

# Health Insights

July 2024

## Work–Life Balance

In our rush to “get it all done” at the office and at home, it’s easy to forget that as our stress levels spike, our productivity plummets. Stress can affect our concentration, make us irritable or depressed, and harm our relationships.

Over time, stress also weakens our immune systems, and makes us susceptible to a variety of ailments from colds to backaches to heart disease. While we all need a certain amount of stress to drive us and help us perform at our best, the key to managing stress lies in that one magic word: balance. Not only is achieving a healthy work/life balance an attainable goal, but workers and employers alike see the rewards. When employees are balanced and happy, they are more productive, take fewer sick days, and are more likely to stay in their jobs.

### At Work

- **Set manageable goals each day:** Be realistic about workloads and deadlines. Make a “to do” list so you can take care of important tasks first and eliminate nonessential ones. Ask for help when necessary.
- **Be efficient with your time at work:** When you face a big project at work or home, start by dividing it into smaller tasks.
- **Ask for flexibility:** Research shows that employees who work flexible schedules are more productive and loyal to their employers.
- **Take five:** Small breaks at work—or on any project—will help clear your head and improve your ability to deal with stress and make good decisions when you jump back into the grind.
- **Tune in:** Listen to your favorite music at work to foster concentration, reduce stress and anxiety, and stimulate creativity.
- **Communicate effectively:** Be honest with colleagues or your boss when you feel you’re in a bind.

### At Home

- **Unplug:** The same technology that makes it so easy for workers to do their jobs can also burn us out. Learn to recognize when you need a tech break.
- **Divide and conquer:** Make sure responsibilities at home are evenly distributed and clearly outlined.
- **Don't over-commit:** If you’re overscheduled with activities, it’s okay to say, “no.”
- **Get support:** Chatting with friends and family can be important to your success at home—or at work—and can even improve your health. People with stronger support systems have better immune responses to illnesses than those who lack such support.
- **Take advantage of your company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** Many organizations offer resources through an EAP, which can save you precious time by providing guidance on issues like where to find a daycare center and caretaking for an elderly parent, as well as referrals to mental health and other services.
- **Treat your body right:** Eat right, exercise, and get adequate rest. Practice using healthy coping mechanisms for the everyday stressors of life.
- **Get help if you need it:** If you are persistently overwhelmed, it may be time to seek help from a mental health professional. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness; taking care of yourself is a sign of strength.

Work life balance. Mental Health America. (n.d.). [www.mhanational.org/work-life-balance](http://www.mhanational.org/work-life-balance)

This is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional. © 2007, 2010, 2013–2024 Zywave, Inc. All rights reserved.

© 2024 by Moreton & Company



# Mental Health Moment

## Health Benefits of Hobbies

A hobby is any activity that you frequently do for pleasure during your leisure time. This could include creative, athletic, and intellectual activities. Giving quality time to activities that you enjoy also helps your performance in your professional life. It improves your creative problem-solving abilities and helps you build better relationships with your coworkers by making you more empathetic.

### Improve overall Well-Being

A study in New Zealand found that participating in activities that bring out your creative side leads to an increased sense of well-being that is good for you in the long term. Those involved in the study felt a sense of positivity after a few days of creative activity. Studies have also shown that individuals that regularly take time off for their hobbies are less likely to feel low or depressed. In fact, such activities can make you happier and more relaxed.

### Reduce Stress

Keeping yourself engaged during your leisure time lowers your stress levels. Research found that adults who took out time to practice art found the time they spent to be relaxing, enjoyable, and helpful. The study found that there was a noticeable decrease in cortisol levels after the sessions. Cortisol is the human stress hormone; your body's stress response is linked to a spike in cortisol levels.

### Improve Relationships

Finding like-minded people who enjoy doing the same activities as you could have added benefits. Research shows that doing activities in groups such as team sports or volunteering helps enhance your communication skills and build healthy relationships with others.

Many people go through a sense of loneliness at different phases in their lives. Having that feeling for a prolonged duration is unhealthy and could lead to poorer physical, mental, and cognitive health. It's also linked to other medical conditions such as obesity, blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

S.R, V. (2022, May 22). Health benefits of hobbies. WebMD. [www.webmd.com/balance/health-benefits-of-hobbies](http://www.webmd.com/balance/health-benefits-of-hobbies)

## The Power of Self-Care

Self-care is the practice of intentionally engaging in activities that positively impact mental, physical, and emotional well-being. It directly correlates to mental health, as self-care techniques can create healthy coping mechanisms for unavoidable stressors in everyday life. Practicing these techniques can soothe negative symptoms of challenges or help you relax.

Not everyone engages in self-care the same way. Self-awareness during your self-care can help you recognize when you're experiencing certain emotions or worsened symptoms of a mental condition. Once you know your common triggers and symptoms, you can find the best techniques to care for yourself. Here are some self-care ideas to practice:

- Eat a balanced diet and stay hydrated. The foods and drinks you consume impact your mood and fuel your body.
- Prioritize movement. Doing an activity outside is best, as spending time in nature can boost your mental health.
- Practice healthy sleep habits. Stick to a schedule, get enough sleep, avoid devices before bedtime, and make time to rest and recharge.
- Prioritize activities you enjoy, such as listening to music, reading, spending time in nature, and engaging in hobbies.
- Find ways to relax, such as meditation, yoga, breathing exercises, or journaling.
- Set self-care goals and priorities to help you understand what triggers certain symptoms and what coping mechanisms work best for managing your mental health.

Self-care looks different for every person, as it involves activities you enjoy or need. Try to do something you enjoy every day. Self-care is not a cure for mental conditions, but it can help you understand what best manages your mental health. Talk to your doctor or a mental health professional if you have concerns.







# Healthy Habits Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <b>Welcome to July!</b> Start the Stop, Hobby Time Challenge.	2	3	4 <b>Independence Day</b>	5	6
7	8 <b>Mindful Monday:</b> Follow a 5-10-minute meditation practice.	9	10	11 <b>Thirsty Thursday:</b> Drink a glass of water with each meal to keep yourself hydrated.	12	13 <b>Sunny Saturday:</b> Get outside and do an outdoor activity today.
14 <b>Self-care Sunday:</b> Cross something off your to-do list that has been there awhile.	15	16 <b>Tuesday's Tip:</b> When working take standing breaks every hour to give your mind and brain a rest.	17	18 <b>Challenge Check-in:</b> Choose one new hobby to start this weekend.	19 <b>Fitness Friday:</b> Try a new fitness class with friends.	20
21	22	23	24 <b>Wellness Wednesday:</b> Plan your next grocery run to have in-season fruits and vegetables.	25	26	27 <b>Social Saturday:</b> Sit down and have a meal with friends or family.
28 <b>Self-care Sunday:</b> Sit down and read a book for 30 minutes.	29 <b>Motivation Monday:</b> Lay out your workout clothes the night before so you are ready to go in the morning.	30	31 <b>Challenge Check-in:</b> What was your favorite new hobby you tried this month?			

# Stop, Hobby Time!



Life gets busy. Between work and personal obligations, it can be hard to try new things. Hobbies reduce the stress caused by busy lifestyles while improving your well-being, social connections, and mental health. Try out a new hobby to gain a fresh perspective.

For the next four weeks, try out a new type of hobby: physical, intellectual, creative, or service-oriented. You can try a new hobby each week, or the same hobby more than once! Take a walk outside, learn a new skill, or visit with others. Write down what you did and how it made you feel. You may find something new that is meaningful and enjoyable!

## Goal: Try out a new hobby each week.

WEEK 1

**Hobby Category:**  Physical  Intellectual  Creative  Service

Hobby or Activity Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How did it make you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 2

**Hobby Category:**  Physical  Intellectual  Creative  Service

Hobby or Activity Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How did it make you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 3

**Hobby Category:**  Physical  Intellectual  Creative  Service

Hobby or Activity Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How did it make you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 4

**Hobby Category:**  Physical  Intellectual  Creative  Service

Hobby or Activity Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How did it make you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

## Answers to Quiz:

Q1: Set manageable goals each day. Be Efficient with your time at work. Ask for flexibility. Take five. Tune in. Communicate effectively. Unplug. Divide and conquer. Don't over-commit. Get support. Take advantage of EAP. Treat your body right. Get help if you need it.

Q2: a. True | Q3: Lowers | Q5: b. Overschedule yourself