You may have heard that “sitting is the new smoking.” Several recent research articles have sounded the alarms about the cardiovascular risk association with too much sedentary behavior. One study compared people who logged more than four hours of screen time to those with less than two and found a 125% increased risk in cardiovascular disease in the sedentary group. In response to the alarms, standing desks, standing meetings, and walking meetings have become more prevalent in some workplaces and schools. Devices such as Fitbit now measure sedentary hours that have less than 250 steps and buzz the user if it is time to get up and walk around. Although these changes in workplace culture and technology are certainly helpful, the cards are still stacked against us when it comes our (and our kids) daily routines. I probably fall into the category of active couch potato, since I jog three times a week and lift weight 2-3 times per week but gravitate to sitting 95% of my waking hours. Although, experts suggest that being an active couch potato is still better than being an inactive couch potato, and that there is still more research needed to understand the risk of sitting too much, most would agree that being couch potato is still a problem. On reflecting on my own daily routine, and my kids:

I spend at least an hour each day in my car sitting, to get to
work, or to get to an Extension program (where I might encouraging people to be less sedentary).

Every meeting room, classroom, office has chairs, tables. The expectation is to naturally sit. Most people sit. I'll stand, and others might stand or walk around, but sometimes we will get funny looks, or a look from the speaker we are listening to.

My kids are encouraged to sit in school. The one time that they are not encouraged to sit very long is during school lunch, the one time when they should be sitting longer.

I have a nice couch in my living room in front of the TV...

My daughter's concert is in an auditorium with nice comfortable seats. If you stand in the isles, whether in the front or the back, you might be in someone's way, or blocking someone's view.

Softball and baseball games have bleachers, but also we have comfortable folding chairs that we can sit in. Basketball games are even more difficult to stand or even walk around.

The golf course I occasionally play on discourages walking in favor of carts in order to promote faster play.

There is nowhere to stand in a movie theatre.

I have a standing desk now, which can adjust up and down. I do stand most of the time but find it easy to lower it and sit for longer periods.

I push mow our lawn now, but riding mowers are fairly inexpensive.

Public health experts have this complex theory called Socio-ecological theory. It suggests that our health behaviors such as physical activity are shaped not only by our own motivations, knowledge, awareness and skills, but also by other people, environments, systems, policies, norms, etc. Although I am motivated to be less sedentary, there are many other influences besides gravity that are countering my efforts as suggested above.

TAKE A STAND. Social ecological theory also suggests that OUR behaviors can change or influence others. In other words we have the power by our own behaviors to influence the culture and the environment. If you stand in a movie theatre, you might feel awkward, or may get some looks, but in a way you are changing culture or what people perceive to be normal. Who knows, you might get some followers. Talk with your teachers and advocate for more classroom activities. Ask your supervisor about a standing desk, even if it might feel awkward. Stand up in a meeting, even if it feels strange. Keep it up, changing culture and norms takes time. This is an interesting YouTube video that illustrates the point.

Other Sources


National Institutes of Health: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3404815/
Labor Day is a perfect reminder that in order to celebrate the work and achievement we have had in the past year, we need a break to reflect. Technology and the strive to always do more (and better than anyone else); can develop a bad habit of never disconnecting from our work. Working all the time may lead us to burnout and even less creativity. As Whitney Johnson says “Only after a break can you have a breakthrough”.

After looking at over 50 studies, journal articles, or books on workaholism, researchers classified workaholics as those who:

- Work beyond what is reasonably expected.
- Give up family, social, and recreational activities persistently for work.
- Think about work all the time.
Numerous workaholics will become over stressed, anxious, and even have health problems; although not all do. Some workaholics seem to find a way to balance their lives. We should all strive to be productive in our work, but not move over to the dark-side of the workaholic. Whether it is Labor Day itself, a weekend, or vacation day we all need to recharge our batteries. Our brain needs to shut down, we need adequate sleep, and we need a little quiet time. If you have been focusing on a big project at work or home, you may need a break to clear your mind and get ready for the next project. Here are some “Un-Labor Day” ideas to help you recharge your batteries:

- Actually use your holidays, vacation days, sick days, and weekends as recreation or relaxation.
- Turn off the TV, computer, or tablet and listen to your favorite music.
- Journal (by actually writing down, not on your phone) things you have to be thankful for.
- Meditate or do yoga.
- Just relax in a hammock, on the beach, or on a blanket under the stars.
- Take a drive on a back road with a view – may it be the waterfront, mountains, or farm fields.
- Turn technology off for the day. If your work email goes to your phone, cut back on the times you look at it after work or on the weekend. Keep count of the times you normally check email per day and see if you can't go to once or twice a day (maybe eventually not at all on the weekend). To break this habit you may need to turn your alerts off.
- Fix a favorite recipe and share it with your friends, family, or neighbors.
- Sign up for a new class, not one related to work, but a hobby you want to learn or fitness. Actually put the schedule on your calendar and phone and say “I have class then, I can't attend that meeting tomorrow night” rather than adding on to your already busy day.

What can you do to “Un-Labor” your day? If you ask my family and friends, they will tell you I work too much and need to heed the advice and take a break to recharge my batteries too.

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Reviewers: Tammy Jones, Extension Educator, Family and
Don’t Be Work Martyr… Take Your Vacation!

Posted in Healthy People, Healthy Relationships, tagged employee health, vacation, Work–life balance, workplace on June 18, 2015| Leave a Comment »

Do you believe you are the only one that can do your job? Do you fear taking time off to avoid returning to a mountain of work? Are you afraid of being seen as replaceable if you take time off? Do you sacrifice your health and well-being to get the job done? If so, you might be a work martyr.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, about 40% of Americans don’t take the vacation they’ve earned, leaving about 430 million days of unused vacation. And that’s not saying much since Americans only get an average of 12 vacation days each year, compared with 20 days a year provided in Europe. Other sources also conclude we aren’t taking our allotted time off. A recent study by the Family and Work Institute reported that 36 percent of workers did not plan to use all their vacation days. Moreover, 37% said they have never taken more than a week off at a time.

In order to understand the attitudes and beliefs driving America’s work culture, the U.S. Travel Association enlisted GfK Public Affairs and Corporate Communications (GfK). GfK asked more than 1,300 business leaders across the country their top reasons for not taking time off. The most common survey responses included:

☑ not wanting to return to a pile of work
☑ feeling like no one else can do their job
☑ one-third reported they cannot financially afford to use their time off
☑ one in five were afraid they could be more easily replaced if they took time off
☑ only 32% say their employers encourage them to take time off

The trend to put our ‘nose to the grindstone’ and power through even though we’re stressed out is concerning, and often based on unfounded fears. Face time at work doesn’t always equal dedication. Seventy-five percent of HR professionals report that employees who take most or all of their vacation days tend to “perform better” compared with employees who take less vacation.
If Americans used more of their vacation, they could see improvements in their own physical and mental health and well-being, as well as the health of the economy. American's unused vacation days could mean an additional $67 billion in travel spending as well as more jobs and earned income, according to estimates in a report by Oxford Economics.

A study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health* looked at how people feel before, during and after a vacation.

- During vacation, people felt healthier and had better moods. They also experienced less tension and higher levels of energy and life satisfaction.
- Interestingly, the positive effects of vacation were found to dissipate within a few days of returning to work. But "that doesn't mean that one should discount the health benefits of a vacation," says the article's author, Jessica de Bloom. "It would be a bit like asking, 'Why do we sleep despite the fact that we get tired again?'"

To fend off the depression that can hit when you return from a vacation, author Robert Kriegel suggests you think about what motivates you and plan to have a few things that you love doing on your agenda when you return.

Perhaps we just need some encouragement to take some time off. If you have the sense that your boss doesn’t want you to take too much vacation time, ask what his or her concerns are. Finish your necessary tasks before leaving. Plan ahead for your duties to be covered and coordinate with co-workers. Then let your manager know how you can be reached if necessary. You may find the time off not only benefits you personally, but allows for new perspective and the chance for innovation to flow upon returning to work.

Research concludes that our health declines over time if we don't take a break from work. Don't be a work martyr, be a better worker.

Written by: Shannon Carter, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Fairfield County

Reviewed by: Kristen Corry, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Noble & Monroe Counties

Sources:

*NPR: Relax! Vacations are Good for Health*
Take A Vacation: It's Good For Productivity And The Economy, According To A New Study

Project Time Off

Many don’t take all their vacation days. But they might be considered nutritional supplements to your professional well-being.

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Just Move!
Posted in Healthy People, tagged Exercise, health, health benefits, healthy choices, Healthy Living, Lifestyles, physical activity, Stress, weight control, Wellness, workplace on February 10, 2014 | 1 Comment »

For many of us this has been a long, hard winter. It can be a challenge to participate in physical activity outside when the weather is severe. I've been enjoying the Olympics and am always amazed at the dedication and drive of the Olympic athletes. Perhaps you can use this as motivation to get moving again. According to Center for Disease Control, only about half (48%) of adults get enough aerobic physical activity to improve their health. Aerobic activities like brisk walking, running, swimming and bicycling make you breathe harder and make your heart and blood vessels healthier. I recently started walking inside for 30 minutes each day and have noticed these benefits: improved mood, more energy, less fatigue, and less arthritis discomfort.

What can you do? Get creative and find ways to move more. Here are some suggestions from

- Walk the mall. If you have an in-door mall, become a mall walker. Join a walking group. A partner can provide support and encouragement. Sometimes it helps to have someone give you the “push” to participate. You will enjoy seeing the store windows and people as you burn calories and exercise in this safe environment.

- Walk inside – our local regional campus has an upstairs walking area with a nice comfortable and safe walking surface. 12 laps around the top and you have walked a mile. You can also measure the minutes you walk. Aim for 30 minutes most days of the week.

- Walk up and down the sidelines while your kids are practicing or playing sports.

- Walk your dog. Make sure you walk for at least 10 minutes to receive health benefits. A walk before and
after work brings you 20 minutes closer to a 30 minute daily goal.

- Move to a fitness DVD or play an active fitness game.

- Do stretches, exercises or pedal a stationary bike while watching television.

- View the snow as a physical activity opportunity: shovel your sidewalk or build a snowman.

- At work, sit on an exercise ball for several minutes each day. This will help your posture and strengthen your core.

- Use a fit band and stretch during webinars.

- Stand up while talking on the phone. Standing burns more calories and can re-energize you if you spend a big part of your day sitting behind a desk.

- Take a walk break instead of a coffee break. Walk the stairs at work — perhaps you walk up or down a flight of stairs each time you have to go to the restroom.

**How much activity do I need?**
Remember that adults need at least 150 minutes of **moderate-intensity aerobic activity** every week (aim for 30 minutes on 5 days). Also, aim for **muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week** that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms).

Get Started and Enjoy the Many Benefits of Physical Activity. The more you move, the more benefits you will experience. For example:

- More Energy
- Improved Sleeping
- Patterns
  - Improved Moods
  - Weight Maintenance or Loss
  - Improved Self Esteem
  - Increase your Chances of Living Longer
  - Strong, Healthy Body
  - Move Around More Easily
  - Improved Metabolism

*What benefits do you see when you are physically active? Share your ideas with us in the comments.*

Sources:

http://www.choosemyplate.gov


http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.htm
Start the Journey Today! Develop an Exercise Habit!

Posted in Healthy People, tagged calendar, developing a habit, Exercise, habits, health benefits, Healthy Living, Lifestyles, physical activity, Wellness, workplace on October 6, 2013 | 1 Comment »

It takes 21 days to develop a habit. Make a commitment to yourself and mark your calendar for the next 21 days to start a physical activity. Start with small steps. For example, start today before you take your shower with 10 jumping jacks or crunches. Add 10 more jumping jacks or crunches daily until you reach 100. Once you reach 100, stick with it on a daily basis before you take your shower to begin to develop the exercise habit.

Choose activities that are fun and easy to do regularly. Be sure to do at least 10 minutes of activity at a time. For example, walking the dog for 10 minutes before and after work, or a 10 minute walk at lunchtime helps to start the journey to develop an exercise habit. Keep a pair of walking or running shoes and comfortable clothes in the car or at the office to be ready for physical activity.

Ideas to increase physical activity

**At work:**
- Replace a coffee break with a brisk 10 minute walk
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Start a walking club at work during lunch time
- Invite co-workers to take a walk or move to a workout DVD after work

**At home:**
- Get the whole family involved – take a bike ride or walk around the neighborhood
- Walk up and down the soccer field sidelines while watching the game
- While your dinner is baking in the oven, try yoga or Pilates
- Exercise to a workout video
- Walk, skate or cycle
- Join a dance class
- Take a nature walk
- Most importantly – have fun!
Before you know it, 21 days will have passed by, an exercise habit is formed and the journey begins for a more active life!

Sources: http://www.choosemyplate.gov/physical-activity/increase-physical-activity
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Got Clutter?

Clutter means different things to different people, but can generally be categorized into the following groups:
- Unused things or things with no sentimental value
- Unfinished things
- Disorganized things
- Too many things in too small a place

Clutter says something about you! Maybe you are holding on to the past, unable to make up your mind, or just seriously messy! Whatever the case, clutter holds you back.

The main clutter styles are listed below. Recognizing your clutter behavior is the first step towards changing the habits that create it.
- The Accumulator – Aka, the classic pack rat, acquires more and more things and lets nothing go, thinking that items may be valuable someday or indecisive about what to do with them.
- The Collector – Seems to collect specific items (like commemorative plates), but collections are rarely complete, and
lead to starting other collections.

• The Concealer – Neatly labels and packs away clutter in storage containers. While organized, the Concealer keeps everything instead of making decisions about what to keep and what to discard.

• The Tosser – Has no clutter problem. But, throws away not only their own things, but everyone else's too. The Tosser has little sentimental attachment to things and has difficulty understanding others' attachments to things.

Clutter adds about 40% more housework in the average American home, and can challenge even the most organized person. Sometimes you just don’t know what to do with something, have no place to put it, or don’t have time to deal with it.

Key Principles for Creating Order – If you want to clear out clutter, focus your mind on creating order. Getting organized means changing habits. You make organization happen by taking control. ACT to reduce clutter:

• Assess the situation
• Commit to a plan
• Take action

Get rid of things you don't use and that have no personal value. Start small and set realistic goals. For example, begin with the kitchen catchall drawer. Attack clutter drawer by drawer, cupboard by cupboard, shelf by shelf.

The QUICK method, detailed in Cut the Clutter and Stow the Stuff, edited by Lori Baird, is a compilation of techniques and advice that many expert organizers use to create order.

Quantify – Think about your clutter and the space you have to store it. What are your needs? Why are they important? Maybe you love books, but your bookshelves are a mess. Write down how you want to organize them (author, subject, fiction, nonfiction, etc.). Set aside time like a regularly scheduled appointment. By assessing and sorting your books, you have begun to quantify your clutter.

Unload – Getting rid of clutter means letting it go. Things can be given away, donated to charity, sold at a garage sale, or thrown away. One way or another, items must leave the premises.

Isolate – After unloading, isolate the items that are left. These are the things you have decided to keep, so organize them in a way that makes sense to you. For example, you've gone through the Christmas decorations, thrown out the threadbare garlands, and separated the tangled lights. Now, sort the items. Fragile ornaments in one group, wreaths in another, wrapping paper and bows in another. You get the idea.

Contain – Decide what storage containers to use for your things and where to put them (bookshelf, closet, garage, etc.). Don’t buy new containers if you don't need them. Just make sure that containers are adequate for the content. Now you can see the
results of your efforts: Items neatly labeled and stored in a practical location.

Keep it up – Maintaining organization is an ongoing process. No worries. The hard part is over! Just quantify, unload, isolate, and contain as needed. With a system for creating order already in place, eliminating clutter is easy.

With a little determination, you can conquer clutter.

Written by: Kathryn K Dodrill, MA, CFCS Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences, Washington County.

Reviewed by: Lisa Barlage Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences, Ross County.

Sources:
- www.realsimple.com

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Stand Up for Health!

Posted in Healthy People, tagged aging, Blood Pressure, good posture, health benefits, healthy choices, Healthy Living, Heart Disease, Lifestyles, physical activity, reverse aging, Wellness, workplace on September 16, 2013 | Leave a Comment »

Time to stand up! Standing up is good for your health. Research is showing that even if you are physically active, sitting a good portion of the day can be a risk factor for poor health and possibly even premature death. Most of us spend a lot of time sitting at computers and driving. Time to stand!

Dr. Joan Vernikos, author of Sitting Kills, Moving Heals and former director of NASA’s Life Sciences Division, provides an explanation of why
sitting affects our health in ill ways. Dr. Vernikos states that we were not designed to sit so much. She feels we were actually designed to squat and kneel. Hours of uninterrupted sitting causes your body to be more affected by the force of gravity. We need to exert our body to overcome the force of gravity and the effects it can have on our body. Thus, we need to stand up often, especially when we are sitting for awhile.

By standing up often or interrupting our sitting we change our posture. It's our change in posture that helps up overcome the force of gravity that causes us to age. Dr. Vernikos found that simply standing up at least once every hour caused good cardiovascular and metabolic changes in your body. Simply, standing up from a seated position increases an enzyme that transports fat to muscles in your body to be used as fuel. Those other movements you do around the office or at home, like reaching to get something, bending down to pick something up, are not really exercise activities but do interrupt your sitting which are effective against aging. She suggests we try to do more of them in a day. One way at work, might be to put your coffee out of your reach so you have to get up to drink it.

Are you sitting up straight reading this? Dr. Vernikos recommends a straight back chair for your office or home. She is not really in favor of standing desks, as it's the movement of up and down that is more important. Good posture helps your body function properly. If you think that you can stand up and sit down repeatedly for a few minutes and that will help, she found it didn't really work. We have to spread out the times we stand up throughout the day, to get the effect of delaying or preventing the damage associated with aging and our loss of flexibility.

So, set the timer on your cell phone or your computer and stand up at least once or more an hour. Just standing up can help counteract the process of aging on your body. You may already have damage but good news! You can reverse the damage and your body can recover. The older we are the longer it may take, but it can be done. So, take a standing break and stand up straight.

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Reviewed by: Elizabeth Smith, M.S., RDN., L.D. NE Regional Program Specialist, SNAP-Ed, Ohio State University Extension.

References:
Posts Tagged 'workplace relationships'. Unsnap Your Judgments. Monday, June 20th, 2011. Guest Post by Peggy Klaus. “Never judge a book by its cover.” While handling workplace conflict is a multifaceted process, the first step you should take when you become frustrated – BEFORE you address the other person – is to calm down physically. It’s a fact that when you are angry or upset, physical activity can often help you calm down and see the situation more objectively.


You Are Powerful Beyond Measure. A week or so ago I saw a post on my Facebook feed from John Sumser about open work spaces. It was called Google got it wrong. The open-office trend is destroying the workplace. It resonated with people who read it, both good and bad. The general consensus was that there are issues with both the space and the people who work in it.

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