

The work will still be there

A short book about working long hours out of habit and
calling it commitment

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First edition

Written by AI with human guidance. It can
contain mistakes, which later editions correct.

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Before you start

This is a short book and you can read it in two or three sittings. It's about one habit. You work a good deal longer than you're contracted to, most days, and have done for years. Nobody ordered it. There was a busy period once, and the hours went up, and they never came back down. When you think about it at all, you think of it as commitment.

I'm going to argue three things. The first is that long hours are an understandable response to work that is never finished, in workplaces that notice who's still at their desk. The second is that the hours deliver much less than they seem to. Past a certain point, extra hours produce little extra work, and the best evidence I know of puts that point lower than most people would guess. The late hours also lower the quality of the early ones, and they carry costs to your health and your family that build up slowly. The third is practical. You choose a time to stop, you stop at it, and you find that the work is still there in the morning and gets done. Chapters 15 to 17 cover how, including what to do when the pressure comes from your employer and not from you.

Nothing in this book asks you to care less about your work or to do it less well. I'll argue that a fixed finish usually improves the work. And nothing here is against the occasional long day for a real deadline. The target is the permanent long week that nobody decided on.

Four cautions.

This book is written for people whose long hours are at least partly a habit. Many people work long hours because they must. They hold two jobs, or they're paid by the hour and the hours are what feed the family, or they're caring for someone as well as working. If that's you, the chapters on what long hours do to a person still apply, and I'm sorry that the chapters on choosing to stop may not. I don't want to lecture anyone about hours they can't afford to drop.

If you're exhausted most of the time, or you dread work, or you feel numb about things you used to care about, take that seriously. The NHS advice is to see a GP if you're struggling to cope with stress or if the things you're trying yourself aren't helping. If you need help urgently and it isn't an emergency, call 111. If you've had thoughts of harming yourself, call 999 or go to A&E.

If long hours are being demanded of you, the law gives you some protection. In the UK you can't be made to work more than 48 hours a week on average unless you've chosen to opt out, and you're entitled to 11 hours' rest between working days and a full day off each week, or two each fortnight. There are exceptions for some jobs. I'm not a lawyer and this isn't legal advice. Acas and your union, if you have one, can advise you properly.

And if your work is a refuge from something painful at home, the hours may be doing a job for you that this book doesn't address. Chapter 17 says a little about that.

The notes at the back give my sources and their limits. Where I'm giving my own reasoning and not a finding, I'll say so.

Tuesday, ten to seven

It's ten to seven on a Tuesday evening and the office is nearly empty. The cleaner is doing the far end. You're at your desk with a cold half cup of tea, and you've just finished rewording the second paragraph of a report that was already fine.

You manage the planning team at a housing association. There are eight of you. Your contract says thirty-seven and a half hours a week, and you stopped noticing that number years ago. You're in by eight most mornings and you leave around seven. After dinner, at about quarter past nine, you open the laptop at the kitchen table just to clear a few emails, and close it at twenty to eleven. On Sunday afternoons you do two or three hours to get ahead of the week. It comes to about fifty-five hours, though you've never added it up.

Think about what you did between five o'clock and now. You reread the report and changed some wording. You answered fourteen emails, which produced nine replies, six of which you also answered. You tidied a spreadsheet that only you look at. You started on next month's rota, got stuck, and decided to come back to it in the morning. None of it was urgent. If a fire alarm had cleared the building at five, tomorrow would look exactly the same.

Your daughter Ellie is nine, and she swims on Thursdays. The galas start at half past five. You've been to one this year. Your partner Sam goes, and sends you a video, and you watch it at your desk.

There's a man on your team called Tom who leaves at quarter past five every day. His work is good and it's always on time. You've never said so, but somewhere in your mind you've marked him down as not quite committed. Last year your own manager, Helen, said to you in passing, "You're always here. I don't know how you do it." You've thought about that remark more often than you'd admit. It felt like being seen.

You're tired most of the time, in a way that's become normal. You've had a cold three times this winter. On holiday last summer it took you until the second Wednesday to stop checking your phone, and you flew home on the Saturday. You've told yourself that it'll ease off after the restructure, as you told yourself it would ease off after the audit, and the merger before that.

I'll use a few terms throughout. **The contract** is the number of hours you're paid for. **The hours** are what you work, counting the laptop in the evening and the Sunday afternoon. **The late hours** are the ones beyond about fifty a week, or the last couple of hours of a long day, where this book argues the returns are poorest. **Drift** is the way work spreads out to fill whatever time you give it. **The commitment story** is the belief that your hours are the measure of how much you care. **The stop** is a fixed time at which you finish, and it's what this book builds towards.

The habit has some regular features. This list is my own observation and not a research finding.

Nobody decided it. The hours rose for a reason that made sense at the time, and they stayed up after the reason had gone.

The boundary is soft. You don't have a finishing time. You stop when you're too tired to go on, or when something at home forces it.

The extra time fills with low-value work. The last hours of the day go to email, rewording, tidying and jobs that could wait.

The day's work follows you home. Even when the laptop is shut, you're turning the job over in your head.

And it feels like virtue. Of all the habits in this series, this is the one people are proudest of, which makes it one of the hardest to look at squarely.

Try one thing before reading on. For one ordinary week, write down when you start and stop work each day, including evenings and the weekend. Add it up. Then, for two of the evenings, write a line about what you did in the last two hours. Most people who try this find the total is higher than they thought, and that the last two hours are hard to describe.

Why the hours grow

If the total came as a shock, you may be wondering what's wrong with you. I don't think anything is. Long hours are the natural result of several pressures that all push the same way, and it would be odd if you'd escaped them.

The first is the nature of the work. A bricklayer knows when the wall is built. If you work with information, people or plans, your work has no such edge. There's always another email, a report that could be better, a problem you could get ahead of. The job can't tell you that you've finished, because it's never finished. Something else has to tell you to go home, and if nothing does, you stay.

The second is that the work now comes with you. Twenty years ago most office work stayed in the office, because that's where the files and the computer were. Now it's in your pocket and on the kitchen table. Nothing physical stops you working at half past nine at night, so something else has to.

The third is staffing. Many organisations run with fewer people than the work needs, and the gap is filled by the willing. If you're conscientious and capable, extra work flows towards you, and your long hours become part of how the place operates. That's a real constraint, and chapter 17 comes back to it.

The fourth is that hours are visible and results often aren't. It's hard for a manager to judge the quality of a rota or a plan. It's easy to see who's at their desk at half past six. Helen's remark, "you're always

here", was sincere praise for the one thing she could observe. Most workplaces praise presence in this way, often without meaning to, and people respond to praise.

Then there are reasons that belong to you, and they're respectable ones.

You want to do the job well. You mind about the tenants, the team and the work, and staying late feels like what caring looks like.

You want to be seen as reliable, and being the person who's always there is one kind of reliability.

You want to feel secure. If redundancies come, you'd like to be the one they can't do without.

You may enjoy it. For many people, work is where they feel most competent. The house is quieter after six and you get a clear run at things.

And sometimes work is simpler than home. A spreadsheet is more manageable than a nine-year-old who won't go to bed.

Underneath these are needs nobody should be ashamed of. You want to be good at what you do, to be valued for it, and to be safe. The question for the next several chapters is whether the late hours serve those needs. I'll argue that they serve them poorly, and that on the first one, doing the job well, they work against you.

"More hours, more done"

The central belief behind long hours is so obvious that it hardly seems like a belief. If you work fifty-five hours, you get more done than if you work forty. Every extra hour adds something, even if the late hours aren't your best.

The best evidence I know on this comes from a surprising place. During the First World War, Britain was desperately short of shells. Munitions factories ran very long hours, often seventy a week and more, with Sunday working brought back in. The government became worried that the hours were damaging both the workers and the output, and set up a committee to investigate. Its researchers collected careful records, week by week, of how many hours groups of workers put in and how much they produced.

A century later the Stanford economist John Pencavel went back to those records and analysed them with modern methods. What he found was this. Up to about forty-nine hours a week, output rose in step with hours, so that more time gave proportionally more shells. Beyond forty-nine hours, each extra hour added less than the one before. Output reached its maximum at around sixty-three hours a week, and after that it fell. A seventy-hour week produced barely more than a fifty-six-hour week. Those fourteen extra hours at the machines yielded almost nothing.

I find this study persuasive for a reason beyond the numbers. Nobody could say that these workers, most of them women, lacked commitment. They were making shells for husbands and brothers

at the front, in a war the country believed it might lose. If motivation could overcome fatigue, it would have done so there, and it didn't.

You might object that you don't make shells. Your work is mental, and you can do it sitting down. That's fair, and I can't point to an equally clean study of planning managers. There's some modern evidence, though. Marion Collewet and Jan Sauermann studied call centre agents in the Netherlands, whose hours varied from day to day because of central scheduling. As an agent's hours went up, their average time to handle a call went up too. They became less productive as the day went on, and most of them were part-timers who weren't working anything like seventy hours.

My own view, which is interpretation, is that mental work is likely to suffer more from long hours than machine-minding does. A tired machinist makes shells more slowly. A tired planner makes decisions worse, misses things, writes emails that need a second email to correct, and spends forty minutes on a paragraph that would take ten in the morning. Slow work at least stands. Bad work has to be found and fixed, and it's usually fixed during someone's good hours the next day.

Go back to the two hours between five and ten to seven. You reworded a report that was already fine, conducted an email exchange that generated itself, and tidied a private spreadsheet. If Pencavel's curve applies to you at all, that's what the flat part of it looks like from the inside. You feel as though you're working because you're at the desk and you're tired. But very little got done.

So the late hours add less than they seem to. The next chapter argues that they also take something away from the hours before them.

"I'm fine, I can handle it"

You've been doing these hours for years. You're still standing and you still hit your deadlines. Some people might wilt on fifty-five hours a week, but you seem to be built for it. If the late hours were harming your work, you'd have noticed.

The trouble is that tiredness damages the faculty you'd use to notice. People who are short of rest are poor judges of their own performance. They feel roughly normal while measurably underperforming.

A well-known experiment makes the point with a comparison that's hard to forget. Williamson and Feyer, two Australian researchers, tested thirty-nine people on a set of mental and physical tasks in two conditions. In one, the volunteers were kept awake and tested repeatedly as the hours went by. In the other, the same people were given measured amounts of alcohol and tested at rising blood alcohol levels. That let the researchers express tiredness in units of drink. After seventeen to nineteen hours awake, performance on some tests was as bad as, or worse than, at a blood alcohol level of 0.05 per cent. That's the legal limit for driving in much of Europe. Response speeds on some tests were up to 50 per cent slower.

Do the sum for your own Tuesday. You got up at half past six. When you open the laptop at quarter past nine in the evening, you've been awake for nearly fifteen hours. When you close it at twenty to eleven, you've been awake for just over sixteen. You're approaching the zone that the experiment found comparable to being over the

limit. You wouldn't go back to the office after three glasses of wine to finalise the rota. The emails you send at half past ten are written in something like that condition, and you feel perfectly clear-headed as you write them.

A one-off late night does no lasting damage. The concern is what years of it do. Marianna Virtanen and colleagues studied more than two thousand British civil servants in the long-running Whitehall II study. They tested their reasoning, vocabulary and memory, and tested them again five years later. Compared with people working forty hours a week or fewer, those working more than fifty-five hours had lower vocabulary scores at both points, and their scores on the reasoning test declined more over the five years. The difference held after allowing for age, education, occupation, income, health and sleep problems.

This is an observational study, and it can't prove that the hours caused the decline. People who work very long hours may differ in other ways that the researchers couldn't measure. But the finding runs against the flattering idea that long hours keep you sharp.

Errors become more likely too. Dembe and colleagues analysed the job histories of nearly eleven thousand Americans over thirteen years. Jobs with overtime schedules had a 61 per cent higher rate of work injuries and illnesses than jobs without, after allowing for the kind of work involved. Working twelve hours or more a day went with a 37 per cent higher rate. You're unlikely to be injured by a spreadsheet. But an injury at work is mostly a lapse of attention, and the same lapse at a desk produces a wrong figure, a missed clause or a reply sent to the wrong person.

Here's the practical cost, as I see it. The mistakes of the late hours get repaired in the early hours of the next day, which are your best ones. So the evening session doesn't just add little. It borrows against tomorrow, in the form of errors to fix and the dullness of a person who hasn't rested. Over a week, the late hours and the good hours are in competition, and the good hours lose.

There's a simple check. Tomorrow morning, reread the emails you sent after nine tonight, and look again at anything you decided. Most people who do this find they'd have done a fair part of it differently.

"There's too much to do"

This is the objection that feels unanswerable. You're not staying late for fun. The work is there, in quantity, and it has to be done by someone. If you went home at half past five, it wouldn't disappear. You'd simply be further behind.

Part of this is true, and I'll come to that part. But first notice something about the volume of your work. It was too much at thirty-seven and a half hours, which is why you went up to forty-five. It was too much at forty-five, which is why you went to fifty-five. It's still too much. If you went to sixty-five it would still be too much, and you know that. In a job like yours, there's no number of hours at which the work is finished, so it makes no sense to keep working until it is.

The second thing to notice is drift. There's an old quip, first made by the writer C. Northcote Parkinson in the 1950s, that work expands to fill the time available for its completion. He meant it as a joke about bureaucracy, and I'm offering it as an observation and not a law. But you can test it against your own experience. Think of the last working day before a holiday. You had a fixed, immovable finishing time, and a long list. You were brisk. You decided things quickly, skipped what didn't matter, wrote short emails, delegated, and said no to a meeting. You probably got through more that day than in any two ordinary ones. Then you left on time.

On that day the amount of work was the same as usual, and what was different was that you had a firm finishing time. On an ordinary Tuesday, with the evening available as overflow, no

decision is forced. The report can be polished because there's time to polish it. You can answer an email at length, and let the meeting overrun. When the day has no end, nothing in it has to be prioritised, and so the low-value work gets done alongside the high-value work and the day stretches to hold both.

Look at what filled your two hours between five and seven. None of it would have made the cut on the day before a holiday. So you didn't lack time that Tuesday. You had more than the important work needed, and drift used up the difference.

Now the true part. Some workloads really are too big. If you've cut out the low-value work and you still can't do what's required in something like your contracted hours, then the organisation has a staffing problem. Your evenings are concealing it. While you absorb the excess without complaint, nobody above you has any reason to know that the job is too large for one person, and every reason to believe it isn't. Your long hours also make things harder for whoever holds the post after you, who'll inherit a job sized for fifty-five hours.

Going on absorbing the overload won't solve it. You need to make it visible, and chapter 17 suggests how. For now, I'd ask you to hold open the possibility that some of your "too much" is drift, and that you won't know how much until the day has an end.

"It shows I'm committed"

Helen said, "You're always here. I don't know how you do it." It was meant kindly, and you took it as recognition. In your mind the hours are the proof of how much you care, and Tom's quarter past five is proof of something less.

Look at what Helen was praising. She didn't say your plans were excellent or that your team was well run, though both may be true. She remarked on your presence, because presence is what she can see from her office. If she were asked to list your achievements for the year, "was here a lot" wouldn't be one of them. When it comes to decisions that matter to you, such as promotion, pay or who leads the new project, what counts is what you delivered and how people find working with you. Long hours contribute to those only through what they produce, and chapters 3 and 4 suggest that the late ones don't produce much.

There's a striking piece of research on how well organisations can tell real hours from apparent ones. Erin Reid, then at Boston University, studied a demanding consulting firm, where the culture expected total devotion and very long weeks. She interviewed more than a hundred people there, and also looked at performance reviews. She found that some consultants had quietly arranged their work so that they put in far fewer hours than the culture demanded, while letting it be assumed that they were as devoted as everyone else. They kept local clients, avoided travel, and didn't announce it when they left early. Those people were rated as highly as the colleagues who really did work the punishing hours. Consultants who openly asked for lighter schedules were

marked down. I'm giving you the result from memory of the paper and its write-ups, and the published summary confirms only the outline.

I take two things from that. The first is that the firm couldn't tell the difference between eighty hours and fifty when the work was good. The extra thirty hours weren't showing up in anything the firm could measure. The second is less comfortable. The penalty fell on people who challenged the commitment story out loud, and not on those who quietly worked less. I don't recommend deceit, and chapter 16 suggests being open with your manager. But the study does show that the commitment story is about appearances, and that good work done in fewer hours is just as good.

Then there's what the psychology of overwork has found about the people who do it. Malissa Clark and colleagues pooled the research on workaholism, by which they meant feeling driven to work excessively. If long hours came from conscientiousness, you'd expect people with this drive to score highly on it. They didn't. Workaholism was unrelated to conscientiousness. It was related to perfectionism, and to burnout, job stress, conflict between work and home, and poorer physical and mental health.

So the equation in your head, in which hours equal commitment and commitment equals merit, doesn't hold. Tom may be exactly as committed as you are. His commitment shows in work that's good and on time. He's also arranged things so that he can do this job for another twenty years, and you could count that as commitment too.

I should give the other side, because it's real. Some workplaces do reward presence, crudely and directly. In some firms, the person who leaves at half past five is passed over, whatever they deliver. If yours is one of those, you have a harder problem than a habit, and chapter 17 addresses it. But check that it's true before you assume it. Many people who believe their workplace demands long hours have never tested the belief. Look for the Toms in your organisation and see how they're doing.

"Everyone here works like this"

You may feel that your hours aren't really yours to set. It's the culture. Everyone in the department stays late, and everyone answers email in the evening. Anyone who didn't would stand out, and you've a fair idea of what people would think of them. You know this because you know what you've thought about Tom.

Look more closely at that last sentence, though. You know what you think. What everyone else thinks, you've inferred from what they do, and they've inferred what you think from what you do.

Social psychologists have a name for the situation where most people in a group privately doubt a norm but go along with it because they assume everyone else believes in it. They call it pluralistic ignorance. Each person sees the others complying and takes the compliance as conviction. The norm holds up even though few people in the group actually believe in it.

Christin Munsch, Cecilia Ridgeway and Joan Williams tested whether this applies to working arrangements. In an experiment, they asked people to evaluate an employee who'd requested flexible working, and also to say how they thought other people would view that employee. People consistently believed that others would judge the flexible worker more harshly than they did themselves. The stigma that everyone feared was partly a shared mistake about what other people thought. In a second study, the researchers found that when people were told that most senior staff in an organisation worked flexibly, the bias against employees who asked for flexible hours shrank.

Think of your office at half past six. There are five people at their desks. It's quite possible that each of the five would rather be at home. Each may be staying partly because the other four are, and each may be assuming that the other four are there out of a devotion they privately don't share. You've been one of the four for each of them. None of the five has ever said out loud that they'd rather be at home, so none of them knows.

I can't tell you that this is true of your workplace. Some cultures really do demand the hours, and the people at the top mean it. But you can find out, more easily than you'd think. Ask a colleague you trust what they make of the hours, and you may be surprised by the answer. And note the second study. The thing that reduced the bias was seeing senior people work differently. You're a senior person to eight others. Whether or not you chose the culture, you now help to keep it going, and you're in a position to be the first visible exception. Chapter 14 comes back to what your hours do to your team.

"I'll catch up at the weekend"

Sunday afternoon is when you get ahead. The house is quiet, nobody's emailing, and two or three hours at the kitchen table takes the edge off Monday. It feels like the most productive time of your week, and it seems a small price.

The munitions records have something to say about this too. The wartime committee was particularly critical of Sunday working. Its verdict, which Pencavel quotes, was that seven days' labour only produces six days' output, and that cutting back Sunday work had caused no appreciable loss of production. Pencavel tested the claim with the committee's own data. He compared weeks in which the same total hours were worked with and without a day of rest. The weeks with no rest day produced about 10 per cent less. It was the same number of hours, and the only difference was whether the workers had had a day off.

That's a finding about recovery. People aren't machines that produce at a fixed rate per hour of operation. They run down and need restoring, and the restoring takes continuous time away from the work. An hour of work done on a rest day has to be paid for out of the week that follows.

The modern research on this uses the term psychological detachment, which means mentally switching off from work during your time off. It's more than being physically absent. You can be at your daughter's gala with your mind on the rota, and that doesn't count. Sabine Sonnentag and colleagues followed 309 employees in demanding service jobs for a year. High job demands

predicted more emotional exhaustion and more physical complaints a year later, as you'd expect. But people who detached from work in their off-hours were less exhausted a year on. Among people with high demands, those who switched off were protected against the rise in physical complaints and the fall in engagement with their work that the others showed.

That last finding deserves attention. The people who switched off stayed more engaged with their jobs. Detachment was what kept them keen over the long run. The ones who never switched off were the ones whose enthusiasm wore away.

Now look at your Sunday. The two or three hours at the kitchen table are the visible part. The less visible part is that Sunday working means you never have a whole day without work in it. From about eleven on Sunday morning you're aware that the session is coming. Your mind starts to turn towards Monday. Your weekend is really a day and a half, and you spend part of that thinking about work. You'd noticed this on holiday, when it took you until the second Wednesday to stop checking your phone. A mind that hasn't switched off for years takes more than a week to learn how.

The objection is that Monday is genuinely easier after a Sunday session. I believe you. But Monday is easier after any good preparation, and twenty minutes on Friday afternoon, writing down the first three things for Monday, gets you most of that benefit. What the Sunday session mainly relieves is the unease of not working. The habit created that unease, and the session brings it back by the next weekend.

"I'll just clear a few emails"

The evening session has its own justification, separate from the long day at the office. You're not really working. You're on the sofa or at the kitchen table, half watching something, clearing the inbox so that tomorrow starts clean. It feels light and it feels useful, and it feels as though you're getting ahead.

Look at what happens in it. You answer fourteen emails. Some of your replies reach people who are also clearing their inboxes, and they answer, and you answer back. By twenty to eleven you've handled thirty messages and your inbox has about as many in it as when you sat down. An inbox refills as you empty it, and every reply you send invites another. Evening email mostly produces more email. Almost none of it needed dealing with before morning, as you'd find if you checked tomorrow which of tonight's messages had been urgent.

Then there's the condition you do it in. By chapter 4's arithmetic you've been awake for fifteen or sixteen hours. It's the worst time of day to be making judgements or writing anything that has a tone. The message you dash off at ten at night is the one most likely to be misread or regretted, or to need a second message to put it right.

The larger cost is to the evening itself. Liuba Belkin, William Becker and Samantha Conroy surveyed 570 working adults about email outside working hours. They found that when people felt expected to monitor work email in their own time, they were less able to switch off from work, more emotionally exhausted, and less satisfied with the balance of their lives. The striking detail is that

the amount of time people spent on email after hours wasn't the main driver. The expectation of having to check did the harm. A person who might have to deal with work at any moment never fully stands down, even on the evenings when no email comes.

In your case, nobody imposed the expectation. Helen has never asked you to answer email at ten at night. You built the expectation yourself, one prompt reply at a time, and the people who email you have adjusted to it. Because you made it, you can also unmake it. People's expectations follow your behaviour quite quickly. If your replies start arriving at nine in the morning, then within a few weeks that's when people will expect them.

The evening session also wrecks the hour before bed. You close the laptop at twenty to eleven with your head full of the rota and an irritating message from the finance team, and then you try to sleep. If you sleep badly, that's an obvious place to look.

What the session really provides is relief from the thought of an unattended inbox. You can get the same relief far more cheaply. Ten minutes at the end of the working day, triaging what's there and noting the two or three messages that matter for tomorrow, will do it. Once the working day has ended, what's in the inbox is a matter for the next morning.

"It's only for now"

Very few people intend to work fifty-five hours a week for the rest of their career. If I'd asked you at any point in the last six years, you'd have told me the hours were temporary. There was the audit. After the audit came the merger, then the new housing system, and now the restructure. Once this is over, things will settle down, and you'll get back to something more normal.

I'd like you to look at that sequence from the outside. There have been six years of temporary periods, laid end to end, with no gap between them. Each one was truly busy, and you weren't wrong about any of them. But at some point a series of exceptions becomes the normal state of things. Organisations always have something going on. There'll be a next thing after the restructure, and you could probably name it already.

The belief that it's only for now is what allows the hours to go on. If you thought of fifty-five hours as your permanent working life, you might decide it was unacceptable and do something about it. Because it's always about to end, you never have to decide, and so the hours continue for years.

The belief hides a second thing, which is that the hours didn't fall when the busy periods ended. Think back to the week after the audit was signed off. You didn't go home at half past five that week. By then the long day was your routine, other work had flowed into the space, and you'd forgotten what leaving on time felt like. The busy period pushed the hours up, and afterwards habit kept them there.

Meanwhile the years being spent are particular ones. Ellie is nine. The stretch of her life in which she wants you at the side of the pool is perhaps five years long, and one of them has just gone. You can't postpone that stretch until after the restructure, because it runs at its own pace, and it's running now. The same is true, less visibly, of your own health, your friendships and your relationship with Sam. They've all been on hold since the audit, and none of them stays in good condition if it's neglected for years.

So I'd suggest you stop waiting for the quiet period. Work will never grant you one. If the hours are going to come down, it will be because you decide that they do, during a busy time, since it's always going to be a busy time.

"But I love my job"

Some readers will have felt that the last few chapters were about somebody else. You're not grinding through hours you resent. You like your work, you're good at it, and the evening session is often the most satisfying part of the day. It seems strange to be told to stop doing something you enjoy.

I take the point seriously. Enjoying your work is a great piece of good fortune, and I've no wish to talk you out of it. An absorbing job is one of the better things a life can contain. So let me separate two things that look alike from the outside.

One is working long because you're drawn to it. The other is working long because you feel uneasy when you don't. Researchers on overwork make this distinction, and they find the two have different consequences. Clark's review, from chapter 6, defined workaholism by the compulsion, the feeling that you ought to be working and the guilt and restlessness when you aren't. That inner pressure was tied to burnout and poorer health. Engagement, meaning real enthusiasm for the work, doesn't carry those costs in the same way.

There's a simple test for which one you have. Imagine a free Sunday with no laptop. If the picture is pleasant, and you'd happily spend the day on something else and pick work up on Monday with interest, then you love your job. But the picture may produce unease. You might already be thinking of reasons why this

particular Sunday you really do need to look at a few things. If so, then something other than love is involved. Most people who work long hours and say they love the job have some of each.

And your body doesn't much care which it is. The evidence on long hours and health comes from studies that couldn't ask whether people were enjoying themselves. Mika Kivimäki and colleagues pooled studies covering more than six hundred thousand people in Europe, the United States and Australia, who were followed for an average of about eight years. Compared with people working standard hours of thirty-five to forty a week, those working fifty-five hours or more had a 33 per cent higher risk of stroke, and a 13 per cent higher risk of coronary heart disease. The stroke risk rose in steps. It was 10 per cent higher at forty-one to forty-eight hours, which was too small a difference to be sure of, 27 per cent higher at forty-nine to fifty-four, and 33 per cent at fifty-five and above.

On the strength of that and similar evidence, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization estimated that in 2016 about 745,000 deaths worldwide from stroke and heart disease could be attributed to working fifty-five hours or more a week.

I need to be careful here. These are observational studies, and a 33 per cent increase in a risk that's small for any individual in any year remains a small risk. People who work very long hours also tend to sit more, move less, sleep less and drink more, and it's hard to separate the hours from what travels with them. On mental health, Virtanen's team found that civil servants working eleven hours or more a day were about two and a half times as likely to have an episode of major depression over the following five or six

years as those working seven or eight hours. That estimate comes from a modest number of cases and is imprecise. I'm not telling you that your job will give you a stroke or make you depressed. But your body registers the hours whether or not you're enjoying them, and your love of the work doesn't protect it.

If you love your job, the best case for a stop is the one at the end of chapter 8. People who switched off stayed engaged. If you want to be doing this work, and loving it, at fifty-five and sixty, you need the rest now.

"If I leave at five, it'll all fall apart"

Behind a lot of long hours is the feeling that you're holding the place together. You're the one who knows how the rota works and spots the problem before it lands. People come to you when the system does something strange. If you weren't there in the evenings, catching things, you feel they'd start to slip.

Some of this is true, and you should take the credit for it. You are good at your job, and things do go better when you're paying attention. But the belief has three weak points.

The first is the evidence of your own absences. You've been on holiday, and you were off for a week with flu in February. The department didn't collapse. Some things waited, other people dealt with a few of them, and one or two were done differently from how you'd have done them and turned out fine. You came back to a full inbox, certainly. But nothing had fallen apart. If the place can survive your being in Portugal for two weeks, it can survive your being at a swimming gala on a Thursday evening.

The second is that your availability shapes how other people behave. If you're always there and always answer, your team learns to bring things to you when they could resolve them themselves. They do it because it's quicker and safer than deciding for themselves, and it doesn't mean they're incapable. Each time you catch a problem at seven in the evening, you take away a chance for someone else to learn to catch it. After a few years of this you

really are indispensable, because nobody else has had the practice. The long hours helped create the dependence that now seems to justify them.

The third is what indispensability is worth to you. It feels like security. But someone who can't be spared from their present job can't easily be promoted out of it, and an organisation that depends on one person's unpaid evenings is fragile, and a good manager above you would see it that way. A team that carries on working when you're not there reflects much better on you.

There's a fear underneath this that deserves saying out loud, and I'm offering it as a possibility. If you left at half past five and nothing went wrong, that would prove the evenings weren't necessary. Part of you may not want to find that out. The hours have been a large part of how you see yourself, and it's uncomfortable to learn that they weren't holding anything up. I'd say it's much better news than the alternative. It would mean your value to the place lies in your judgement and your skill, which you'd take home with you at half past five and bring back in the morning.

You can test this one. Pick one thing you currently keep hold of because nobody else does it right, and hand it to someone on your team, properly, with the authority to decide. Expect it to be done differently from how you'd do it. See what happens over a month.

What the hours cost you

The last several chapters took the beliefs one at a time. This one adds up the bill. Some of it has been mentioned already, and I'll be brief about those parts.

You're paying in the work itself. On the evidence of chapters 3 to 5, the late hours add little output, produce more mistakes, and take the edge off the following morning. You'd do the same job at least as well in fewer hours, and probably better.

You're paying in health. Chapter 11 gave the figures on stroke, heart disease and depression, with their caveats. Nearer to hand are the things you've already noticed, such as the three colds this winter, the tiredness that has become normal, and the holiday that took ten days to begin.

You're paying in money, which people rarely work out. You're paid for thirty-seven and a half hours and you work fifty-five. Divide your salary by the hours you really work and you'll find your hourly rate is about a third lower than your contract says. You've been giving your employer seventeen and a half free hours a week. Over a year that's more than twenty working weeks. You wouldn't agree to a one-third pay cut if it were put to you in those terms.

You're paying in time with the people you live with. Count what the late hours displace. On a day when you leave at seven and open the laptop at quarter past nine, your time with Ellie is perhaps forty minutes, most of it spent getting her to bed. Your time with Sam is dinner. Across a year, the gap between that and an evening that

starts at six is several hundred hours. At nine, a child wants you there for the gala, the walk to school, the long pointless conversation about which animal would win in a fight. By fourteen she won't, or not in the same way.

You're paying in everything else you used to be. Think about what you did, ten years ago, that you don't do now. There may have been a sport, an instrument, a group of friends you saw every month, a garden, a course you were going to take. Hardly anyone decides to give these up. They went one at a time in busy periods and didn't come back. What's left is a person who works and recovers from working. If the job went tomorrow, through no fault of yours, you'd have very little else to fall back on.

And you're paying in the quality of your time off. Even the hours you don't work are coloured by the ones you do. You're at the table, but you're thinking about the rota. You're tired in a way that makes everything feel like effort, so the free time goes on the sofa and the phone. People who work long hours often say they've no energy for anything else, and conclude that they couldn't use more free time if they had it. It's the hours that have taken the energy, though.

I should put the other side. You've had things from the hours too. You've had Helen's good opinion, a reputation for reliability, perhaps promotion, and the satisfaction of knowing you never let anything drop. Those are real. I'd ask you to weigh two things, though. You should consider how many of those you'd have had anyway, on the strength of your work. And you should ask whether you'd have chosen this trade, stated as plainly as I've just stated it, if anyone had offered it to you at the start.

What they cost everyone else

It's natural to think of your hours as your own business. It's your evening, given up by your own choice, and the only person paying is you. But other people pay too, in two places.

The first is your team. You're their manager, and managers set norms whether they mean to or not. When you send an email at half past ten at night, you may be thinking only of clearing your own list. The person who receives it learns what time their manager works, and wonders whether a reply is expected. When you're at your desk at seven every evening, the person who'd like to leave at half past five has to walk past you to do it. You've never asked anyone to stay late and you'd be dismayed to think you were pressuring them. But people take their cue from what the boss does, whatever the boss says. Some of your team are almost certainly working longer than they need to because of you. And Tom, who has the confidence not to, pays a small price in your estimation every day, for doing his job well in the time he's paid for.

If you believe the argument of chapters 3 and 4, this matters for the work as well as the people. A team that copies your hours is a team working in the flat part of the curve, tired, making more mistakes. If you lead by example into long hours, the work gets worse.

The second place is home. Sam has been running the evenings alone for six years. That means the dinners, the homework, the galas, and the low-level daily work of knowing what a nine-year-old needs for school tomorrow. Whatever you've agreed between you,

the hours have made the agreement for you. Even when you're there, Sam and Ellie get what's left after work has had the best of you, which by seven o'clock is a tired person with half a mind still on the rota.

They also absorb the unpredictability. "I'll be home by half six" followed by a text at quarter past saying you'll be another hour is a small thing each time. But when it's repeated across years, the people at home learn to stop counting on you. They plan as though you won't be there, and they're pleasantly surprised when you are. They're not punishing you by doing that. They've adapted sensibly to the way you've behaved. It means that even if you come home early one night, the evening has been arranged without you in it.

Children also learn what's normal from what they see. Ellie is learning, from you, what a working adult's life looks like. She's learning that work comes first, that tiredness is the normal condition of grown-ups, and that the laptop at the kitchen table matters more than whatever she wanted to show you. You wouldn't say any of those things to her, but she'll learn them from how you live.

I don't mean any of this as an accusation. You've been working these hours partly for them, to keep the job secure and the mortgage paid. But it's worth asking them what they'd choose. Most families, if asked, would trade a good deal of security for a parent and partner who was home at six and properly there.

What a stop does

The rule in the next chapter is a fixed time at which you finish work. Before you get to it, I'd like to describe what a stop does, because it's easy to see it only as a loss of hours. This chapter is my reasoning, drawing on the evidence so far, and not a research finding.

A stop makes the day a fixed size, and the fixed size forces you to choose. Remember the day before your holiday from chapter 5. You were decisive because the day had an end. A stop gives you a mild version of that every day. When you know at nine in the morning that you finish at half past five, the question changes. You stop asking what needs doing, to which the answer is always everything. You start asking what most needs doing in the eight hours you have, and that question has an answer. The report that's already fine doesn't get reworded, because there isn't time, and no harm comes of it.

A stop exposes drift. In the first fortnight you'll find out which parts of your work were real and which were filling time. Most people find that the real work fits much better than they feared. Some find that it really doesn't fit, and that's valuable too, because now they know the size of the staffing problem, and they have evidence.

A stop protects your good hours. If you finish at half past five, eat with your family, do something that isn't work, and sleep properly, you arrive at your desk the next morning as a different person from

the one who closed a laptop at twenty to eleven. The first three hours of that person's day are worth a great deal more than the evening session they replaced.

A stop lets you switch off, which you can't do while work might resume at any moment. If the evening is possibly a work evening, some part of your mind stays on duty. When there's a stop, the evening is definitely yours, and the part of you that was on duty can stand down. This is the detachment that protected Sonnentag's employees, and you won't get it while the boundary is soft.

A stop also makes the unfinished bearable. The title of this book is meant literally. The work will still be there tomorrow. At the moment that thought probably causes you anxiety, because it sounds like falling behind. But think about what it says. The work isn't going anywhere, and nothing gets lost. The email that wasn't answered at six will be answered at nine, by a fresher person, and almost nobody will notice the difference. In most jobs very few things can't wait fifteen hours. Those that really can't are rarer than they feel.

I should warn you about the first weeks. At half past five on the first day, with things undone, stopping will feel wrong, like walking out of a shop without paying. You'll feel guilty and exposed. It's the unease from chapter 8, the same one the Sunday session was relieving, and it's the feeling of a habit being broken. It doesn't show that you've made a mistake. It fades faster than you'd expect, usually within two or three weeks, as the evidence comes in that nothing has fallen apart.

Hardly anyone will notice. You're expecting comment. What usually happens is that a colleague says "off already?" once, in the first week, and after that your new hours are just your hours. The opinions you've imagined your colleagues holding about hours are mostly your own.

The decision

Here's the rule I'm suggesting.

I stop at a time I've chosen in advance. The work will still be there tomorrow, and I'll do it then.

It has seven parts.

Count first. If you haven't done the exercise in chapter 1, do it now, for one week. You need to know your real hours, and you need a look at what the last two hours of the day contain.

Choose the stop. Pick a finishing time for ordinary days. I'd suggest the end of your contracted day plus no more than half an hour. If that feels impossible from where you are, choose a time an hour earlier than you leave now, hold it for a month, and then move it again. The time matters less than the fact that it's fixed and chosen before the day begins.

End the day on purpose. Spend the last ten minutes on a short closing routine. Write down where you've got to, and the first three things you'll do tomorrow. Check tomorrow's diary. Then close everything. This is what makes it possible to switch off, because your mind can let go of something once it's been written down.

After the stop, no work. That means no laptop at the kitchen table and no work email on your phone in the evening. If you can, take work email off your personal phone altogether, or turn its

notifications off outside working hours. If a thought about work arrives at nine in the evening, write it on a piece of paper and leave it for the morning.

Keep one full day a week with no work in it at all, and preferably two. A full day without work each week is what the law entitles you to, and on Pencavel's evidence it's worth about a tenth of your output. If the Sunday session goes, replace it with twenty minutes of planning on Friday afternoon.

Make exceptions deliberately. There will be real deadlines, and an occasional long day for a real reason is fine. An exception has three marks. It's for something specific, you decided on it in advance, and it has an end date. A board paper that's due on Friday fits. "It's a busy time" doesn't, because it's always a busy time. If you find you're making an exception most weeks, then the long hours have come back.

Tell people. Tell your manager what you're doing and why, in terms of the work. You might say that you've noticed your late hours aren't productive, that you're going to finish at half past five and protect your mornings, and that you'd like her to judge it by results. Most managers will accept this, and some will be relieved. Tell your team as well, and tell them you don't expect replies to anything outside working hours. If you must write an email in the evening, schedule it to send at nine the next day.

Plans of the "when this happens, then I'll do that" kind make a decision much more likely to survive a pressured afternoon. Peter Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran pooled 94 tests of such plans and

found that they made people a good deal more likely to follow through. Here are three, which you can adapt.

When it's ten minutes before my stop, then I'll write tomorrow's first three tasks, whatever I'm in the middle of.

When I think "I'll just finish this first", then I'll write down where I've got to and finish it in the morning.

When I reach for the laptop after dinner, then I'll write the thought on paper and go and find Ellie.

Sooner or later you'll slip. You'll stay until eight one Wednesday without having planned to. When you notice, stop, go home, and keep to your time the next day. One late night doesn't bring the old hours back.

Finally, put something in the space. An evening with nothing in it will fill up with work, or with the sofa and the phone. Decide what the time is for. The gala on Thursdays is an obvious start. After that, look at the list from chapter 13 of things you used to do, and pick one.

Bosses, busy seasons and other hard cases

If the pressure comes from your manager. First check that it does. Many people assume an expectation that nobody has ever stated. Have the conversation in chapter 16 and see what happens. If your manager really does expect long hours as a matter of course, put the discussion on the ground of output. Agree what you're to deliver, and ask to be judged on that. If the answer is still that you must be seen at your desk until seven, you've learned something important about the job. You can stay and accept it with open eyes, you can push back with the help of a union or Acas, or you can look for a better employer. Any of those is better than letting the hours continue on the assumption that they must.

If the workload really doesn't fit. Give the stop an honest month, cutting the low-value work first. If the essential work still can't be done, write down what isn't getting done and take it to your manager as a question of priorities. "I can do A, B and C in the time. D and E won't fit. Which matters most, or can we get help?" Every manager knows how to answer that question. It turns your private overload into a decision about resources that the organisation has to make, as it should.

If your profession runs on billable hours or visible devotion.

Law, consulting, finance, medicine and some others build long hours into the career structure. I won't pretend a rule from a short book undoes that. What you can do is apply the ideas inside the constraint. Protect a full day off, guard your sleep, keep work out of whatever evenings you do have, and be honest with yourself about how many of your hours are productive and how many are for

show. And make a deliberate decision about how many years you're willing to work this way, so that it doesn't carry on by default.

If you're self-employed or run the business. With no contract, a stop matters more to you than to anyone, because nobody else will ever send you home. The fear is that every hour not worked is money lost. Pencavel's curve applies to owners too. Set your stop, keep your day off, and watch what happens to your income over three months. Most people find that it doesn't fall.

If you teach, nurse, or do any job where the work is for people who need you. Marking, planning and paperwork will take every evening you offer them, and the people you serve are real. But a worn-out teacher or nurse serves them worse. Set a limit on the hours you'll give to work at home, put them at fixed times, and let some things be done less thoroughly. If the job can't be done within any reasonable limit, that's a matter to raise with colleagues and unions, because one person's weekends won't solve it.

If you work across time zones. Agree which hours you're reachable, make them known, and move your stop to suit. An early call can be balanced by an early finish. Don't let your day stretch to cover both ends.

If you work from home. Without a journey home to end the day, you need something else to end it. Work in one place, and at the stop close the laptop and put it away out of sight, in a bag or a drawer. A ten-minute walk round the block afterwards can do the job that the commute used to do.

If it really is a crunch. If it's the year-end close, a product launch or a court date, work the hours, under the exception rule. Decide the end date in advance, keep your day off even then, and return to your stop the day after it ends. When the day after comes, you'll have to make yourself do it, because that's the point at which habit tries to hold on to the longer hours.

If you need the money from overtime. Then the hours aren't a habit, and most of this book isn't aimed at you. The evidence on rest still applies. Protect your sleep and your day off as far as you can, and be especially careful with driving and machinery at the end of long shifts.

If work is where you hide. Sometimes the hours are long because home is hard. There might be a strained relationship, a bereavement, or a loneliness that the office covers. If you suspect that's part of it, be honest with yourself about it. Cutting your hours will bring you face to face with whatever you've been avoiding, and it would be wise to line up some support first. That might be a friend, your GP, or a counsellor.

If you're already burnt out. If you're exhausted beyond what a weekend fixes, detached from work you used to care about, and struggling to function, a stop isn't enough, and you shouldn't try to fix this alone. See your GP, as the preface said. You may need time off, and you should take it if it's offered.

Tuesday again

It's a Tuesday some months on, and at twenty past five you're writing three lines on a pad. They say to finish the rota for the north team, to ring the contractor about the Elm Road voids, and to give the draft of the board paper to Tom for comment. You check tomorrow's diary, close the laptop and put it in your bag. It stays in the bag until morning now. At half past five you say goodnight to the cleaner, who's just arriving, and go.

The first fortnight was as uncomfortable as promised. On the first Monday you stood in the car park at twenty-five to six feeling like a truant. You'd left eleven emails unanswered and a report half read. On Tuesday morning you dealt with all of it by ten o'clock. Nobody had noticed. By the third week the feeling had mostly gone, and something else had replaced it. At nine in the morning you were sharper than you'd been in years.

The work looks different. You have eight hours, so you start with what matters. The report that's already fine goes out as it is. You answer email in two batches, and your replies have got shorter. You handed the weekly performance figures to Priyanka, who does them differently and at least as well. You do less than you used to, measured in hours, and as far as you can tell nothing that matters has been dropped. One thing really didn't fit, which was the new compliance returns. You took that to Helen with a list, and she moved them to another team. She'd had no idea how long they took.

You told Helen what you were doing in the first week. You'd rehearsed a long justification. She listened to the first two sentences and said, "Good. I've been worried about you." She hasn't mentioned it since. Your review in the spring was the best you've had.

There have been exceptions. The board paper in March took two late evenings, planned on the Monday and finished on the Thursday, and on the Friday you left at half past five. In April you slid for a week without deciding to, and caught it when you noticed the laptop was on the kitchen table again. You put it back in the bag.

You're at the pool on Thursdays. Ellie came third in the backstroke last week and looked for you in the seats before she looked at the clock. You and Sam have started cooking together on Tuesday evenings, not very well. You've joined a five-a-side group on Wednesdays, where you're the second oldest and nowhere near the worst. On Sundays there's nothing, and on some Sundays you still feel the old pull at about eleven o'clock. You've learned to let it pass.

Tom still leaves at quarter past five. You've revised your opinion of Tom. You've also noticed that two others on the team have started leaving on time since you did, and that the department's numbers haven't suffered.

You're still ambitious and you still mind about the work. You've learned that the hours weren't a good way of showing either, and that the people you were trying to impress couldn't tell the difference.

Here's one action. Decide what time you'll stop tomorrow. Write it down now, along with the first three things you'll do the morning after. Then tell one person.

Notes

This book gives general information. It isn't medical, legal or career advice, and it's no substitute for a professional who knows your situation. NHS and GOV.UK guidance is quoted as I found it in September 2026. The NHS guidance applies to England and the working time rules to Great Britain.

I've kept sources out of the chapters where I could so they read easily. Here they are by chapter, with the limits I'm aware of. Unless I say otherwise, I read the published summary of each paper and not the full text. I checked each paper for a retraction or correction notice in September 2026 and found none on the papers cited. Where a chapter isn't listed, it rests on my own reasoning. That includes chapters 1, 2, 10, 12 to 15 and 18. You, Ellie, Sam, Tom, Helen, Priyanka and every other example are invented for illustration.

Before you start. The advice on when to see a GP about stress, and on 111 and 999, is from the NHS page "Stress". The 48-hour average week and the opt-out are from the GOV.UK page "Maximum weekly working hours". The 11 hours of daily rest and the weekly day off are from the GOV.UK page "Rest breaks at work". Acas is the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Chapter 3. Pencavel, "The productivity of working hours", Economic Journal 125, 2015, pages 2052 to 2076. I read the full text of the freely available working paper version, IZA Discussion Paper 8129, 2014, and the figures of forty-nine, sixty-three, fifty-six and seventy hours are from there. The workers studied were on piece

rates in particular munitions jobs, and the observations are of groups of workers and not individuals. Collewet and Sauermann, "Working hours and productivity", *Labour Economics* 47, 2017, pages 96 to 106. I read the summary of the working paper version. That the call centre was in the Netherlands is from memory. The view that mental work suffers more than manual work from long hours is mine.

Chapter 4. Williamson and Feyer, "Moderate sleep deprivation produces impairments in cognitive and motor performance equivalent to legally prescribed levels of alcohol intoxication", *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 57, 2000, pages 649 to 655. The volunteers were kept awake through the night, which isn't the same as a long working day after a normal night's sleep, so applying it to an evening laptop session is my step. The drink-drive limit in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is 0.08 per cent. It's 0.05 per cent in Scotland and most of Europe. Virtanen, Singh-Manoux, Ferrie, Gimeno, Marmot, Elovainio, Jokela, Vahtera and Kivimäki, "Long working hours and cognitive function: the Whitehall II Study", *American Journal of Epidemiology* 169, 2009, pages 596 to 605. There were 2,214 participants. Dembe, Erickson, Delbos and Banks, "The impact of overtime and long work hours on occupational injuries and illnesses: new evidence from the United States", *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 62, 2005, pages 588 to 597. Extending a finding about injuries to errors at a desk is my inference.

Chapter 5. Parkinson's remark opened an essay in *The Economist* in 1955. It was satire and I've treated it as such. The day before a holiday is my illustration.

Chapter 6. Reid, "Embracing, passing, revealing, and the ideal worker image: how people navigate expected and experienced professional identities", *Organization Science* 26, 2015, pages 997 to 1017. The published summary confirms the 115 interviews, the use of performance evaluations, and that how people managed their departure from the expected devotion affected how they were evaluated. The details I give, including the comparison of ratings and the ways people arranged lighter schedules, are from my memory of the paper and of the author's own account of it in the business press. Clark, Michel, Zhdanova, Pui and Baltes, "All work and no play? A meta-analytic examination of the correlates and outcomes of workaholism", *Journal of Management* 42, 2016, pages 1836 to 1873.

Chapter 7. Munsch, Ridgeway and Williams, "Pluralistic ignorance and the flexibility bias: understanding and mitigating flextime and flexplace bias at work", *Work and Occupations* 41, 2014, pages 40 to 62. The study concerned requests for flexible hours and home working, and not long hours as such. The effect of senior staff working flexibly held for flexible hours and not for working from home. The picture of five people at their desks is mine.

Chapter 8. Pencavel as above. The committee was the Health of Munition Workers Committee, set up in 1915. Sonnentag, Binnewies and Mojza, "Staying well and engaged when demands are high: the role of psychological detachment", *Journal of Applied Psychology* 95, 2010, pages 965 to 976.

Chapter 9. Belkin, Becker and Conroy, "The invisible leash: the impact of organizational expectations for email monitoring after-hours on employee resources, well-being, and turnover intentions",

Group and Organization Management 45, 2020, pages 709 to 740. It was a survey, so it shows association and not cause.

Chapter 11. Clark and colleagues as above. The summary doesn't report the contrast with work engagement, which I've given from memory of the paper and of related work. Kivimäki and 43 colleagues, "Long working hours and risk of coronary heart disease and stroke: a systematic review and meta-analysis of published and unpublished data for 603,838 individuals", *Lancet* 386, 2015, pages 1739 to 1746. Pega and colleagues, "Global, regional, and national burdens of ischemic heart disease and stroke attributable to exposure to long working hours for 194 countries, 2000 to 2016", *Environment International* 154, 2021, article 106595. The estimate was 745,194 deaths. Virtanen, Stansfeld, Fuhrer, Ferrie and Kivimäki, "Overtime work as a predictor of major depressive episode: a 5-year follow-up of the Whitehall II study", *PLoS One* 7, 2012, article e30719. The odds ratio was 2.43, and the range the authors give for it runs from 1.11 to 5.30, which is wide.

Chapter 13. The pay calculation uses the example's own figures. Fifty-five hours against thirty-seven and a half is a 32 per cent lower hourly rate, and seventeen and a half hours a week over 46 working weeks is about 800 hours, or a little over 21 weeks at the contracted rate.

Chapter 16. Gollwitzer and Sheeran, "Implementation intentions and goal achievement: a meta-analysis of effects and processes", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 38, 2006, pages 69 to 119. The rule and its parts haven't been tested together, and what

chapter 15 says to expect is my expectation and not a finding. The idea of a closing routine at the end of the working day is widely taught, and I haven't traced it to a source.