

# Take Five:

## Tips for a healthier, happier you!

### Work • Life Tips

▶ Have you seen someone inhale helium from a balloon or tank at a party in order to cause a high-pitched distortion of the voice and make everyone laugh? Inhalation of helium can be fatal. One of world's largest producers of helium, Praxair Technology, Inc. says that inhalation of helium can cause sudden acute asphyxia characterized by fatigue, dizziness, irregular heartbeat, loss of coordination, suffocation, convulsions, unconsciousness, coma, and death. Don't inhale helium and do not allow children to see you do it. Discourage others from doing it, too. Source: Praxair Technology, Inc., Material Safety Data Sheet

▶ Achieving work and family balance is a lot like visiting a car mechanic for a tune-up or a dentist twice year for a check-up and a cleaning. Try these two "inspection techniques" to help you "reboot" work-life balance. 1) Write down family goals. Family needs change over time. Opportunities to build a tree house for the kids or experience a new family pastime don't last forever. Decide what is important now, write it down, and commit to making certain goals "absolutely happen." Also, discuss family expectations and responsibilities. When one family member is taking on too many responsibilities at home, resentments can build. Periodically discuss family needs to gain the awareness needed to consider choices for work and family balance.

▶ Start the morning by completing an important task that you would normally procrastinate about doing—while it weighs on your mind all day. This approach to work management takes practice because it does not conform to the way your mind likes to work, which is to postpone the pain. It is a success secret used by many productivity pros to reduce burnout and accomplish more. The technique allows you to escape the gnawing sensation of what you know you eventually must do. You will enjoy your job more, and it could make the rest of the day feel like a breeze.

## Journaling for Maximum Impact



If you keep a daily personal journal, you already know that it helps you focus on goals and directs your thoughts and intentions toward dreams and desires. The positive outcomes that appear in your life are the result of focus. If you don't keep a journal now, try a journaling experiment to see if this exercise has payoffs for you. Journal in the morning or after taking a 30-minute break from work. Don't journal while watching television or alongside other distractions. You can also journal after taking a walk, a drive, or perhaps after working out. This time gap puts you in a more creative mindset. Journal four things—and try to do this daily—your ideas and sudden insights; positive statements that you will achieve your goals, plans, and strategies; and thanks and acknowledgements for positive outcomes you are experiencing.

## Saying No at Work— with Style

Saying "no" is a strategy for reducing stress, but keeping workplace relationships positive and your reputation as a team player intact are important considerations in your response. Always avoid the terse "no." Attempt to join forces with your requester to find an alternative for the help they need, avoid text or email rejections (go in person to say you aren't available, if possible), and communicate openly that your refusal is not signifying your unwillingness to help in the future. In many instances, we say no to requests because we simply don't want to do what's being requested. In such cases, try to avoid the "let me get back to you after checking my calendar..." This avoidance technique keeps hope alive that you will accept the task, and can make for a bigger let down later when you say no.



## Bring the Body and the Mind Will Follow

If you're bullied at work but unsure about how to respond, questioning your reaction, or wondering whether you should do anything about it, talk with a counselor or visit your EAP. This intermediary step can help you get clarity so you can follow the procedures your organization wants you to take. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control reports that bullied employees have mental health costs twice that of non-bullied employees. That's a strong business case for employers, who are now taking a stronger stance on workplace bullying and interventions. Don't suffer in silence. Use resources that can help you get the positive workplace you deserve. Source: <https://journals.lww.com/joem> [search "mental health bullying"]



# Can't Out-Train a Bad Diet

**A**wesome, you've decided to get healthier by exercising more and training for improved fitness, but wait, are you changing your diet? A common misconception is that exercise can out-train a bad diet. If you are still eating high-calorie foods, fats, and prepared foods, and hitting restaurant buffets, you are fighting a losing battle. You might feel a bit less guilt about your diet, but even a daily two-mile jog can't put a dent in a bad diet. The opposite is also true. A diet without enough carbs or calories can cause you to lose muscle rather than burn fat for the energy needed in your exercise program. So what's the solution? Talk to your doctor about exercise. Get a referral for nutritional guidance. Your health provider may only recommend a great book. Perhaps an experienced nutritionist is better. Either way, overlooking diet as you seek improved health will place you at risk for giving up on the new life habit of building a better you.



# Helping a Friend Who Has an Eating Disorder



**L**ike those with other health conditions, eating disorder sufferers often seek treatment with the encouragement of loved ones. Are you concerned about someone's relationship with food, their body image, or behaviors that indicate the likelihood of an eating disorder? There are tips recommended by the National Eating Disorders Association for helping a person you care about. You'll find them at [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org). The first and most important recommendation is to learn as much as possible about eating disorders. Skipping this step is why many interventions and discussions focused on convincing someone to get help—for any behavioral/health problem—end in disappointment. Why? When you have accurate information, your responses to any naturally defensive statements are more effective, educational, and helpful. This facilitates your loved one's ability to self-diagnose. Shame and stigma reduce quickly. Less defensiveness is observed, emotions may be calmer, your loved one is likely to listen more readily, and the acceptance of help is more likely. Beyond this key step, rehearse what you want to say. Set a private time and place to talk. Be honest, direct, and use "I" statements, not accusations (i.e., "I have noticed..." vs. "You must/need to..."). Learn more about the steps to helping a loved one or a friend at [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org).

# Mismanaging Your Anger

**D**o you struggle to keep your anger under control by attempting to suppress your thoughts at temper-triggering events? Suppression—consciously attempting to tamp down or block troubling thoughts is a natural defense mechanism, but it is not very efficient when solely used as an anger management strategy. In fact, it could contribute to a more explosive response of anger. You're missing two additional parts—learning healthy expression (talking about your feelings) and intervention skills—exercises that when practiced regularly retrain how you respond to anger cues. Talk to your EAP or a professional counselor, get a referral to the help you need, and experience the relief and satisfaction that come with feeling in control of how you respond to common life stressors and events.



# World Health Organization Officially Recognizes Burn-out

**T**he World Health Organization (WHO) now recognizes "burn-out" as a genuine health condition in its International Classification of Diseases. Its definition: "A syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." The syndrome is characterized by three dimensions: "1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and 3) reduced professional efficacy." Sound familiar? If so, talk with your organization's employee assistance program or a professional counselor.