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Reinvigorate Your Life: **Feel Better About Everything You Do**

It's natural to feel drained, distracted or overwhelmed from time to time. Demands of family, personal issues, work or school may cloud your mind and leave you weary. Maybe you're no longer fulfilled by your job, or you've lost spontaneity and feel bored. Perhaps the pace of your days means that no matter how hard you try, you can't reach the bottom of your to-do list. When you feel this way, it's important to slow down, step back and look after yourself.

Staying energized, engaged and upbeat keeps you healthy and allows you to experience a truly fulfilling life. Consider these strategies to help clear your mind, refresh your day and find joy on and off the job.

Recharge Your Wellness Plan

A busy schedule and multiple responsibilities make it difficult to focus on your own needs. Maintaining good physical and mental health helps you stay optimistic and energetic. Revitalize your health and fitness by making self-care a priority:

Move more. Psychologists agree that moderate, daily exercise promotes a sense of control, boosts focus and improves mood. Aim to exercise for 30 minutes most days of the week. Incorporate a brisk walk, bike ride or exercise class into your daily routine. Play ball with your kids or put on an exercise video. If you need extra motivation to exercise, sign up for a charity walk or race. With an event to prepare for, you'll work harder to accomplish something you might not have thought possible.

Clear the clutter. Physical space and mental space go hand-in-hand. When the area around you looks messy and disordered, the disarray creeps into your psyche, making you feel weary and weighed down. The act of discarding unneeded items and tidying up generates fresh energy,

creates breathing room and helps you feel productive.

Designate downtime. Find healthy ways to chill out — practice yoga, listen to music, meditate or delve into a new hobby. Carve out time for something you enjoy such as a massage or hike through the woods. Just spending a few minutes alone sipping a cup of tea while gazing out the window can recharge your body, mind and spirit. Create a bedtime routine that helps you unwind and aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Feeling well rested improves concentration and boosts energy.

Take a Staycation. Vacations give your body and mind a chance to recharge. A restful break need not be long or expensive. A few hours or single day doing something out of the ordinary can renew your focus and vitality. Turn off the phone and computer and read a book or watch a movie. Enjoy a weekend excursion to a nearby city, natural area or tourist destination.

Learn Something New

When you feel intellectually challenged, you are more engaged in what you are doing. Expanding your knowledge reduces boredom and boosts confidence. Refresh your intellect and stimulate your psyche with these alternatives:

Discover your talent. Take up a new activity like cooking, dancing or drawing. Learn a new language or join a community chorus. Look for adult courses at local schools, community workshops or cultural centers. Join a trade group or professional society to stay on top of trends. Form a critique group of

artists, writers or inventors to encourage each other and share ideas.

Read and discuss. Book clubs cater to all interests and tastes. Some choose books with food themes and enjoy potluck meals. Others read books that become movies and participants watch them together. Some clubs discuss works of science fiction or classic literature. Inquire about book clubs at the library, through social media or form your own. You can combine a book reading and discussion with a regularly scheduled meeting at work or family gathering.

Explore. Plan a day trip. Visit local parks, wildlife preserves or scenic areas and discover trails for walking, biking and paddling. Spend a few hours at an art exhibit or take a guided tour of a historic district.

Go Play!

Imagine the smile and laughter of a child blowing bubbles or the joyful shouts of kids playing in the park. Grownups need to have fun, too. George Bernard Shaw was correct in writing, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."

Psychiatric studies show that adults who don't play are less able to handle stress and often experience a smoldering depression.

"Playful humans who can roll with the punches and innovate through their play-inspired imaginations will better survive," says Dr. Stuart Brown, a physician, psychiatrist and pioneer in research on play. He advocates playful pursuits — like art, books, movies, music, comedy, games and daydreaming — to support problem solving, creativity and relationships.

Create opportunities to laugh and unwind. Dedicate leisure time for family game night or impromptu parties with friends. An evening spent playing charades or



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answering trivia questions brings people closer together and sparks conversations. If you feel silly playing games or telling jokes, watch a comedy film and don't hold back. There's nothing like a good laugh to release tension.

If you feel you have too many things to do that are more important than playing, perhaps it's time to re-evaluate the to-do list. How many tasks need to be done by YOU? How many need to be done *at all*? When you have more on your list than you can reasonably accomplish, it's time to enlist help, reorder task priorities or just say 'no.' Practice setting boundaries and remind yourself that you don't have to be everywhere and do it all.

Dream On

When was the last time you dreamed about your ideal future? Do you ever close your eyes and picture something that you really want? Young people dream a lot, but when life gets busy with work, family, and responsibilities, dreams take a back seat. At any age, having dreams engages you in your life and connects you to what's important to you. Never tell yourself you are too old or not good enough to achieve your dreams, or that you missed your chance. Consider these examples of famous dreamers:

- At age 28, J.K. Rowling was a depressed single parent living on welfare. Twelve publishers rejected her first novel. Today, she is known worldwide as the author of the *Harry Potter* series and is ranked by *Forbes* as one of 14 female billionaires who earned their fortunes, rather than inherited them.
- Vera Wang failed to make the Olympic figure skating team, didn't get the Editor-In-Chief position at *Vogue*, and designed

her first dress at age 40. Her gowns are now worn by well-known public figures at red carpet events.

- Julia Child released her first cookbook at age 39 and got her own cooking show at 51.
- Morgan Freeman landed his first major movie role at age 52. Today he is ranked as the 3rd highest box office star.
- Grandma Moses didn't begin her painting career until age 76.

It's never too late to dream big!

Find Your Bliss

It may not always seem like it, but you have the power to control your attitude and outlook. When something upsets you, it's normal — and healthy — to feel sad, angry, or frustrated. You can stew over those emotions or decide to move on. You can let a situation at work frustrate you or make the best of it. You can come home cranky and cross or be deliberately cheerful. Try one of these approaches to bounce back from a bad mood:

Look through a new lens. Ask questions that help you find the positive. Try these: What one thing could I do today that would increase my joy? What can we learn from this experience? If things were different, what would I do? How can I make this better? Shining a different light on the scene allows you to see all the possibilities.

Act from Inspiration. Develop a vision of what you want and eliminate distractions that prevent you from getting there. For example, if you dream of writing a book, running a marathon, or taking a big trip, create a matrix that shows how you will take small steps to develop a storyline, increase your weekly mileage or save a few dollars from each paycheck in a vacation fund. Choose one or two specific goals that

you can accomplish in the next six months that would make you happy and proud. Setting goals focuses your attention toward tasks that can turn your vision of the future into reality. Try creating a vision board (see sidebar) to display words and images that inspire you to keep your attention on your intentions.

Appreciate the good. What are you thankful for? Focus on the things you love and enjoy. Create a daily appreciation list on which you write down the experiences, people, places, food, thoughts and events that make you feel good. When you give attention to things that you appreciate, you will start seeing more of those things in your life.

SIDEBAR: Create a Vision Board

A vision board is literally a board on which you display pictures, words and symbols representing what you want to accomplish. To make one, you'll need a poster board or small canvas, a stack of old magazines, scissors, makers, tape, rubber cement or glue. To begin, create a relaxing atmosphere with comfortable seating, inspiring music, and perhaps a candle. Close your eyes and take a moment to reflect on your big goals and dreams. What does your ideal life look like? Cut out pictures and phrases from magazines that represent that vision. Don't glue them on yet; just make a big pile of images and words. Sort through the images and lay your favorites on the board. Eliminate any that don't feel right. As you place the pictures on the board, you'll get a sense of how the board should be laid out. When it looks right, glue everything onto the board. Display your vision board where you'll see it often and feel inspired.



6 Second Summary:

On and off the job, you can revitalize your life by:

- Incorporating moderate exercise, good nutrition and adequate rest into your daily routine.
- Learning new skills, discussing ideas with others and exploring the world around you.
- Playing and having fun.
- Dreaming about what you want in life.
- Looking for joy and appreciating the good things in your life.

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