

Pathways: Stay energized

November 2015 Newsletter



Being grateful for
gratitude

Groggy mornings? Here
are some tips.

Test your energy IQ

e-Thoughts —
If...



There are good reasons to feel thankful now and all year. **More...**



"Sleep inertia" is the mental fog you may feel when you first awake. Learn more... **More...**



Try this short quiz to find out about making your energy last. **More...**



It's a good time of year to look back and take stock. **More...**

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

Being grateful for gratitude

November 2015 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Thanksgiving is coming and gratitude is “in season”. But there’s news that may make you value gratitude even more: It’s very good for your body, mind and mood.

Gratitude helps relieve stress

Stress can make you sick. In fact, heart disease and cancer are just two serious illnesses with links to stress. Stress may be responsible for up to 90% of all visits to the doctor.¹

Research shows that gratitude can help you manage stress. How? When you have a mindset of gratitude you focus on the good things in life. This attitude can bolster your ability to cope when things goes wrong.¹

Being a positive person also helps you attract and build connections with other people. That support really helps in times of stress.¹

It can lift your mood

Since gratitude is about seeing the good in your life, it fuels your mental and physical being with positive energy. It can enhance your mood. It also can boost the morale of those around you when they feel your “good vibes” and gratitude.²

It may give you better ZZZZs

Feeling thankful just before going to bed may help you sleep better. Studies show that spending 15 minutes listing things you’re grateful for can help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.¹

It can help relationships

Mutual respect and appreciation are keys to happy relationships. It can fortify your bond to thank your partner or spouse often – even for the smallest things.

It may boost your immune system

Grateful folks are often optimists. And studies show that optimism can help in fighting off illness. Even folks facing surgery seem to fare better if they have a positive attitude.¹

Special benefits for teens

Grateful teens often have a more upbeat outlook on life than their peers. They also tend to get higher grades and show better behaviors in school.²

Being mindful about gratitude

Saying thank you doesn’t always come naturally. It may take practice.

Anyone can build the skill. It’s like forming a new habit. You can choose to be grateful for what you have rather than unhappy about what you think you lack. Start by:³

1. Keeping a diary of things that make you thankful every day
2. Becoming more aware of the things others do for you
3. Consciously saying thank you more often

Gratitude shifts our focus from ourselves to others. It makes us more caring and mindful of what others mean in our lives.

¹www.webmd.com. Accessed September 2015.

²www.huffingtonpost.com. Accessed September 2015.

³www.livescience.com. Accessed September 2015.

Groggy mornings? Here are some tips.

November 2015 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Last month, we featured an article on getting enough sleep. This month, we'd like to "wake you up" to a problem that many people have even after they've had a good night's sleep.

Have you heard of "sleep inertia"? It's the mental fog that keeps many of us from feeling sharp and alert first thing in the morning. Experts say it takes the brain time to get up to speed after you first wake up.¹

How can you avoid sleep inertia? While it may not be possible to prevent it completely, there are some actions that can help.

Get into a routine

Dr. Allison Harvey of Golden Bear Sleep Research Clinic at UC Berkeley¹ advises going to bed and waking at about the same time each day. This helps set the body's internal clock. It may help reduce sleep inertia.

If you need an alarm, choose wisely

A buzzer may startle you. Loud music may do the same. There are many alarm systems on the market today: subtle lights, nature sounds and more. And there are lots of smartphone apps that make it easy to wake to your favorite light music or other gentle sounds. Choose an alarm that wakes you without causing confusion or fright. The result could be less sleep inertia.

Hands off the snooze button

It may feel like hitting the snooze button will help that tired, fuzzy feeling. The opposite may be true.² It may actually lead to a greater incidence of sleep inertia. Why? Using "snooze" gives your brain mixed signals about whether or not it's time to get up.

RISEUP

Dr. Harvey also recommends the R.I.S.E. U.P. method of waking up in the morning:²

- Resist the urge to hit the snooze button
- Increase your activity for the first hour
- Shower or wash your face right away
- Expose yourself to sunlight
- Upbeat music — turn some on
- Phone a friend to boost your alertness

Avoid room-darkening shades

Here's another tip: Use regular shades and curtains rather than the types that shut out all light. Why? Your body responds to light and dark. It helps you maintain a regular sleep cycle when you awake to natural light.³ There are even some alarm systems that use light to wake you since light is a cue for the body to become alert.

Wake-up call

Understanding sleep inertia can help you grasp why you may go through the first few minutes or hours of the day in a bit of a fog. And the tips above may help overcome this issue.

¹www.webmd.com. Accessed September 2015.

²www.medium.com. Accessed September 2015.

³www.symptomfind.com. Accessed September 2015.

Test your energy IQ

November 2015 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Do you struggle to keep up your energy level all day? Try the quiz below to test how much you know about making your energy last.

Quiz: Choose an answer to each question.

1. You should skip breakfast and drink a strong cup of coffee instead to build your energy. True_____ False _____
2. Drinking water throughout the day can help maintain your energy level. True_____ False_____
3. When you have an energy “crash” in the middle of the morning or afternoon, just push yourself through it and you’ll feel better. True_____ False_____
4. Sugary snacks will give you a quick energy boost. True_____ False_____
5. Spending time with negative people can impact your energy. True_____ False_____
6. Even if you’re feeling really beat, it’s good to exercise. True_____ False_____
7. Skipping meals can make you tired. True_____ False_____

Energy answers

- 1. False.** Coffee will give you a burst of energy but it won’t last. The key to healthy meals is to keep your blood sugar balanced and coffee won’t do that. It’s very important to eat a good breakfast. Examples of energy-rich breakfast foods are oatmeal, yogurt, fruit and milk.
- 2. True.** Dehydration can cause you to feel tired. When you’re dragging, a drink of water may make you feel better. Try to drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water every day.¹

- 3. False.** You’ll feel better if you take a break. If you ignore your body’s signal that you’re exhausted, you’re likely to wind up feeling even worse. Stand up and stretch or go for a short walk. Have a snack like yogurt and fruit or a small sandwich and water.
- 4. True.** Cake, candy and soda will give you a jolt of energy, but it won’t last long. The flip side of that “high” is that your blood sugar will then plummet, making you feel more tired than before. Avoid sugary foods and choose healthy snacks of protein and fiber-rich carbohydrates. Have a piece of fruit, dip some veggies into hummus or eat a handful of peanuts.
- 5. True.** Do you know any people who are “energy vampires”?? They’re folks who are so negative that it’s work to be around them. They drain you. Consider how much better you feel around upbeat friends. Spend time with positive people as often as possible.
- 6. This can go either way.** Sometimes going for a walk, taking a short swim or doing light yoga will help revive you. However, if you find you’re still tired, you may need a power nap.
- 7. True.** When you skip meals, your blood sugar drops and you feel depleted. Regular meal and snack times help maintain your blood sugar level — and your energy.

How did you do? Try one or more of these tips and see if it helps you enjoy more energy every day.

¹www.webmd.com. Accessed September 2015.

²www.psychcentral.com. Accessed September 2015.

e-Thoughts — If..

November 2015 Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

I really enjoy the work of author and humorist, Erma Bombeck. Here are some lines she wrote that are among my favorites:

“If I had my life to live over, I would have talked less and listened more. I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded. I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains. There would have been more ‘I love you’s’... More ‘I’m sorrys’ ... But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute... look at it and really see it ... live it...and never give it back.”¹

There’s a lot of food for thought in those words and I can relate...

- I’ve certainly had times when I’ve spoken too soon because I wasn’t being “present” when someone trusted me as a listener.
- I’ve procrastinated or not taken a risk because I was afraid of being judged or making a mistake.
- In raising my kids, there were moments when it seemed more important to keep them tidy than to let loose and have fun.

- And I could’ve said “I love you” and “I’m sorry” on occasions when I was too proud or stubborn to do so. I regret those times.

Thanksgiving is a time for gratitude but I also see it as a time for re-evaluation. And for trying to make changes that feel important.

So I’m glad for Ms. Bombeck’s inspirational lines. They give me great ideas for new personal goals: I’m going to try to “seize” more moments, worry less and enjoy more.

How about you? What are you grateful for? What might you change?

Have a wonderful holiday and cherish every moment!

¹www.goodreads.com. Accessed September 2015.

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Monthly Newsletter — November 2015

[Return to index page](#)

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