

Member's Quarterly

Fall 2017 Edition

Perspective

Self-Care for the Busy

Look after yourself

In today's crazy world, we are chock-full of duties and responsibilities and our time is spread very thinly over our work, at home and in our communities. We look after everything and everyone except ourselves.

We have very little time left at the end of our day and our ever-increasing workweek. What gets squeezed out for far too many of us is our basic self-care. That's more than a bit of a problem, since our hectic lives and responsibilities are built on the premise that we can continue to perform at this high level. Here are some suggestions for self-care that will allow you to maintain your busy life, your health and your sanity.

Schedule Yourself First

We have all found ways to micro-manage our time to the tiniest segments and making priorities is a breeze. So why not put yourself first and make your self-care a priority? If you schedule it first, then it will by default become a priority instead of something you try and make time for. Start with the basics. Building in some 'me' time will have a positive effect on not just your health, but your work and productivity as well.

Once you actually slow down enough to think about your needs, you can then start making a plan to meet them. This may be more relaxation time or just time alone to think and breathe. Putting yourself first sounds a bit selfish, but if you don't do it, who will? Are you getting what you need right now in terms of your mental, emotional and physical health? If not, then pencil yourself into your calendar.

Take Breaks: Small, Medium and Large

The truth is that most of us are vacation-deprived. We give up our vacation time regularly, mostly for work. Even when we do go away, we take our cell phones and our office with us. We may be indispensable at work, but we are not indestructible. Our bodies and our minds start breaking down if we do not take breaks to refresh and rejuvenate ourselves. Somehow, we have to find a way to get completely away from work for at least a week or two every year.

We need more than that if we are going to not just survive, but thrive in our very busy world. Many experts suggest mini-vacations as part of the antidote to our crazy lives. It could be taking an extra-long weekend or a midweek spa or golf day. Even if we can't find that small amount of time, we can always take 15 minutes for a short walk outside or add a few minutes to our lunch break for yoga or retail therapy. Do the cost benefit analysis yourself. You'll always get a return on those investments.

Maintain Your Foundation

Eating well is one of the things that we can do for ourselves and our bodies. Caffeine and sugar are great short-term energy boosters as we all know. But our bodies, especially our hearts, pay a terrific price afterwards. If we switch to a healthier diet, we can not only prevent some chronic diseases but we can actually get an energy boost. Reducing our intakes of excess fats, sugars and refined carbohydrates helps prevent blood sugar fluctuations. This allows us to maintain constant and consistent energy levels as a result. You will not only feel better — you will work better too!



Nathaly Pinchuk
RPR, CMP
Executive Director

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Get some exercise. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of over 25 chronic conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, breast cancer, colon cancer, Type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis. Not only that, but higher levels of fitness allow daily tasks to be accomplished with greater ease and comfort and with less fatigue. Research shows that as much as half the functional decline between the ages of 30 and 70 is due not to aging itself, but due to an inactive lifestyle. This way you can get better and maintain your productivity much longer.

De-Stress Yourself

We will never completely eliminate all stress from our lives. However, we can benefit from getting rid of unwanted stress and better manage the stress that naturally arises around us, especially at work. That includes healthier eating habits and more exercise as noted above. It may also mean eliminating or reducing our alcohol intake and finding new relaxation techniques other than just vegging in front of the television.

We also need some instant stress relief techniques that help when we don't have time for to fully relax and unwind. A great technique is some form of breathing exercise. It can be as simple as taking three long breaths and holding them before you exhale to more complicated maneuvers. Anything that will slow down your breathing will reduce your stress. Other techniques can be doing some stretches or taking a quick walk — anything that will cause your mind to become distracted from your worries, even for just a few minutes. There are hundreds of stress relief strategies out there. Find some that work for you and use them daily. You'll be amazed with the results!

Nathaly Pinchuk is Executive Director of IPM [Institute of Professional Management].