

# Employee Support Network

## Health & Harmony News

SPRING 2011

### Tips To Increase Your Energy and Mood

All of us could use more energy. The tips below can help you improve your personal energy and mood to help you get the most out of each day. Choose the tips that appeal most to you to get started. When you feel your new habit is firmly established, look to make other positive lifestyle changes to further enhance your vitality and mood.

**Tip #1 – Take a brisk walk.** A survey of more than 300 Californians ranked exercise as the best way to lift a bad mood. According to renowned mood expert Robert Thayer, Ph.D., a bad mood has two major components, feelings of tension and low energy. Exercise can boost your mood by relieving tension, raising energy and increasing optimism. If you're dragging or in a bad mood, take a brisk walk. In experiments conducted by Thayer, a brisk 10-minute walk not only increased energy and mood, but the positive effects lasted for up to two hours. And when daily 10-minute walks continued for three weeks, overall energy levels and mood were lifted.

**Tip #2 – Don't skip breakfast...or any other meal.** Start your day with a nutritious breakfast. Studies show that people who eat breakfast report being in a better mood and have more



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energy throughout the day. Other benefits include improved metabolism and better concentration and performance. Additionally, studies published in the journal Nutritional Health found that missing any meal during the day led to an overall greater feeling of fatigue by day's end.

**Tip #3 – Identify the biggest source of stress in your life and face it head on.** Too much stress drains your energy, undermines your mood and negatively impacts your health. If you're suffering from overwhelming or chronic stress ask yourself: What is the biggest problem or conflict that is troubling me and how can I deal with it more effectively? Face the issue head on by devising ways to change or manage the aspects of the issue over which you have control. Learn to let go of those aspects over which you have no control.

**Tip #4 – Commit to getting adequate, quality sleep each day.** Many people drag through each day because of nothing more complicated than a chronic sleep deficit. According to a survey by the National Sleep Foundation, those who got fewer than six hours of sleep on weekdays were more likely to describe themselves as stressed, sad, angry and pessimistic. Conversely, those getting adequate sleep reported more positive feelings. For better energy and mood, make the quality and quantity

of your sleep a priority. Commit to getting seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

### Relieve Job Stress

1. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others. Don't expect perfection.
2. Plan your work. Tension builds when your work seems endless. Plan your work to use time and energy most efficiently.
3. Take a break. A change of pace, no matter how short, can give you a new outlook on an old problem.

**Tip #5 – Adjust your diet.** What you eat and when you eat affects your energy and mood. Choose one or more of the following tips to help keep your energy and mood stable throughout the day:

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## Tips to Increase Your Energy and Mood

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- Eat small meals and snacks every few hours. Eating consistently throughout the day provides the brain with a constant source of fuel.
- Limit your consumption of simple sugars (soda, candy, fruit juice) and refined carbohydrates (white bread, crackers, breakfast cereals, white rice). These can create radical spikes (and resulting drops) in your blood sugar levels and leave you feeling tired and irritable.
- Eat more whole grains and complex carbohydrates. These take longer than refined carbohydrates to digest, preventing fluctuations in blood sugar and drops in energy and mood.
- Limit your caffeine intake. A cup or two of coffee in the morning may help you get going, but try not to consume caffeine once you get into the early afternoon. Too much caffeine is linked to fatigue and mood swings.

**Tip # 6 – Listen to music.** Numerous studies report that listening to music is a proven mood lifter. According to Thayer, music is second only to exercise in raising energy and lifting mood. Music activates the part of your brain that is hardwired for pleasure and has a powerful influence over your state of mind. Any music you like works, and the positive effects can last long after the music is over.

**Tip #7 – Drink plenty of water.** Believe it or not, a common and often overlooked cause of fatigue is dehydration. Even slight dehydration can leave you feeling tired and lethargic, according to the most recent research. A recent Tufts University study found that mild dehydration – a loss of just 1 to 2 percent of body weight as water – was enough to impair thinking and have a negative effect on mood. A steady supply of water throughout the day will naturally keep things flowing – including your energy. Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day and do not wait until you're thirsty to drink.

**Tip #8 – Give yourself a break.** Research indicates that for optimal performance you need to disengage every few hours – even if only for a few minutes. Instead of a coffee break, take an “energy” break. Energy breaks might include some of the suggestions mentioned above such as taking a brisk 10-minute walk, listening to music or having a nutritious snack, or they might include: deep breathing, spending a few minutes in the sun, meditating, stretching or yoga. The important thing is to take a break to restore your energy, focus and mood.

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## Workplace Bullying: What You Need To Know

The most recent research reports that workplace bullying is a serious problem. According to a 2010 survey by Zogby International, 35 percent of the U.S. workforce (an estimated 53.5 million Americans) reported being bullied at work. Of these, 9 percent reported they are currently being bullied, while 26 percent reported that at a previous time they have been bullied at work.



### What is workplace bullying?

Workplace bullying is the repeated mistreatment of a targeted employee – conducted by bosses or coworkers – which creates a risk to the targets' physical and psychological health and threatens the targets' job security. Bullying behavior includes:

- ◆ Deliberate actions to humiliate, intimidate, undermine or destroy the targeted individual.
- ◆ The withholding of resources (time, supplies, support, equipment) necessary for the targeted individual to succeed.

### Examples of bullying

- ◆ Unwarranted or invalid criticism
- ◆ Blame without factual justification
- ◆ Being treated differently than the rest of your work group
- ◆ Being sworn at
- ◆ Exclusion or social isolation
- ◆ Being shouted at or being humiliated
- ◆ Being the target of practical jokes
- ◆ Excessive monitoring

Bullying is different from aggression. Whereas aggression may involve a single act, bullying involves repeated attacks against the target, creating an on-going pattern of behavior.

### What to Do

If you believe you are being bullied at work, or if you are presently concerned about a bullying situation at work, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and speak with an EAP counselor. Your EAP counselor can help you develop a plan for dealing with a bully at work and help you resolve the problem. We're here to help you.