

... JANUARY 2010 ...

QUICK TAKES



FINDING TIME FOR FITNESS

Cramming workouts into a busy day can challenge even the most efficient of us -- but it can be done. Try these tips:

Schedule it: Pick one preferred workout time, and stick to it whenever possible. Your chosen slot should be a time of day when you're sure to be free of all other demands for at least 45 minutes to an hour, leaving time for a 30-minute workout plus travel and showering.

Make it convenient: If you have trouble getting to your workout, bring the workout to you. Take a walk during your lunch break at work and ways to exercise at home or join a gym that's near where you live or work.

Get a workout buddy: Arranging to meet someone regularly to work out together is a great way to make sure that you both show up.

Top 10 Time Management Tips

1. Start with a plan. Many people start the day without a clear concept of what they need to get done. If you're stressed at work, make a plan for the next day right before you leave work in the evening. That way you'll be set to hit the ground running the next morning.

2. Focus on quality, not quantity. It's always satisfying to complete tasks. When you plan your time, make sure to prioritize tasks in order of priority.

3. Tackle difficult tasks in the morning. Most people's energy level is highest in the morning. Get started on the day's most demanding task then. You'll likely finish it faster when your concentration is highest.

4. Skip the settling-in routine. Take a close look at your morning routine. Do you always stop for coffee on the way to work? Do you check email and read headlines before starting your work? Putting off your real work might just add to your stress. Consider starting the day by digging right into work. Then make those little moments a reward for completing a task.

5. Eliminate distractions. It's easy to get side-tracked in today's super-wired workplace. Look for ways to stay focused when you have an important task: turn off the incoming-message alerts in your email program, forward your calls to voicemail and close your office door if you have one.

6. Beat procrastination. Getting started on a tough task is usually the hardest part. Try setting a timer for 10 minutes and tell yourself you only have to work on it for that long. By the time it goes off, you may be so focused that you plow ahead and finish the job.

7. Scale back. If you've tried to plan out your tasks and you still don't have enough time to finish during your workday, look at ways to scale back. See if you can take less important items off of your list or reschedule them for a later time. If necessary, talk to your manager about your most important priorities.

8. Delegate (whenever possible). Some of us hold on to responsibilities because we think we're the only ones who can do them the right way. If you're in the position to delegate tasks, just make sure to give the other person clear guidance and follow-up to make sure the job gets done. If you're not in a position to delegate tasks, talk to your boss and see if he or she can help distribute your workload.

9. Choose the right communication medium. Is it more time-efficient to pick up the phone or send an email? Email is great for a simple exchange of information, but if a situation requires some back-and-forth, you're better off having a conversation.

10. Plan your schedule two days ahead. Once you start to get the hang of managing a daily schedule, start planning two days in advance. This can help you feel in control -- which, in turn, combats stress and does wonders for your sense of well-being.

Coping with Stress

You're stretched too thin at work. There's strain in your January 2010 family relationships. Money is tight. With issues like these weighing on your mind, it seems like stress is inevitable. Stress can be managed. The key is to take a proactive approach.

Coping with Stress at Home

Here are some tips to help you manage stress at home.

Laugh at yourself: No matter what the issue is that's causing you problems, it's important to keep your sense of humor.

Don't forget to breathe: Consider taking up yoga or another discipline that can provide deep breathing techniques. It can be calming and help you feel much more at peace.

Slow down: Most people are trying to do too much, too fast, and too often.

Compartmentalize: If there are certain things that stress you out, try to approach them at the right time. If you're rushing to make dinner and you realize the pots and pans are out of order, let it go and make a note to straighten them out later.

Get exercise: A regular routine -- as little as 20 minutes, three times a week -- can stop stress before it starts.

Picture a happier you: Many people find that visualization can help them relax. Imagine yourself flawlessly completing a task you are worried about, and you can lay the groundwork for desirable outcomes.

Coping with Stress on the Job

Here are some ways to keep an even keel at work:

Make time for breakfast: Your eating habits can have a lot to do with your stress level. If you have to, set your alarm clock 15 minutes earlier than usual, and make sure you eat something nutritious, preferably high in fiber.

Talk about it: Discussing workplace problems with experts in stress management can assist people who find themselves in stressful situations on their job.

Sleep on it: Many people who are stressed at work complain about being tired all of the time. If you feel this is true for you, try setting an earlier bedtime, and focus on improving the quality of your sleep. Most people need seven to eight hours of sleep each night to feel their best.

Give yourself time to refocus: If you're in a crunch time and feeling stressed, don't be afraid to take short breaks to clear your mind. You might find that you'll get more done if you're more centered.

Listen to music: Even if it's only for a few minutes, listening to music can be a great release. Keep headphones in the office and use them to listen to a favorite song when you're stressed.

Think positive: When you have a success, give yourself credit for it. Too often we dwell on the negative experiences more than positive ones. And remember that your job is only one part of your life. Don't let it overwhelm you.

Ecuadorian Bean Soup

Takes: About 30 minutes | Makes: 6 Servings

Ingredients

1 teaspoon olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 large carrot, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
4 cloves garlic, chopped
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
6 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
1 1/2 cups frozen corn kernels
1 15-oz can low-sodium black beans, rinsed and drained
1 15-oz can white or yellow hominy, rinsed and drained
1 cup frozen baby lima or butter beans
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Optional garnishes: chopped parsley or cilantro, tomato salsa, pickled onions, lime wedges

Preparation

1. Heat oil in a large, heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, peppers and garlic and cook until vegetables are soft, about 8 minutes.
2. Stir in cumin and cook for 1 minute. Add the broth followed by the corn, black beans, hominy, lima beans and a generous grinding of black pepper. Simmer for 15 minutes to blend flavors.
3. Ladle the soup into bowls. Serve the garnishes on the side.



Nutritional info / serving

190 calories
2 g fat
0.3 g saturated fat
9 g protein
36 g carbohydrate
9 g fiber
480 mg sodium

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