

# BALANCE

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## Run for Your Life

Who says you can't outrun old age? A new study concludes that aging runners live longer and are less likely to suffer physical disability than non-runners. All you need to get started is a pair of quality running shoes and an "all clear" from your doctor before beginning. Ease yourself into your routine by starting with a brisk 10-minute walk. After you've warmed up, jog slowly for one minute and then return to walking for another 10 minutes. Reduce walking time and increase jogging time by one minute each week until you're able to jog for 20–30 minutes straight. Overtraining is counterproductive, so don't push too hard. Shoot for three sessions per week. Always remember to stretch before beginning your jog, and walk for 10 minutes after your run to cool down and prevent injuries.

## You've Got Mail

Is e-mail consuming your life? Continuously checking e-mail at work can drag down your productivity, yet 20 percent of people check e-mail 10 times a day or more—a lot more, according to a recent survey by AOL. Dedicate small blocks of time for catching up on e-mails during the day. Kill alerts for incoming mail so you won't be tempted to respond to it. Avoid distractions by using filters to separate work from personal e-mail. Minimize e-mail volume by asking coworkers to contact you by phone or in person whenever possible.

## Negotiation Skills for Everyone

The ability to negotiate is an important life skill, but you may be surprised to learn that you don't have to be aggressive or pushy to be good at it. Effective negotiation leaves both parties feeling satisfied with the result. Try your hand at negotiating with a simple technique called "reframing." Reframing involves two people placing their focus on what they are trying to accomplish (the need) rather than their "positions" (the demand). For example, let's say that Erin wants Jeff to stay home for the evening, but Jeff wants to spend time with his friends. These positions tell you nothing about the true source of the conflict between the two individuals. Reframing the issue may reveal that Erin needs companionship because she's felt unusually lonely that week, while Jeff may be looking for some downtime to blow off steam accumulated from a stressful work project (or vice versa).

By addressing the needs instead of the positions, a new range of solutions becomes possible. When you are faced with conflict, try zeroing in on the other person's needs by asking effective questions. Listen carefully without interruption and follow-up by restating the answer back to the other person to make sure that you understood correctly. By reframing, you have shifted from being combatants to partners in finding a solution that satisfies both parties' needs.



## Lazy Ways to Improve Creativity

Creativity is the ability to imagine new ideas, possibilities and solutions. Simply put, it's the ability to think and act in new ways. If you don't think that you are naturally creative, you may not be giving yourself permission to be inventive. Try these lazy ways of turning on your inner innovator:

- 1) Daydream: Your teacher may have scolded you for it, but letting your mind wander freely will allow it to leave the beaten path and explore new territory.
- 2) Brainstorm: Take an idea and bounce it around with several coworkers. Don't worry about getting off topic. Have fun and relax.
- 3) Play: Toss a ball around; grab some LEGO bricks and build a castle.
- 4) Sit quietly and try meditation: Reflect and contemplate the problem needing a creative solution in total silence.

## Next Time, You'll be Assertive

Don't kick yourself for not being assertive—next time you'll be ready for it. Before an event occurs, make a decision that you will demonstrate assertiveness. Next, visualize yourself carrying out your response—sort of a mental rehearsal. When something happens, take a few minutes to examine your feelings about how you responded since your feelings can give clues to your success. Some people experience feelings of guilt after being assertive. If you notice these feelings, you may need a bit of coaching and support to get comfortable with assertiveness. Talk with a close friend, professional counselor or employee assistance professional to get another perspective. If you didn't respond the way you hoped, decide what alternative response or responses you will make the next time. Keep going and repeat the process. This “staircase technique” to achievement can work with other life challenges, too.

## Squeezing Work Time: Parkinson's Law

If you took too long to do an unpleasant work task you knew was not time-consuming, you were probably a victim of something called Parkinson's Law. Parkinson's Law states, “Work expands to fill the time available to do it.” The phenomenon combines procrastination and busywork (or distractions) to avoid an unpleasant task until a deadline forces you to finally complete it. The more time you have, the more likely it is that you will substitute unimportant and sometimes unnecessary tasks for those that are undesirable. Here's how to conquer this:

- 1) Tackle unpleasant work first.
- 2) Compress time by promising completion of tasks to others sooner.
- 3) Try using a kitchen timer and break tasks down into 45 minutes segments. Work intensely without distraction. Then break for 15 minutes. Repeat with 45 minute work segments and breaks until finished.

## Couples Counseling: When Only One Will Go

In marriage, it takes two to tango but when problems within the relationship require professional counseling, don't be afraid to go solo if your spouse chooses to sit out. Attending marital counseling alone doesn't mean admitting that you're the problem. Even without your spouse, a professional counselor can provide tools and strategies that you can use within your relationship. It's also a good way to discover your own inner workings and learn to be happier. Just because your partner balks at counseling today doesn't mean he or she won't join you in the future. In the meantime, why not take some positive steps right now?

# Flu Prevention

We are all familiar with the symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, headache, chills, fatigue, body aches and just feeling miserable. Flu season is here.

The flu, also known as influenza, is a contagious respiratory illness that is easily spread by coughing, sneezing and nasal secretions. Healthy adults may be able to infect others one day before showing symptoms and up to five days after getting sick. Anyone can get the flu, although children and older adults are at highest risk. Flu outbreaks can begin as early as October, but most flu cases are diagnosed in January or later. The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated. Each year, scientists develop a vaccine to cover the anticipated influenza viruses for that year, which is why an annual vaccination is recommended. After vaccination, it takes up to two weeks for protection to develop and lasts for one year. The two types of flu vaccines are:

- The “flu shot”: an inactivated vaccine that is given by injection. The flu shot is approved for children older than 6 months, healthy adults and adults with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease and diabetes).
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine: a vaccine made with a live, weakened flu virus that is unable to cause the flu. It is approved for use in healthy individuals, 2 to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

Other ways to prevent flu outbreaks involve using good health habits daily:

- Avoid close contact to people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use the crease of your elbow when coughing or sneezing, which decreases the risk of expelling the flu virus in the air, on surfaces and your hands.
- Clean your hands. Good hand washing habits are excellent protection from germs.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread by touching a contaminated surface and then introducing the germs to your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits. Eat a nutritious diet, be physically active, get plenty of sleep, and manage your stress. Keep your immune system healthy!

## Nap Time for “Left Brainers”

Studies show that a short 20-minute snooze can stimulate/turn on the right side of your brain. This is the creative, emotion-laden and more abstract thinking part of your brain. This can be a great way to kick-start outside-the-box thinking, especially for those who are more left-brain dominant. Left-brain dominant people tend to be more analytical, structured, linear in their thinking, mathematical, and likely to view things sequentially to understand the whole.

## Relationship Harmony and Heart Health

Conflict in close relationships may contribute to heart disease, according to a study conducted by the International Institute for Society and Health, University College (London).

The Archives of Internal Medicine released the results of the study, which examined negative aspects of disharmony in close relationships and the potential links to heart disease. These findings add a new motivation to improve harmony in personal relationships. In addition to living a happier life, improving the quality of a close relationship may help you live a longer one as well!



## Give Teen Drivers the Total Experience

Independence has its rewards and its responsibilities. Before handing over the car keys to your teen, make sure that he or she is prepared for more than just parallel parking and shifting gears. Your teen's attainment of legal driving age presents a unique teaching opportunity—one in which you'll have plenty of leverage. Begin by teaching your teen the power of preventive maintenance. Show him or her how to check oil, coolant, and other fluid levels. Show how a tire pressure gauge works. Stress the need for adhering to a regular maintenance schedule by reviewing the manufacturer's recommendations in the owner's manual. All cars break down sooner or later, so make sure your teen is prepared for emergencies. Show how to use jumper cables, change a tire and use road flares. Pack an emergency kit with tools, water, blankets, dehydrated food, a few dollars in cash, and a flashlight and store it in the trunk. Finish your child's driving education by going over your car insurance policy and explaining deductible and coverage. Requiring that your child pay for at least a portion of gas and insurance is also a great way to teach financial responsibility and will encourage safer driving habits.

## First, Burn Your To-Do List

You might be great at keeping to-do lists and crossing through all those objectives that you accomplish, but are you frustrated that this has not coincided with accomplishing the goals that you are most passionate about in your life? The more you do, the more it seems needs to be done. Productivity experts say this problem relates to a lack of focus—a lack of focus on the big picture. You are looking at the trees instead of the forest. The fix: first, decide what goals you want to accomplish. Where do you want to be months from now or by next year at this time? Next, decide what directly relates to accomplishing these goals. Stay in this frame of mind when you create, manage and make decisions with a to-do list. This is also called “clarity of purpose.” Once you have it, you ignore the small stuff that eats away at your time and make greater leaps forward with your goals.

To speak with an EAP professional,  
please call: **800.327.2384**

