



Get in the Slow Lane

Does your inner voice keep saying, *slow down?* You'd like to, but can't find the time with nonstop deadlines, child care, places to be and people to text. Getting a lot done isn't bad, but feeling constantly rushed is.

During this busy season, give yourself permission to move into the slow lane. Here are 3 simple practices:

Pause. Say you're surrounded by traffic jams, chattering people or noisy crowds – consciously shift your focus from these annoyances to the tangible things around you such as light, air and objects. Observing the stillness of these elements can provide a brief reprieve from rushing thoughts.

Retreat. Enjoy time-outs. Take a short walk and breathe in fresh air. Have a quiet lunch or spend a few minutes reading.

Meditate. Try it right now: Take a deep breath and relax your facial muscles. Lower your shoulders and arms, and loosen up your hands and wrists. If seated, uncross your legs or ankles; you'll feel your thighs sinking into your chair, and your calves becoming heavy. Now slowly breathe in and out. You've just activated your relaxation response.

Ease off the gas pedal and welcome the calm. ***Make it a habit.***

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.” – Maria Robinson

Good Sleep Habits Run in the Family

Modern families face many barriers to getting quality sleep. They're busier and more dependent on smart devices than ever before. In the 2014 National Sleep Foundation (NSF) poll, parents cited evening obligations and homework as the most common reasons for missing sleep.

The poll also found that electronic devices, including TVs, smartphones, tablets and laptops, are pervasive in bedrooms; 72% of children have at least 1 device in their bedroom. Smart devices can disturb sleep through light and noise, as well as use up time needed for sleep.

More than 90% of parents polled believe in the importance of sleep for their family's health. Yet 45% of kids age 6 to 17 aren't getting the 9 hours of nightly sleep needed through childhood and adolescence.



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Exercise from Your Wheelchair

Needing a wheelchair needn't keep you from enjoying physical activities. In fact, daily exercise is essential. It helps preserve muscle strength so you can move about and complete everyday tasks with greater ease. It reduces your risk for heart trouble, type 2 diabetes, pressure sores and weight gain.

When choosing new activities, pick those suited to your abilities and personality – from adaptive floor sports and upper body strengthening to DVD workouts and calming yoga sessions. Seek advice from your health care provider; working with a physical therapist expert in wheelchair fitness can help, too.

Be cautious. Increase your pace, duration and activity level gradually.

Alternate activities. Variety helps prevent common overuse injuries, particularly shoulder pain or carpal tunnel syndrome.

Stick with it. Identify and focus on your goals to keep you motivated.

Expect ups and downs. We all have days when we'd rather skip our exercise – just don't make it a habit.

Learn more at the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability, nchpad.org.



Neck Pain No More

We're more likely to develop neck strain and pain when we sit or stand for extended periods of time with little movement. Neck pain becomes more common with age and loss of muscle tone, as well as structural wear and tear of the spinal vertebral disks.

Six practical ways to avoid neck strain:

- 1. Don't stay in 1 position too long.** Get up and move about frequently; gently stretch your neck and shoulders. Try to stay aware of your posture.
- 2. Use correct posture at your desk.** Keep your computer monitor at eye level to avoid looking down. Keep your back straight and don't slouch.
- 3. Prop up your reading material** and smart devices to prevent looking down at them.
- 4. Don't cradle the phone between your ear and shoulder.** Wear a headset or use a hands-free phone function.
- 5. Avoid using extra pillows when sleeping.** The added height can cramp your neck's range of motion.
- 6. Sleep well.** Adequate rest protects you from musculoskeletal pains.

First aid for neck strain: Try 5- to 10-minute cold pack massages within the first 48 hours. Acetaminophen or naproxen can help relieve pain. Don't use them longer than the product directs without consulting your health care provider.



Neck pain is rarely a sign of serious trouble. But if it occurs more often or you have other symptoms such as radiating pain, weakness or numbness of an arm or a leg, see your provider.

Say Goodbye to Food Cravings

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

It's 3 o'clock and your body longs for chocolate.

Does this craving sound familiar?

Before you indulge, ask yourself if it's true hunger (you haven't eaten in hours) or emotional hunger (you've recently eaten but have a craving). Some people eat to soothe their feelings. Here's how to tame cravings:



> **Fill up with fiber and protein.** High-fiber foods (whole grains, legumes and vegetables) and protein (lean meat, fish and dairy) can reduce cravings by helping you feel full for longer. When you feel full, you yearn less for treats.



> **Don't deprive yourself.** If you cut out tempting foods, you may crave them even more. Enjoy small portions of your favorite comfort foods. Moderation is your best ally.

> **When a craving hits, wait 20 minutes.** Food cravings are typically short-lived and may subside if you're distracted. If 20 minutes pass and you're truly hungry, reach for a nutritious snack and a small portion of what you crave.

> **Eat every 3 to 4 hours.** Plan ahead for meals and snacks so you won't reach for food high in calories, fat and sugar when you're hungry or rushed. Keep portable, healthy snacks in your bag or car.



> **Break the habit.** If you do yearn for chocolate mid-afternoon, try replacing it with an apple and some almonds.

Good Sleep Habits Run in the Family

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Ongoing sleep deprivation raises our risk for serious maladies, including type 2 diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease. For children, sleep is critical to brain development and emotional health. Besides poor concentration and performance, sleep-deprived kids are more likely to be depressed, sick or obese and have behavior problems.

How do we manage our busy lives and still protect sleep?

Here's advice from the NSF:

1. Set regular bedtimes and enforce them.
2. Be a role model; practice good bedtime habits.
3. Experts advise removing TVs and all screen devices from bedrooms. Children need to stop using electronic devices at least 1 hour before they go to sleep.
4. Ask your child's teacher about any related behavior, such as alertness problems or falling asleep in class.
5. Talk to your child about the importance of sleep.
6. Try to ensure that your child's homework and activities can be completed without interfering with the routine bedtime.



Make sleep a priority for the whole family.
Together, commit to better sleep and good health.



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/15V12tools.

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