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9.2021

Reclaim Your Time



You don't have to move to a cabin in the woods, quit your job or give away everything you own to lead a life with more enjoyment and freedom. Instead, take small steps toward reclaiming your most important asset: time.

Schedule your own enjoyment. It's easy to fill up your calendar with must-do items, and it can be satisfying to feel busy. But don't let that busy feeling rob you of time for other pursuits – time to exercise, reflect, enjoy friends and family, relax and have fun. Block off unscheduled time on your calendar that is for you alone, and protect it.



Get rid of time-wasters. Limit social media usage, news feed browsing, mobile gaming, streaming videos and other time-eaters. Surprise – you could reclaim an hour or more a day that you didn't realize you had.

Change your routine. Get up an hour earlier. Cook lunches and dinners ahead on the weekend. Split chores, shopping and errands with a friend or family member. Downsize wherever you can to regain precious minutes of free time.

Above all, change your mindset. Think of your time as a valuable possession, like money, and learn to protect it. Spend and give it intentionally, and *pay yourself* first, so you never feel like your time is in someone else's control.



Hobbies Help You

Too busy? Stressed? Overwhelmed? Get a hobby! Adding another activity to your already-hectic life might sound crazy, but carving out time for an enjoyable pursuit can help you:

- **MANAGE** stress. Hobbies are a source of enjoyment and fun that help balance life and counteract negative stress. They also can be challenging, providing the good stress that drives you to achieve and accomplish more.
- **JOIN** in a community. Hobbies provide ways to meet people who share your interests and engage in a fun activity that brings people together.
- **STRUCTURE** your free time. Hobbies give you purpose and help you use your free time to do something fun, enriching and mentally or physically active.
- **STIMULATE** your mind. A hobby can help you learn and develop confidence, skills and knowledge.


There's no right or wrong hobby. Any structured activity that you like could become a hobby. Simply take the time to make it a regular part of your life.

Making the MOST of Your EAP

If your employer offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), it is a benefit you can use, just like your health or dental insurance. An EAP helps employees and their families in dealing with life issues, including:

- Transitions such as divorce, a new baby, grief, loss or caregiving.
- Conditions such as stress, burnout, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, PTSD or eating disorders.
- Coping with difficult situations and people.

Research shows that although companies have been offering EAPs for decades, many people do not use them. EAP services offer low-cost counseling and advice, usually for issues that can affect performance and productivity on and off the job.



If your employer offers an EAP, your supervisor or human resources department can tell you how to access services. **A few things to keep in mind:**

- EAPs are staffed by professional counselors.
- EAP services may help increase productivity, reduce sick leave and lower the incidence of workplace accidents.
- EAP services are confidential. A supervisor may recommend you seek services, but he or she is not allowed to discuss your EAP use with coworkers.

When you face a life or work issue, even just a couple of EAP sessions can help you cope better.



Help for Depression

In the workplace, depression ranks very high among health problems. Many workers fail to get help for their depression, and suffer unnecessarily.

It's difficult to meet your goals and do your job well when you feel depressed. Don't fall short of your potential or give up on your dreams. Recognize the symptoms of depression: persistent sad and hopeless feelings, extreme fatigue, lack of interest in professional and personal activities, appetite and sleep changes, or moodiness that lasts for several weeks.

If your symptoms continue, talk with your health care provider about treatment. Depression does not go away on its own.

Most people with depression can feel better with medication, by working with a therapist, or both. It can take time and patience to find the right medication and dosage and the right therapist. Talk with your provider if you feel like the treatment isn't working, so you can make adjustments.

Exercise has also been shown to help people with depression feel better. Walk, run, swim, cycle, dance, play a sport or perform some other moderate-intensity activity for at least 150 minutes weekly. Mindfulness practices, such as yoga, tai chi or sitting in quiet reflection, can also aid depression treatment.

The key to managing depression is to get help; don't go it alone. Find the right combination of treatment and lifestyle change that works for you.


When you feel stressed and crave comfort foods, reach for foods that are nutritious and provide steady energy.

As the changes begin to take effect, you'll regain the calm you've been craving.

- 1) Protein for breakfast and lunch helps maintain blood sugar and energy levels.
- 2) Complex carbohydrates (whole grains and lots of fruits and vegetables) increase serotonin in your brain, which has a calming effect.
- 3) Drink plenty of water. Even mild dehydration can affect your mood.
- 4) Avoid alcohol. As the calming effect subsides, alcohol can make you edgy.
- 5) Limit caffeine if you're sensitive to it.



Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download,  **Help Prevent Medical Errors**, is at personalbest.com/extras/21V9tools.

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Sleep, stress and overeating:



Michigan State University researchers found that a stressful workday causes people to overeat junk food in the evening. The researchers also found that good sleep the night before made people less likely to react to stress by overeating that night. Going to bed early and making sleep a priority might be your best defenses against stress-related eating.

Lessons in Appreciation

Studies show that people who appreciate life have stronger relationships, better physical and mental health, more empathy, and even sleep better. Consciously replacing negative thoughts and self-pity with appreciation is one of the most powerful steps you can take toward satisfaction in your life and work. Try this:

Start the day with gratitude. Take a few moments before the day gets started to remember what you have to be thankful for in life. Consider listing them in an appreciation journal, so you can see how good life truly is.

Jog your memory.

Keep items that remind you of the joy in your life. Display a family photo on your desk, save a note of thanks from a supervisor or coworker, or pin up a memento of a favorite trip or event.



Go small. It's easy to feel appreciative when momentous events happen, such

as a promotion, a new baby or a fun vacation. Daily gratitude, though, comes from little things – lying down in a comfortable bed after a long day, eating a delicious meal with family or friends, seeing a beautiful sunset or hearing a favorite song, for example. Slow down to notice the positive moments that occur on even a bad day, and stop to appreciate them.