



FrontLine

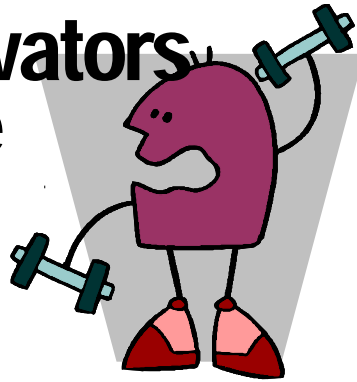
Employee

Wellness, Productivity & You!

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Employee Assistance Program 651-662-0900 or 1-800-432-5155

Hidden Motivators for Exercise

You know you should exercise regularly, but keeping your body physically fit may not be enough motivation for you to do it. Acquiring more positive beliefs about exercise will give you more reasons to do it regularly, and you may feel new motivation. See exercise as a form of recreation, a way to apply work-life balance, and a means of achieving the goal of finding mental relaxation. Exercising will produce a tranquilizing effect that you will feel hours later, and it can give you the feeling that you accomplished something. These effects can be especially beneficial if you've had a hard day. Exercise can be the one bright spot during those times where you feel a sense of helplessness about specific worries and concerns. Don't think of exercise as just something you "have to do." Instead, think of its many other benefits.



Incentives to Lose Weight Works

Financial incentives to lose weight do work, it appears, at least in the short run. Motivation might be boosted with a financial award that you plan for yourself if you succeed or a financial penalty if you don't. Try duplicating a University of Pennsylvania study that had 50 percent of participants succeeding in losing 16 lb. in 16 weeks with this technique. Some winners chose the forfeit money route, while others went for the award. The figure that worked: about \$300.



Maximize Productivity Take Breaks!

Treat your work like a marathon rather than a sprint and you'll get more done in less time. Start by warming up with a few easy tasks, and slowly increase your pace until you hit a comfortable rhythm. Take frequent, short breaks. If you don't, you will experience fatigue followed by vulnerability to distractions. This is your body's way of saying "Enough!" These distractions can morph into procrastination, which will usually keep you away from work longer than planned breaks would!



Stepping out of Your Comfort

Success almost always requires stepping out of your comfort zone. The next time your anxieties start clawing at your willingness to explore a new workplace opportunity, remember that it's natural to feel unfit for a task at first. Expect to fumble a bit until you get your footing. Living up to your potential doesn't include firm instructions or a "paint-by-numbers" approach. False starts and dead ends happen. Don't be discouraged. Follow this rule: You know more than you think you do. The key is applying old experiences to new situations, getting feedback, and making adjustments until you excel. Then move on to the next challenge.



Secrets of Small Talk

Don't hate small talk or dread business social events. Great connections and increased productivity may result from your willingness to engage. The secret is improved "engagement skills." If deep down you'd rather be social, decide to feel "adventurous." This powers up sociability and boosts your enthusiasm, which can overcome the "I hate these events" feeling. To prepare, discard the dread and focus on having a few conversational topics at the ready before your arrival. Focus on three categories: 1) your location and immediate environment, 2) the purpose of the event, and 3) the event's anticipated outcome or result. Apply who, what, where, when, how, and why questions to these topics. Numerous icebreakers can be formulated using these topics and question-word starters. (The world's best conversationalists are newspaper reporters. Now you know why: This is how they think!) Key point: Break the ice with questions. After a conversation starts, then give your name. Offer a firm handshake first, and look the person in the eye. When introduced to others, repeat their names as you shake hands. Verbally affirm ("Uh-huh") or nod your head to show interest, and look for opportunities to volley the conversation. Don't monopolize. When you employ these skills, new acquaintances will remember you as someone who is personable. Being a good conversationalist isn't something you can easily put on a résumé, but it is one skill that will boost your career dramatically.



Kick Cravings to Keep to Your Diet

Don't beat yourself up for failing to slay the craving goblins in the psychological war against hunger. Ironically, the solution may be your need to eat *more frequently*. If you reduce caloric intake too quickly, a starvation/binge cycle can begin. Set realistic goals for dieting, and ease into it. Do you need more sleep? Exhaustion can make you want high-calorie foods. Also, eat breakfast. If you don't, you risk overeating at lunch or later in the day. If you aren't hungry first thing in the morning, head out the door with something nutritious in hand that you can eat on the way to or at work. Stress can be a trigger for binges, so manage it with help from your EAP. If possible, try short exercise breaks. One study showed that a brisk walk could overcome chocolate cravings! It could help reduce other food cravings as well.



Work With Your Moods

You can get in sync with your body and be more productive during the week by learning how natural sleep-wake cycles affect your energy level and emotions. Here's how:

Jot down how you're feeling every hour during the day. Use a five-point scale where "1" equals low energy and "5" equals feeling peppy. Keep score for a week, and when done, analyze your findings. Did you discover your "up" times and your "not so up" times? You have a natural biological clock inside you that regulates everything from hormones to appetite. These *circadian* rhythms are found in almost every living thing. Once you are familiar with your unique pattern, predicting the best time to work, study, and learn is easier. You'll know when you're likely to be energetic, positive, and upbeat so you can do more, think more clearly, and handle detailed tasks. Use this knowledge when planning important work projects and watch your productivity skyrocket!



Helping Your Child "Think College"

If you value a college education for your child, the secret to implanting the idea is "expectation" and "anticipation". Start imparting messages in middle school, *rather than high school*. Treat college attendance as a natural and assumed event in your child's life. Help your child envision the experience by visiting different campuses and talking about the benefits and drawbacks of each. Don't push too hard for early decisions on a major. Instead, talk about different career options and how they fit in with your child's strengths and interests. Discuss how making good grades and securing scholarships today gives your child more options down the road. If you're a graduate, share some of your own college experiences with a sense of excitement and explain how they helped shape your life.

