

Self-Care Activities



Workforce Health

Three Good Things Journal



Source: Martin E. Seligman. *Flourish*. (2011).

- Memories are tricky; good ones are like Teflon (they slip away) while bad ones stick like Velcro (especially when we are exhausted).
- **Three Good Things** retrains our brains so that we can remember the good things and our role in bringing them about.

Why You Should Try It

- In our day-to-day lives, it's easy to get caught up in the things that go wrong and feel like we're living under our own private rain cloud; at the same time, we tend to adapt to the good things and people in our lives, taking them for granted.
- As a result, we often overlook everyday beauty and goodness -- a kind gesture from a stranger, or the warmth of our heater on a chilly morning. In the process, we frequently miss opportunities for happiness and connection. This practice guards against those tendencies.
- By remembering and listing three positive things that have happened in your day, and considering what caused them, you tune into the sources of goodness in your life. It's a habit that can change the emotional tone of your life, replacing feelings of disappointment or entitlement with those of gratitude, and why this practice is associated with significant increases in happiness.

How to Do It

- Each day for at least one week, write down three things that went well for you that day and an explanation for why they went well.
- The items can be relatively small in importance (e.g. "My coworker made the coffee today," or relatively large, "I earned a big promotion.").
- As you write, follow these instructions:
 1. Give the event a title (e.g. "Coworker complimented my work on a project.").
 2. Write down exactly what happened in as much detail as possible including what you did or said and, if others were involved, what they did or said.
 3. Include how this event made you feel at the time and how it made you feel later (including now, as you remember it).
 4. Explain what you think caused this event – your contribution.
 5. Use any writing style you please; don't worry about perfect grammar and spelling.
 6. If you find yourself focusing on negative feelings, refocus your mind on the good event and the positive feelings that came with it.

Take a Deep Breath



Deep Breathing

Deep breathing relieves stress and anxiety due to its physical effect on the nervous system. During stressful situations or thoughts, our body triggers a fight-or-flight response. People can experience shallow or rapid breathing, or a burst of adrenaline, raising blood pressure and pulse rate. Deep breathing, helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system. The parasympathetic nervous system helps to slow down heart rate, lower blood pressure and ease the mind. Breathing exercises can help rid the lungs of accumulated stale air, increase oxygen levels and get the diaphragm to return to its job of helping you breathe. There are many different breathing techniques, but

learning to control your breathing can have healthful effects on the mind and body. Many studies show “the benefit of yoga breathing in treating depression, anxiety, PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and asthma¹.” Through deep breathing, people can experience these additional health and wellness benefits²:

- Reduce stress and blood pressure
- Strengthen the abdominal and intestinal muscles
- Promote blood flow
- Release toxins from the body
- Aid in a good night’s sleep

Why Is It Important?

Exercise helps strengthen muscles and keeps our body healthy. Similarly, our lungs need exercise to keep them strong and efficient. Lungs play an important part in daily life like walking up a flight of stairs, yardwork and doing aerobic and strength exercises. To maintain healthy lungs or to improve their capacity, try different breathing exercises. These exercises can also be helpful in reducing stress.

Breathing Exercise Examples:

- Deep breathing
- Pursed lip breathing
- Belly breathing
- Alternate nostril breathing
- Equal breathing

References:

1. [American Lung Association](#) – Breathing Exercises
2. [Chopra](#) – Breathing for Life, S. Patel, M.D
3. [Mindful](#) – How to fight Stress with Intentional Breathing, G. Bullock, PhD

Take a Deep Breath

Continued



How Do I Breathe Deeply?

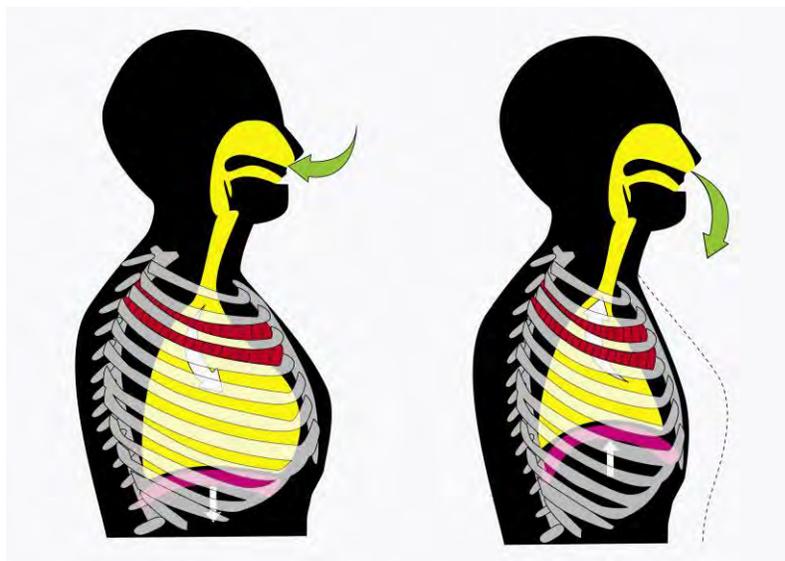
There are many forms of breathing exercises. If you do not find one technique helpful, try another.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your hands on your knees.
2. Keep your shoulders relaxed; your eyes can be open or closed, whichever is more relaxing.
3. Breathe in through your nose, filling your lungs from the bottom up. Your belly should extend out.
4. Exhale slowly through your nose as you count to five. Tighten your abdominal muscles to help push out the air.
5. At the end of your breath, pause for two counts, then inhale again slowly.
6. Repeat as many times as you need to relax.

Try It in Real Life

Try deep breathing in real life. Our daily commute can be stressful, whether it's a long day at the office, traffic, construction or running late to your next event. Try these three simple ideas to lower stress during your commute.

1. Before you leave your driveway/parking spot, take three or more deep breaths to help you feel more alert and focused on driving versus being distracted behind the wheel.
2. Use each stop to take a breath. It's unavoidable, there will be stops. Use this moment to breathe and enjoy life.
3. Make driving a compassionate experience. Everyone on the road is commuting somewhere. Before you yell or get agitated with others on the road, take a deep breath. It's like counting to 10 when you're mad.



Computer Workstation Analysis and Adjustment



If you work at a desk with a computer, you may be at risk for injuries from improper work station set-up. Making simple adjustments can significantly reduce your likelihood of developing injuries.

Adjust your chair

- Your chair should be adjusted so that your forearms are parallel to the floor when your fingers are resting on the middle row of the keyboard.
- Your thighs should be parallel to the floor, with 3-6 inches of clearance between your thighs and the underside of the desk or keyboard tray.
- Your backrest should be adjusted so that your entire back feels fully supported and is upright. You may need to use a small, firm pillow, a folded towel or a lumbar cushion for additional support for your lower back if the contour of the chair's backrest does not fit snugly against your lower back.
- Your thighs should be fully supported on the seat, with about 1.5 inches of spaces between the front edge of the seat and the back of your knees.
- Your knees should be bent at a 90-degree angle. Adjust the chair height to allow for your feet to touch the floor. If your feet do not reach the floor, you may need to use a footrest or a wedge-shaped item such as a three-ring binder beneath your feet.

Adjust your monitor

- Your monitor should be adjusted so that the top of the screen is about eye level. The tilt of the screen should be adjusted to minimize glare and allow comfortable viewing of the entire screen without tilting your head and neck up or down. Certain types of corrective lenses in glasses and contacts may require variations in these adjustments. Try to keep your head, neck and shoulders upright and relaxed.
- The eye distance to the screen should be 18-21 inches. A simple test is to extend your arm out in front of you. Your hand should not touch the screen but be within 2-3 inches. You may increase this distance by 3-4 inches if you have a large screen monitor.
- Keep document holders at about the same height and distance as the monitor screen. If you use them often, occasionally move them back and forth on each side of the monitor.

Adjust your keyboard and mouse

- Your keyboard should be adjusted so that your forearms are parallel to the floor with your elbows at a 90-degree angle and your wrists straight and relaxed when your fingers are on the middle row of the keyboard.
- The tilt of the keyboard should be adjusted so that you can reach all rows of the keys with your wrists remaining straight and relaxed.
- A padded wrist rest can be used to support your wrists or cushion the edge of your desk if the keyboard rests on your desk. Your wrists should "glide" over the wrist rest as you type, rather than resting statically on the wrist rest.
- Your mouse should be placed at the side of your keyboard so you do not have to fully extend your arm to use it. As with the wrist rest, do not rest your wrist on the mouse pad or desk as you use the mouse.

Computer Workstation Analysis and Adjustment

Continued



Adjust your lighting

- Reduce glare from outside light by closing window coverings when light is shining in. If window coverings cannot be adjusted, position the monitor so the screen is at a right angle to the window.
- Reduce glare from inside light by changing the tilt or position of your screen. Anti-glare filters can also help. If used, task lighting (an extra light used at your workstation) should be positioned to avoid glare on the screen.
- The contrast/brightness should be adjusted to maximum brightness without blurring.

Organize your desk

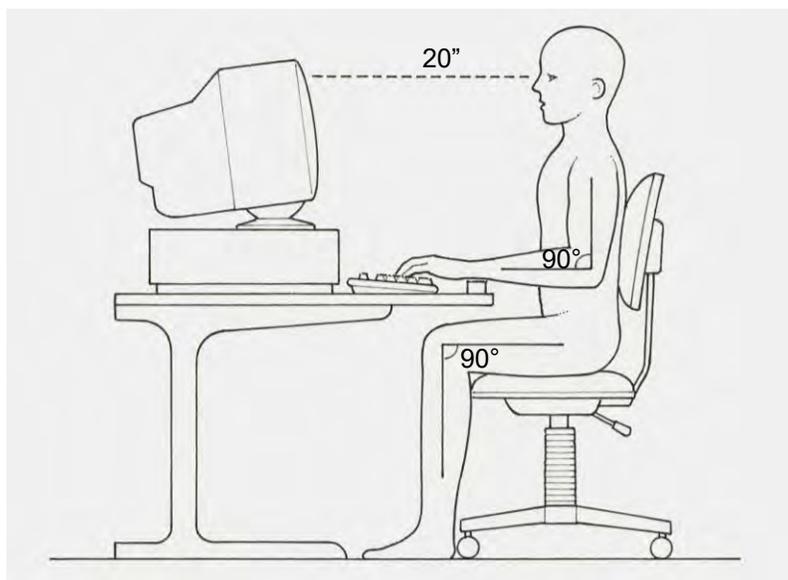
- Arrange items on your desk so that what you use most often is within easy reach.
- If you use overhead shelves for storage, stand up to retrieve or replace items rather than reaching with your arms.

Headset

- If you frequently talk on the phone and type or write at the same time, use a headset rather than cradling the phone between your head and neck. Experiment with various styles until you find the headset that works best for you.

Sit properly

- Keep your ears over your shoulders
- Your shoulders should be level, with your elbows at 90-degree angles and your wrists straight
- Avoid resting your wrists on the edge of a table or on wrist rests
- Your hips and knees should be at 90-degree angle
- Use a back support
- Keep your chair and backrest at proper height
- Your eyes should be level with the top of the screen
- Keep your elbows loose instead of locked when reaching



*This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care.
Always follow your healthcare provider's instructions.*

Strength Training Anywhere - Office



Consult with your health care provider before starting or changing an exercise program, especially if you have any medical conditions.

Strengthening exercises can keep muscles strong and active, even if a large amount of your day is spent at a desk. Perform three to 20 repetitions; ideally, your muscles will start to fatigue by the last two repetitions.



CHAIR SQUATS (Hips, hamstrings, quadriceps)

As you inhale, squat down by sitting hips back, keeping chest and head up until knees are bent about 90 degrees. Knees should remain behind toes. As you exhale, push through heels to stand up tall and squeeze glutes at the top.

DESK PUSH-UPS (Chest, shoulders, triceps)

As you inhale, tighten your stomach and slowly lower yourself as far as possible while keeping elbows in and near your sides. As you exhale, pull your belly button in toward your spine and push yourself back to starting position in a strong, controlled motion.



STATIONARY LUNGE WITH CHAIR (Hips, hamstrings, quadriceps)

As you inhale, bend the back leg until knee is close to touching the floor and front knee is bent at 90 degrees. Knee should remain behind toes. As you exhale, push through the front heel to straighten legs and return to starting position.

LEG LIFTS FROM CHAIR (Abdominals, low back)

Sit forward on chair with legs fully extended. Armrests may be used for support and leverage. Tighten your stomach before you start. As you exhale, slowly raise your straightened legs. As you inhale, lower legs back down to starting position.



W-RAISES (Middle back, back of shoulders)

Bend elbows to create a "W" with your upper body with thumbs pointing behind you. As you exhale, squeeze shoulder blades together to draw arms back and engage your back muscles. As you inhale, release.

Strength Training Anywhere – Home



Squat (Glutes, quadriceps, hamstrings)

As you inhale, squat down by sitting hips back, keeping chest and head up until knees are bent about 90 degrees. Knees should remain behind toes. As you exhale, push through heels to stand up tall and squeeze glutes at the top.



Bent Knee Push-Up

(Chest, triceps, anterior shoulder)

With knees resting on the floor and hands shoulder width apart, push up until arms are straight. Lower slowly and repeat.



Bent-Over Wide Row (Middle back, back of shoulders)

Hinge forward at the hips, with arms hanging down, bend elbows to push your shoulder blades together, then release arms back down to hanging position and repeat.



Lunges (Quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings)

Take a big step forward and bend your front knee to about 90 degrees. Keep your weight on your back toes and drop the back knee toward the floor. Do not let your knee touch the floor. Keep your upper body straight, your shoulders back and relaxed with your chin up. Perform the desired number of reps and then switch legs.

Stretching Anywhere



Consult with your health care provider before starting or changing an exercise program, especially if you have any medical conditions.

- **Benefits:** release tension, reduce overuse injuries, increase range of motion, reduce stress
- **Frequency:** Two to three days per week is enough to improve your range of motion; however, stretching exercises can be performed daily
- **Intensity:** Gently lean into the stretch to a point of tightness or slight discomfort, but not to the point of pain
- **Breathing:** Take a deep breath and exhale as you lean into the stretch, avoid holding your breath



WRIST (Forearms, palm)

Extend one arm forward with your palm facing up. With the other hand, grasp the topside of your fingers, straighten your elbow and pull back toward the forearm.

This stretch is great for prevention and management of carpal tunnel syndrome.



NECK (Upper back, neck)

Lean right ear toward right shoulder and hold. Roll head down toward chest then left ear toward left shoulder. Repeat in the other direction and alternate for 30 seconds.



UPPER BACK (Back of shoulders, upper back, palms, forearms)

First, straighten both arms in front and interlace fingers with palms facing away from you. Push palms away from you as you tuck your chin and spread your shoulder blades apart. Allow the upper back to round slightly forward. Second, drop your hands down to about knee level and stretch again. The angle may need to vary per individual to obtain the best stretch.



LOW BACK (Hamstrings, low back)

Sit on the edge of your chair. First, rest elbows on knees and pause until you feel the tension release. Proceed until your fingertips touch the tops of your shoes. Pause. Try to touch your palms to the floor. Come up slowly or you may increase the tension.

Stretching Anywhere

Continued



DOUBLE HAMSTRING STRETCH (Hamstrings, low back)

Sit down with both legs straight. Keep your back flat and lean forward so the chest goes straight toward the knee. Do not allow your back to round.

SEATED FIGURE 4 (Piriformis, side of leg)

Start in a seated position. Bring right knee up toward chest and cross over left, so right ankle is resting just above the left knee. Keep right foot flexed (toes toward shin) to protect your knee. Gently pull in on your right knee to feel a stretch along the outside of the right leg. Repeat with the other leg.



FULL BODY STRETCH (Low back, upper back, sides, abdominals)

Stand up, interlock your fingers and push your palms up as high as you can. There should be a slight arch in your low back. At the top of your stretch, tighten the muscles in the middle of your back and pull back your shoulders. **Beneficial for releasing low back tension from long periods of sitting or driving.**

SIDE STRETCH (Sides, shoulders, low back)

Stand with feet hip-width apart and raise arms overhead while keeping stomach tight and tailbone tucked. Gently reach left arm over toward the right, allowing for a slight bend in the upper body, keeping stomach braced the whole time. You should feel a stretch in the left side of your body. Gently return back to starting position and repeat on other side.



CAT COW STANDING (Spine, low back, upper back, abdominals)

Start with feet hip-width apart, knees bent and hands down on thighs with fingers facing inward. As you inhale, arch back and look up toward the ceiling. As you exhale, round the back, tucking in the tailbone and chin. Repeat for 30 seconds.

Reference: American Council on Exercise, www.acefitness.org/acefit

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Workforce Health

Healthy Snacking



Healthy Snacks:

- Between meals helps to keep energy levels and metabolism high
 - May be a good strategy for weight loss
 - Can improve control of blood sugars for diabetes management
 - Should consist of a complex carbohydrate (high in fiber) and a lean protein or healthy fat
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- Low-fat or Greek yogurt with berries
 - Fresh veggies with Greek yogurt dip, bean dip or hummus
 - Tuna (sealed pack/no drain) on high fiber crackers
 - 1/3 cup dried fruit and nut mix
 - Bean salad in a pita pocket
 - 1/2 cup cottage cheese with pineapple in a Dixie® cup
 - Light string cheese and strawberries
 - Small apple with almond/peanut butter
 - Banana with slivered almonds
 - Laughing Cow® cheese with oat bran pretzels
 - Hardboiled egg and whole grain rice crackers
 - Low sodium vegetable juice, celery sticks and three olives
 - Low sugar, high protein granola bar (ex. RX Bar®, KIND®, Lara®)
 - 1/2 cup dry high fiber cereal mixed with nuts
 - Veggie or flax tortilla chips and salsa mixed with sprinkle of cheese
 - 1/4 cup natural yogurt covered raisins mixed with pecans
 - String cheese wrapped in slice of nitrate-free turkey
 - Whole grain English muffin with peanut butter
 - Vitamuffin Vitatops® (www.vitalicious.com)
 - Cocoa almonds and blueberries
 - Baked, seasoned chickpeas mixed with veggie sticks
 - Popcorn mixed with nuts
 - Nitrate-free turkey jerky and baby carrots
 - Single pack guacamole with baked chips
 - Blue Diamond® rice crackers and almond butter
 - Quinoa (cooked grain/seed) veggie salad
 - Sprouted grain tortilla & veggie refried beans
 - Wholegrain crackers with hummus

Sources:
Best snacks from the Good Housekeeping Institute's Nutrition Director, Delia A. Hammock, M.S., R.D.
www.todaysdietitian.com

Healthy Sleep Checklist



Check boxes of your current healthy sleep habits.
Star those habits you would consider adding to your sleep routine.

Preparing Your Bedroom for Optimal Sleep

Keep your bedroom cool and comfortable.

- The ideal temperature for sleep is 60-67 degrees F
- Make sure your mattress is comfortable and the right size
- Enjoy comfortable pillows and sheets
- Wash sheets and comforters at least once a week
- Declutter your room to create a sleep haven

Eliminate noise and light from your sleep environment.

- Try white noise (a sound machine or app)
- Try an eye mask or earplugs
- Use an aromatherapy diffuser (lavender, jasmine)
- Keep nightstand lamp bulbs to 50-60 watts
- Invest in blackout shades or curtains

Eliminate electronics – they emit a light that interferes with melatonin, a hormone that is released at night to help us sleep. Check items currently in your bedroom.

- TV
- Cell phones
- Electronic readers
- Computers
- Gaming systems

Activities You Can Do Throughout the Day to Improve Sleep

- Exercise! As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise on a daily basis can help you fall asleep faster, sleep longer and improve the quality of your sleep.
- Avoid falling asleep after dinner or other large meals. Eat smaller meals during the day to maintain alertness.
- Limit naps to 30 minutes. Use an alarm to prevent longer naps that disturb your sleep and wake cycle.
- Get plenty of natural sunlight during the day. Consider a light therapy box if natural sunlight is not an option.
- Regular massages can help relieve tension.

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Healthy Sleep Checklist

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Preparing Your Body for Optimal Sleep

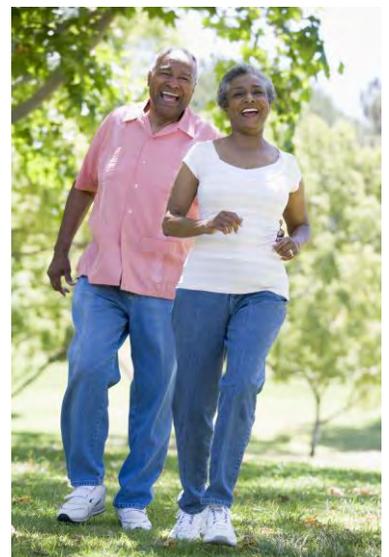
- Establish a regular sleep routine. Set an alarm as a cue to get ready to unwind.
- Establish a consistent bedtime and wake-up time. Try not to vary by more than an hour (two hours maximum) on weekends.
- Consider an earlier bedtime. Make 15-minute adjustments every three to four days until you reach your goal.
- Eat your last meal two to three hours before bedtime.
- Try a mug of herbal tea (Chamomile, Passionflower, Valerian)
- If you need a bedtime snack try combining carbohydrates and protein (a bowl of cereal and skim milk).
- Complete your exercise routine two to three hours before bed.
- Skip the nightcap. Alcohol might aid in falling asleep but disrupts sleep later in the night.
- Set a media curfew. Turn off all screen devices at least one hour before bedtime.
- Cut the caffeine. It can take up to six hours to eliminate caffeine from your system.
- Try hydrotherapy – a hot bath or shower before bed can be very relaxing.
- Make a prioritized “To Do” list prior to going to bed. This will avoid that loop of continuous thinking about what you need to do tomorrow.
- Relax before trying to fall asleep. Meditate, stretch, pray, read a book (not electronic) or listen to music to allow your brain time to calm down.
- Do not self-prescribe any substance to induce sleep or wakefulness.

Waking Up Energized and Ready for the Day

- Set a gentle sounding alarm to wake up.
- Avoid the snooze button – any additional winks will not be high quality sleep.
- Allow bright sunlight into your bedroom in the morning to get you ready for the day.
- Stretch soon after waking to get moving.
- Take an early morning outdoor walk. Activity and exposure to light will improve energy.

Other Considerations

- Consider healthy boundaries with your pets. If they are disturbing your sleep, consider providing them with other sleep options.
- Keep a sleep journal or use a sleep app to help identify patterns and habits.



This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your health care provider's instructions.

References: www.sleepfoundation.org, www.Sleep.org, www.cdc.gov/sleep/resources.html