. To examine whether psychological detachment would be able to explain variance in performance and well-being beyond aspects of the work environment, we decided to control for two well-known work characteristics, namely, *workload* and *job autonomy*. Both variables have been found to be associated with employee outcomes and may additionally be associated with psychological detachment from work during nonwork time. Workload (five items) and job autonomy (five items) were measured with scales developed by Spector and Jex (1998). Cronbach's alpha was .85 and .80 for workload and job autonomy, respectively.

Demographic variables. We additionally decided to control for gender, age, supervisory role, and job tenure.

Results

We used hierarchical regression analyses to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. However, the specific procedure was slightly different for each hypothesis. To test Hypothesis 1, we controlled for negative affectivity of the target and significant other when predicting well-being outcomes (Hypotheses 1a and 1b), and thus, we entered it into Step 1 of the hierarchical regression for these outcomes (emotional exhaustion, life satisfaction). In addition, we controlled for workload, autonomy, and demographic variables. In Step 2, we included psychological detachment as a predictor to test whether it explained variance in the outcome variables over and above the control variables. For Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we included workload, autonomy, and demographic variables in Step 1 and psychological detachment as a predictor in Step 2 to test for a possible main effect. In Step 3, we entered the squared term for psychological detachment to examine the hypothesized curvilinear effect. Correlations between all study variables can be found in Table 1.

Detachment and Well-Being

As Table 2 indicates, Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported. Specifically, after controlling for negative affectivity (target and significant other), psychological detachment significantly predicted employee well-being (significant other report). Higher levels of detachment (self-report) were associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of life satisfaction. The amount of variance explained by psychological detachment was 6% and 7%, respectively.

Detachment and Job Performance

Results of regression analyses for job performance are displayed in Table 3. Findings indicate that linear effects for psychological detachment were not significant. However, as hypothesized, psychological detachment showed significant curvilinear relationships with task performance and proactive behavior. A closer look at the data indicates that medium levels of detachment were, in fact, associated with the highest levels of job performance, whereas very high and very low detachment were associated with lower levels of job performance (see Table 4 for details). Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are supported.

To ensure that there were no curvilinear relationships between detachment and well-being in addition to linear ones, we ran models entering the squared term for detachment in an additional step in the regression equation. Results indicate no significant curvilinear relationships.

Discussion

In this study, we examined relationships between psychological detachment and two important work-related outcomes: well-being and job performance. We found linear relationships between detachment and indicators of well-being (emotional exhaustion and life satisfaction), and we identified curvilinear relationships between detachment and job performance (task performance and proactive behavior). Our findings concerning the detachment and well-being relationship replicated previous research (Sonnentag et al., 2008; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). In addition, our research provides new insights into the relationship between detachment and job performance, a heretofore unexplored variable. In addition, our findings suggest that it may be necessary to test more complex relationships between detachment and possible outcomes by going beyond linear relationships.

Implications for Theory and Future Research

Our findings indicate that Ashforth et al.'s (2000) theorizing regarding boundaries and transitions between life domains can be helpful in understanding relationships between detachment from work and employee outcomes. Specifically, high levels of segmentation (high levels of psychological detachment) seem to be associated with employee well-being, and too much or too little segmentation can hinder performance-related behaviors. On the basis of this theoretical approach, future research should explore which experiences or behavior can act as boundaries that help create a sense of detachment from work. Results for our study further support the theoretical assumption that psychological detachment from work allows employees to "get away from" work demands, possibly resulting in the replenishment of resources that become apparent in lower emotional exhaustion and higher life satisfaction.

One question for future research could also be whether work is always depleting. If work is not depleting, is psychological detachment still needed and beneficial? Further, in situations of low detachment, does the quality of thoughts have an impact on the outcomes studied? Although there is some indication that the type of work reflection—positive or negative—during nonwork time matters (Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Mojza, 2009; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005, 2006), more research is needed to shed light on the dynamics of specific thoughts off work and their impact on employees' experiences and behaviors. In addition, future research may explore ways for employees to detach during work (e.g., during lunch breaks, while daydreaming) and their impact on employee well-being and job performance. Although the outcomes of such detachment may be similar, the underlying processes and pursued activities may differ.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Study Variables

Study variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender															
2. Age	44.65	10	.04												
3. Job tenure	120.22	107	−.01	.58**											
4. Supervisory role	1.55	0.50	.25**	−.19*	−.28**										
5. Workload	3.47	0.76	.09	.18	.15	−.24*	(.85)								
6. Job autonomy	1.72	0.63	.12	−.17	.16	.16	.00	(.80)							
7. Employee NA	1.76	0.55	.02	−.33**	−.23*	.06	−.09	.22*	(.84)						
8. Significant other NA	1.66	0.66	−.21*	−.02	.00	−.08	.17	.12	.24*	(.90)					
9. Detachment	3.23	0.83	.10	−.10	−.06	.18	−.20*	−.02	−.18	−.10	(.84)				
10. Exhaustion	2.21	0.61	.12	.03	.05	.05	.33**	.22*	.40**	.25*	−.38**	(.84)			
11. Life satisfaction	3.22	0.80	−.16	−.04	−.02	−.06	−.16	−.20*	−.37**	−.41**	.33**	−.57**	(.87)		
12. Task performance	3.67	0.29	−.11	.02	.03	−.13	.06	−.09	−.03	.12	.04	−.16	−.03	(.79)	
13. Proactive behavior	4.24	0.58	−.05	.37**	.19*	−.08	.03	−.07	−.19*	.10	−.09	−.08	−.01	.47**	(.90)

Note. Cronbach's alphas are presented on the diagonal. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; Job tenure = number of months employed; Supervisory role: 1 = supervisory, 2 = nonsupervisory; NA = negative affectivity.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Future research should also examine the transitions form work to nonwork roles as well as nonwork to work roles in more detail. For example, individuals that successfully detach from work during nonwork time can engage more actively in nonwork activities, which may explain the relationship with well-being. Furthermore, it is important to understand the extent to which employees detach from nonwork thoughts and feelings (family issues, hobbies, etc.) while at work and whether a lack of such detachment impairs well-being and performance at work. Further, how could employees use a commute from work to home and back to successfully detach from the life domain they leave behind?

Limitations

Our findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. One weakness of our study is the use of a cross-sectional design, which limits inferences of causality. Future research should apply longitudinal designs to help understand causal paths between psychological detachment and well-being as well as performance outcomes. In addition, our sample—administrative university staff—may differ from other occupations in some regards. Thus, future research should further explore the validity of our findings using samples from different occupations.

The small final sample may also be a concern; however, because we hardly found any differences when comparing the unmatched cases with the final sample (matched cases), we think this alleviates the concern at least somewhat. In addition, because our findings regarding relationships between detachment and well-being replicated earlier findings (e.g., Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007), we assume that there is no major bias because of small sample size.

Although we perceive the use of other-reports for our outcomes (well-being and performance) as a strength (as suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), we agree that this approach may be associated with additional biases. However, with regard to well-being outcomes (exhaustion and life satisfaction), we think that controlling for the significant others' level of negative affect helps control for some of the possible biases. In addi-

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression of Well-Being on Detachment From Work

	Emotional exhaustion			Life satisfaction		
Variable	β	ΔR^2	R^2	β	ΔR^2	R^2
Step 1: Control variables		.36**	.36**		.33**	.33**
Gender	.07			−.23*		
Age	.07			−.06		
Job tenure	.09			−.06		
Supervisory role	.15			−.08		
Workload	.30**			−.05		
Job autonomy	.12			−.07		
Employee NA	.36**			−.23*		
Significant other NA	.10			−.37**		
Step 2: Detachment (linear)	−.26**	.06**	.42**	.28**	.07**	.40**

Note. Beta weights are standardized and refer to the full model. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; Job tenure = number of months employed; Supervisory role: 1 = supervisory, 2 = nonsupervisory; NA = negative affectivity.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression of Task Performance and Proactive Behavior on Detachment From Work

Variable	Task performance			Proactive behavior		
	β	ΔR^2	R^2	β	ΔR^2	R^2
Step 1: Control variables		.03	.03		.14*	.14*
Gender	−.06			−.03		
Age	−.03			.37**		
Job tenure	−.02			−.04		
Supervisory role	−.07			.04		
Workload	.10			−.01		
Autonomy	−.09			−.03		
Step 2: Detachment (linear)	.02	.01	.04	−.11	.00	.14
Step 3: Detachment (curvilinear)	−.26*	.06*	.10*	−.21*	.04*	.18*

Note. Beta weights are standardized and refer to the full model. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; Job tenure = number of months employed; Supervisory role: 1 = supervisory, 2 = nonsupervisory.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

tion, our findings for well-being replicate self-report results (e.g., Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Therefore, we are confident in the accuracy of the significant other reports. Because this study is the first in which relationships between detachment and performance-related outcomes were explicitly examined, we recommend that future research examine relationships between detachment and performance-related outcomes using and comparing self-reports as well as other reports.

Implications for Practice

Although we believe that more research on psychological detachment from work is necessary, our current findings nevertheless have some implications for practice. First, it is important to point out that detachment seems to be associated with employee well-being and performance-related outcomes, although in different ways.

Organizations and supervisors can support employee detachment by insisting that employees be unavailable (e.g., via e-mail or phone) during their nonwork time and by scheduling their employees' work demands accordingly. Allowing employees to detach during nonwork time can help employee outcomes that are relevant for organizations as well.

With regard to performance outcomes, organizations and supervisors should encourage their employees to give themselves time to transition between nonwork and work roles. One idea could be to create a list of work tasks that need to be completed at work that day (and the order in which to do so) in the morning before or when getting to work. The commute between home and work could also serve as a transition period between both domains and allow the person to reconnect with his or her work role. Further, supervisors can act as role models by not being available during nonwork time and by not initiating work-related communication with their employees during this time, thereby allowing detachment to occur.

The importance of appropriately detaching from work should not be underestimated. Research has indicated that negative experiences at work may spillover into family life (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989; Ilies et al., 2007; Song et al., 2008; K. J. Williams & Alliger, 1994; K. J. Williams, Suls, Alliger, & Learner, 1991). Therefore, detaching from negative work events during nonwork time can help prevent such negative spillover processes.

Table 4
Mean Levels of Task Performance and Proactive Behavior at Quintiles of Detachment

Quintile	Detachment	Task performance	Proactive behavior
Quintile 1	2.05	3.60	4.24
Quintile 2	2.80	3.76	4.29
Quintile 3	3.33	3.73	4.31
Quintile 4	3.71	3.73	4.40
Quintile 5	4.32	3.57	4.00

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