



MIND
& BODY



food & body
mind & body

Secrets to a Healthier, Happier Life

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Staying Sharp: A Lifetime of Learning

Research proves it — your mind is like a muscle. Exercise it, and it grows strong and stays supple. Let it be sedentary, and it will weaken. Have the wisdom to know when to push your mind to be active, and when to back off and let yourself rest. The secret to a vibrant, long life? The world is your school and life your greatest teacher.

10 WAYS TO LEARN YOUR WHOLE LIFE LONG

Keeping your mind sharp helps keep your body well, since your brain is central command for every move you make. Here are some quick tips to keep learning in the school of life:

- 1. Read every day.** The more you read, the better your retention.
- 2. Keep a journal.** It's a launching pad for ideas.
- 3. Talk to a child.** Kids can teach lessons that grown-ups have forgotten.
- 4. Play "I Spy".** Notice at least one new thing on your daily commute. You'll broaden your perspective.
- 5. Sample new foods.** Teach your taste buds a new thing or two.
- 6. Sign up for something fun.** You'll learn something new and meet like-minded people.
- 7. Visit your library.** It's free, it's quiet, it's loaded with knowledge, and it's just about the most stress-free environment you'll ever encounter.
- 8. Volunteer to teach.** It's a guaranteed way to truly learn something.

9. **Take a trip.** Even a day's jaunt exposes you to something new.
10. **Ask questions.** Be curious at work, at play, with friends, with family. You'll strengthen social bonds and learn more than you ever thought possible. ♦

HOW HOBBIES HELP YOUR HEALTH

Hobbies are potent medicine for reducing stress and boosting your performance. So when you pursue a hobby, you're doing more than just passing time pleasantly. And it doesn't matter whether you're quietly collecting stamps at home or out acting in local theater — pursuing a passion pays you back ...

Physically. Numerous studies suggest that hobbies do wonderful things for your body. For instance, caring for pets can lower blood pressure ... listening to music may increase levels of serotonin, a brain chemical that can lift your mood ... gardening promotes strength and healing ... dancing generates the cardiovascular benefits of aerobic exercise.

Mentally. A hobby can be a great mental release valve. Just think: After working all day, you can relax and revitalize with slow activities such as walking or painting, with little or no pressure to perform.

Emotionally. As you gain skill in your hobby, your self-confidence rises. *Example:* One study of retirees showed that those involved in challenging leisure pursuits were happiest and had the greatest sense of achievement.

Socially. By connecting with others who share your interests, hobbies boost social interaction, a major stress-buster. And there's growing evidence that the more friends you have, the less problems trouble you, the healthier you are and the better you perform.

To get started: List activities that interest you, ask friends how they spend their free time or try an adult education class. *More fun hobby ideas:* stargazing ... bird-watching ... figure skating ... juggling ... model building ... restoring antiques ... quilting ... traveling. ♦



Time Out

If you forget things such as grocery items, appointments or people's names every now and then, don't worry. Everyone does. Try working on your "memory muscle" by doing puzzles, playing board games, reading the newspaper. Just like your body, your mind will reward you for keeping it active.

WHY ARE YOU SO BUSY?

An active mind is a wonderful thing. But a frantic mind? That's a different story. Just as people tend to spend what money they make, our natural tendency is also to fill every moment of our time. This constant bustling adds to chronic stress and makes it difficult to focus, either at home or on the job. One solution? Simplify.

Here's how:

Fix what you can. Perhaps you can't change your commute or the fact that the lawn needs mowing, but there's plenty you can do to simplify your day. *Examples:* Cook on Sunday and freeze meals for the week ... have items such as dry cleaning delivered when possible ... arrange a car pool for your children's activities.

List projects and priorities. Include everything you do — driving your children to sports practice or activities, household errands, picking up doughnuts for work meetings, hair appointments, volunteer work, church activities.

Cut back where you can. Think of this as gaining time rather than as sacrificing. Can you delegate more at work? Hire a high school student to help with household chores or yard work? Say "no" more often? Work on eliminating one item per week.

Get over your fear. Society rewards overachievers, and having free time may make you feel as though you are lazy, inferior or missing out on something. For a change, make yourself No. 1. Use your newfound time to take a walk without a destination, read a book, meet a friend for lunch or play a board game with your spouse. Chances are, you'll realize that what you were missing out on all along was time for yourself. ♦