

Find Balance by Boosting Energy

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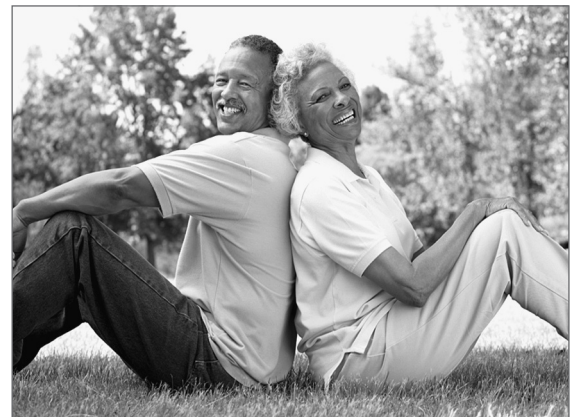
Educational Objectives

1. Learn to manage time effectively.
2. Understand the benefits of physical activity.
3. Learn how to restore your soul by connecting with nature.
4. Understand the importance of quality sleep.
5. Learn what friendship and community can do for your health.

Even when we give our attention to the things we enjoy, we may discover our attention is scattered and diffused. We have too many things on our plate, and we are distracted by the sheer number of commitments, relationships and responsibilities. Our physical and emotional health declines.

Sometimes, we become so preoccupied we forget what we enjoy.

Carving out time for self-care will boost our energy and can make a real difference in finding balance in our lives.



Time Management

So where do I find the time? Making the most of our time is a goal we often want to achieve, but many times we feel our time is scattered to the four winds through interruptions, lack of focus and stress. Working hard is not the same as working smart. It is more effective to prioritize and use your time well than to work all the time. Try these tried and true tips to work smart.

- **Plan.** When you start with a plan for the day or week, you will be more efficient and productive. A plan for the week with task lists will help you to focus.
- **Big rocks first.** Each day, identify the three most important tasks and finish them first. Then, do the other tasks on your list. You will relax and enjoy your day more once the important tasks are complete.
- **Focus.** Once you start a task, stay on the task and complete it. Constantly bouncing around among multiple tasks reduces efficiency.

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- **Handle it one time.** Resist the urge to think “I will get back to it later.” Just do it! Sometimes we read an email message or look at a piece of paper three or four times before doing the work. Set aside time to read email and complete the task right away. File only if it is something that really requires a block of time.
- **Organize.** Get yourself, your things and your schedule organized. Incorporate simple, effective systems into your life so that you can actually get things done.

Activity: Juggling Balls

Start the lesson by juggling a ball and gradually adding more. One or two balls are easy, three is manageable, but four or more starts to cause problems. Try adding a glass ball, which reminds us that some balls cannot be dropped. Each person decides what the ball represents: family, church, parents, etc.

Physical Activity

Can you boost your energy by using your energy? Yes, you can! One of the benefits of physical activity is that most people feel like they have more energy. The effect is almost immediate.



There is no magic pill we can take that ensures health and well-being but the next best thing might be physical activity. Exercise means that more oxygen is flowing into our cells. This improves the function of cells and gives us an energy boost at the same time.

Why is regular physical activity important? Regular physical activity can produce long-term health benefits. Being physically active can help you:

- Increase your chances of living longer;
- Feel better about yourself;
- Decrease your chances of becoming depressed;
- Sleep well at night;
- Move around more easily;
- Have stronger muscles and bones;
- Maintain or achieve a healthy weight;
- Be with friends or meet new people; and,
- Enjoy yourself and have fun.

When you are NOT physically active, you are more likely to:

- Have less energy;
- Develop heart disease;
- Develop type 2 diabetes;
- Have high blood pressure;
- Have high blood cholesterol; and,
- Have a stroke.

How much physical activity? Strive for 2 hours and 30 minutes each week of aerobic physical activity at a moderate level. That can translate to 30 minutes most days of the week. Each activity should be done for at least 10 minutes at a time to have any helpful effect.

Overwhelmed? Don't be. Start where you are. Choose activities that you enjoy and that you can do regularly. Look for ways to incorporate more activity into your day. Find a physical activity partner that will help keep both of you motivated.

Meeting Activities:

- Use the Health Motivator Calendar and track activity daily. Report to the club each month.
- Brainstorm ideas to increase activity as an individual.
- Brainstorm ways to increase activity as a club or in your community, such as a walking challenge.
- If you have access to Internet, show USDA's Physical Activity Tracker at www.supertracker.usda.gov/physicalactivitytracker.aspx.





Connect with Nature

Connecting physical activity with being outdoors provides a double benefit. There is something about being outside that can restore your soul. It is vital to healthy survival.

“I am well again, I came to life in the cool winds and crystal waters of the mountains.”
– John Muir

Direct exposure to nature is essential to our physical and emotional health. Nature in and around the home appears to protect our psychological well-being. Making time to be outdoors and being active outdoors can bring a real boost to our lives. Set a goal to spend more time outdoors.

“Spare time in the garden, either digging, setting out, or weeding; there is no better way to preserve your health.”
– Leonard Maegar, *English Gardener*

Sleep

You can boost your energy by getting enough sleep, too! Getting quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life and safety.

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being. Sleep deficiency can cause you to feel very tired during the day. You may have trouble making decisions, solving problems, remembering things, controlling your emotions and behavior, and coping with change. You may take longer to finish tasks, have a slower reaction time and make more mistakes.

While everyone’s need for sleep is different, on average, adults including the elderly need 7 to 8 hours a day. While napping may give you a boost of energy, it does not provide all of the benefits of nighttime sleep. You can’t really make up for lost sleep.

Sleep is often the first thing that busy people squeeze out of schedules. Allow yourself enough time to sleep. Making time to sleep will help you protect your health and well-being now and in the future.

Friendships

Meaningful friendships are vital to joy in our lives and positive health outcomes. Friendship satisfies psychological needs and therefore improved happiness (Demire, 2012). Making time for the friends we enjoy should be a priority.

The quality of social interaction is important. Health outcomes are dependent upon social integration; social support and negative interaction all have effects upon health outcomes. Positive interactions benefit us and negative ones harm our health (Cohen, 2004).

Limit social media. Social media can have positive benefits; however, studies show that if it is the only means of connection, our need for real face-to-face relationships won’t be met. It creates distance – we know what is going on in someone’s life, but we aren’t really engaged. At first it may seem fun, but ultimately it begins to feel meaningless.



Positive Social Connections

One of the most “dependable, universal means to a thriving life is simply to socialize more,” (Buettner, 2010). The study showed that the happiest people were those who were the most connected. Even persons not very outgoing tend to be happier when they are around people.

One of the strategies for creating social bonds that will benefit the individual is to join a club (Buettner, 2010). It is important to find an organization to help nurture interests and talents. Join a group that compels you to show up regularly. Joining a group that meets even once a month produces the same happiness as doubling your income.

Being engaged with a group has been extensively shown to have a tremendous benefit to our psychological, physical and cognitive functions. Social disengagement is associated with depression. Positive relationships in families, communities, schools, workplaces and culture reduce the risk or delay cognitive impairment to our brain health (Ristau, 2011).

The combination of better time management, increased physical activity, connecting with nature, adequate sleep and social time with friends will boost our energy and bring positive balance to our lives.

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