

VALUES - BASED QUALITY OF LIFE™ Newsletter

Because Making Smart Choices About Your Money Impacts The Quality of Your Life

Over the years, we have found that there are elements of your life that are more important than money. These elements - Physical Health, Relationship Health, Inner Health and Career Health - cannot be delegated. We hope that you find these articles to be of value in improving the quality of your life.



Daryl M. Milleker
Trusted Advisor

It is better to have and not need rather than need and have not.

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PHYSICAL HEALTH

6 Ways Pets Can Improve Your Health

By Lisa Fields

Have you ever noticed that you feel better when you're around your pet?

It's true. Spending quality time with a dog, cat or other animal can have a positive impact on your mood and your health. Pets can be calming stress-fighters.

"We found that pet owners, on average, were better off than non-owners, especially when they have a higher-quality relationship with their pets," says pet researcher Allen R. McConnell, PhD. He's a professor of psychology at Miami University. "What [makes] a meaningful relationship varies from person to person."

For some active people, that includes playing ball or Frisbee in the park. For others who can't get outside, just petting your dog can help you feel connected.

Pets can help you in other ways, too.

1. A Healthier Heart

Your dog may make you less likely to get heart disease. Why? Dog owners walk more and have lower blood pressure than people who don't have dogs.

Pets can also be good for you if you already have heart problems.

Heart attack survivors and people with serious abnormal heart rhythms who own dogs live longer than people with the same heart problems who don't have pets, studies show.

2. Stress Soothers

Petting your cat or dog feels good. It can lower your blood pressure, helps your body release a relaxation hormone, and cuts down on levels of a stress hormone.

It also soothes your pet, says Alan Beck, ScD, director of the Center for the Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University.

3. Social Magnets

Pets, especially dogs, can help you connect with other people.

"If I saw you walking down the street, I couldn't comfortably start talking to you if I didn't know you, but I could if you had a dog," Beck says. "It's an acceptable interaction that otherwise wouldn't be possible."

People who use wheelchairs say that other people make eye contact with them more often and ask if they can be of help when they're with their dogs, Beck says.

**"Until one
has loved
an animal a
part of one's
soul remains
unawakened."**

- Anatole France

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RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

How to Support A Friend After Surgery: Visiting Your Friend in the Hospital

By Mirel Ketchiff

Surgery can be traumatic for many people. If you have a friend who's just undergone a procedure, you may be concerned about what to say or do. There are many great ways to be supportive after a surgery, and if you stay empathetic and patient you can be a great asset to a recovering friend.

1. Plan your visit ahead of time. While your friend might usually love a spur of the moment visit, recovering from surgery is a different matter entirely. Not only do hospitals often have specific visiting hours, your friend might need to prepare physically and emotionally for visitors.

Know the hospitals visiting hours and policies. Depending on where in the hospital your friend is staying, there is different protocol for visitation. If your friend is still in the recovery room, for example, only one visitor at a time is permitted, with the nurse's permission and supervision, and there are stricter rules for personal hygiene. Call the hospital ahead of time to ask about visiting hours and any restrictions.

Try to reach a family member or spouse to see when a good time would be to visit. This way, you'll have a better idea of how your friend is feeling, what tests have been run, and whether they're up for visitors. Once you know, plan your visit accordingly. Call or text once more before heading out to make sure your presence is still welcome.

Plan to stay about 20 or 30 minutes, but use your judgment. If your friend seems tired or disengaged, you should slip out sooner. If they seem happy to see you, and are excited to talk to you, then feel free to stay longer.

2. Know post-surgery etiquette and hygiene. A lot of things can be bothersome to patients just out of surgery, so make sure you do not do anything to cause your friend discomfort during your visit.

Do not wear perfume, aftershave or strong-smelling lotions as people are often sensitive to smells when they're sick or recovering from surgery. In addition, many healthcare facilities are now fragrance-free.

When you enter and leave a friend's room, wash your hands with soap, water, alcohol rubs, or hand sanitizer. Check with the nurses' station before entering the room, as you could be required to use a gown, gloves, and/or a mask. People are more susceptible to germs after an operation.

If you have any type of illness, such as a cold or flu, ask the hospital staff beforehand if it's safe for you to visit your friend, as it usually isn't.

If you are a smoker, only smoke in designated areas and do not get cigarette fumes anywhere near your friend.

Due to the risk of bacteria and germs spreading, you could be banned from the hospital if you bring a non-service dog into the hospital.

Do not swear as this is usually against hospital rules and can get you thrown out and/or banned if caught.

Avoid the patient's bed, as this can spread germs. Do not sit or put your feet on the bed.

Do not touch the patient's wounds or any medical equipment they are attached to.

Do not use the patient's toilet or bathroom, this can also spread germs and bacteria, and nurses may also report you and have you removed from the hospital.

Do not share any property, such as toiletries or tissues, with a patient.

“Friendly people are caring people, eager to provide encouragement and support when needed most.”

- Rosabeth Moss Kanter

3. Bring a gift. People love to receive gifts, especially if they're not feeling well. It's not about the money spent, but just knowing that a person cares. Consider bringing a small gift to your friend for them to enjoy post-surgery.

Many people think to bring flowers, but flowers are not ideal for a hospital stay. They take up a great deal of room, and shelf-space in a hospital room is limited. They also decay quickly, and are hard to transport home.

Boredom is a huge issue with hospital patients, so consider an interactive gift. Try novels, magazines, crossword puzzle, sudoku books, or a journal. If your friend has some kind of electronic media, like an iPad or tablet, try iTunes or Amazon gift certificates, so they can select and purchase entertaining media for themselves.

If food is allowed, bring the patient their favorite snack, as hospital food can get tiresome. However, keep in mind that even if you mean well, they might not want to eat, as surgery and medications can affect their appetite. Many patients are placed on special diets following surgery, and some patients may not be allowed to eat until normal bowel function returns, such as after a bowel resection surgery.

4. Make the hospital feel like home. A hospital can be a drab, impersonal space. If your friend is there for a prolonged recovery period, try to make their hospital room feel less alien by creating a homey environment for your friend.

Decorate the room. Hospital rooms are beige or white and this can grow depressing with time. Bring cheerful posters, a small decorative hanging, or colorful blankets and throw pillows. Just check with hospital staff first to make sure you're not violating any hospital policies.

Bring them something familiar. During a traumatic event like a surgery, familiarity can be a comfort. Make a small scrapbook of friends, family members, beloved pets, and other loved ones. Borrow your friend's iPod and create custom playlist of their favorite feel better songs or burn them a mix CD. Buy DVD's of their favorite movies and TV shows, as many hospital rooms have a television patients can use.

Act natural when visiting. Your friend is probably eager to get back to a sense of normal, so share news of mutual friends and discuss what's been happening in the news or on TV. Let your friend feel like they're part of the world even if they are stuck in a hospital room.

5. Organize group visits. If possible, and after you make sure your friend is up to it, get a group of friends together to visit your friend.

Group visits can feel like a more natural hang out session than one-on-one communication, as people often congregate in groups. Your friend will also be happy to see how many people care and have taken the time to visit.

Check hospital policy to make sure there isn't a cap on the number of people permitted in a room at a time.

6. Plan for the future. Making some future plans and promises can give your friend something to look forward to after their hospital stay, and reassurance their needs won't be forgotten once they're released.

Set a date to go see a movie, go out to dinner, get coffee, go shopping, etc., sometime after they will be released from the hospital. Your friend will appreciate having something small to look forward to after their stay is over.

Offer any assistance in the transition back home, such as driving your friend back from the hospital and running errands for them during recovery.

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INNER HEALTH

12 Useful Ways To Get Out Of Ruts

By Celestine Chua

Have you gotten into a rut before? Or are you in a rut right now?

You know you're in a rut when you run out of ideas and inspiration. I personally see a rut as a productivity vacuum. It might be a reason why you aren't getting results. Even as you spend more time on your work, you can't seem to get anything constructive done. While I'm normally productive, I get into occasional ruts (especially when I've been working back-to-back without rest). During those times, I can spend an entire day in front of the computer and get nothing done. It can be quite frustrating.

Over time, I have tried and found several methods that are helpful to pull me out of a rut. If you experience ruts too, whether as a working professional, a writer, a blogger, a student, or other work, you will find these useful. Here are 12 of my personal tips to get out of ruts:

Work on the small tasks. When you are in a rut, tackle it by starting small. Clear away your smaller tasks which have been piling up. Reply to your emails, organize your documents, declutter your work space, and reply to private messages. Whenever I finish doing that, I generate a positive momentum which I bring forward to my work.

Take a break from your work desk. Get yourself away from your desk and go take a walk. Go to the washroom, walk around the office, go out and get a snack. Your mind is too bogged down and needs some airing. Sometimes I get new ideas right after I walk away from my computer.

Upgrade yourself. Take the down time to upgrade yourself. Go to a seminar. Read up on new materials (#7). Pick up a new language. Or any of the 42 ways here to improve yourself. The modern computer uses different typefaces because Steve Jobs dropped in on a calligraphy class back in college. How's that for inspiration?

Talk to a friend. Talk to someone and get your mind off work for a while. Talk about anything, from casual chatting to a deep conversation about something you really care about. You will be surprised at how the short encounter can be rejuvenating in its own way.

Forget about trying to be perfect. If you are in a rut, the last thing you want to do is step on your own toes with perfectionist tendencies. Just start small. Do what you can, at your own pace. Let yourself make mistakes. Soon, a little trickle of inspiration will come. And then it'll build up with more trickles. Before you know it, you have a whole stream of ideas.

Paint a vision to work towards. If you are continuously getting in a rut with your work, maybe there's no vision inspiring you to move forward. Think about why you are doing this, and what you are doing it for. What is the end vision in mind? Make it as vivid as possible. Make sure it's a vision that inspires you and use that to trigger you to action.

“Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.”

- Swami Sivananda

Read a book (or blog). The things we read are like food to our brain. If you are out of ideas, it's time to feed your brain with great materials. Here's a list of 40 books you can start off with. Stock your browser with only the feeds of high quality blogs, such as Lifehack.org, DumbLittleMan, Seth Godin's Blog, Tim Ferris' Blog, Zen Habits or The Personal Excellence Blog. Check out the best-selling books; those are generally packed with great wisdom.

Have a quick nap. If you are at home, take a quick nap for about 20-30 minutes. This clears up your mind and gives you a quick boost. Nothing quite like starting off on a fresh start after catching up on sleep.

Remember why you are doing this. Sometimes we lose sight of why we do what we do, and

after a while we become jaded. A quick refresher on why you even started on this project will help. What were you thinking when you thought of doing this? Retrace your thoughts back to that moment. Recall why you are doing this. Then reconnect with your muse.

Find some competition. Nothing quite like healthy competition to spur us forward. If you are out of ideas, then check up on what people are doing in your space. Colleagues at work, competitors in the industry, competitors' products, websites, and networking conventions. You get the drill.

Go exercise. Since you are not making headway at work, might as well spend the time shaping yourself up. Sometimes we work so much that we neglect our health and fitness. Go jog, swim, cycle, whichever exercise you prefer. As you improve your physical health, your mental health will improve, too. The different facets of ourselves are all interlinked.

Take a good break. Ruts are usually signs that you have been working too long and too hard. It's time to get a break. Beyond the quick tips above, arrange for a 1-day or 2-days of break from your work. Don't check your (work) emails or do anything work-related. Relax and do your favorite activities. You will return to your work recharged and ready to start. Contrary to popular belief, the world will not end from taking a break from your work. In fact, you will be much more ready to make an impact after proper rest. My best ideas and inspiration always hit me whenever I'm away from my work.

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“Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that's very important for good health.”

- Dalai Lama

CAREER HEALTH

How to Keep Your Mental Health In Check at the Office

By Analisa Cantu

The other week, as I was trying to catch a Lyft in the rain, the person I was with cheekily commented that I had “learned how to walk.” What they meant is that I had learned how to walk like a New Yorker. If you’ve been in the city, you know it: quickly, leaning forward, and on the right.

As someone who intentionally leaves for out of office meetings a few minutes earlier than other people, so I don’t have to walk with New Yorkers, my smell-the-roses Texan persona felt shook.

While I love this city, I’m constantly pushing back at it, especially where work/life balance is concerned. What’s valued in an Austin workspace isn’t the same thing that’s valued in NYC, and thus I’ve had to adjust. But some habits, I refuse to let go of.

As I’ve grown in my professional career, I’ve learned the hard way that if you don’t set boundaries, people will take as much as they absolutely can from you.

Here are some ways I guard my time and stay sane in the startup world:

1. Reserving the first hour of the day for your agenda, and no one else’s.

If I can help it, I don’t schedule any meetings before 10 AM. I may scan my email quickly to make sure I’m not missing a crisis, but otherwise, the first hour of the day is reserved for me checking in on my projects on Asana and setting my to-do’s for the next eight hours. Figuring out what my priorities are first, allows me to then compromise in a more balanced way when others come to me with their own priorities that they need my assistance on.

2. Keeping your phone in do not disturb mode.

Being protective of my time means being protective of the energy that I exhibit and that I choose to intake. Productivity does not lend itself to a full and scattered brain. This is why I keep my phone in a permanent state of DND (do not disturb) - I also don’t actively check my email.

I check both once an hour, or every two. My philosophy being if it’s an emergency anyways, you’ll call or come right up to me in the office.

3. Stepping away from your desk for lunch, ICYMI (in case you missed it): It’ll be there for you when you get back.

This isn’t just some woo-hoo practice, there are legitimate science-backed reasons on why you should take a breather. Sitting for hours on end has been proven to be unhealthy, and you can even use this hour to work on your relationship with your colleagues or have a networking lunch.

4. Automating as much as possible.

Automating workflows can help you reach your goals faster, and gives you space to focus on other projects (time is money!). I use tools like Asana to manage projects and be able to quickly see the lifecycle of a task and where it’s at in the pipeline, Later for scheduling Instagram posts, Buffer for scheduling all other social posts, Boomerang to schedule emails in advance, and IFTTT (if this then that) to push Google Alerts to Slack.

5. Get a change in scenery.

Stop trying to fight the 3 PM slump, instead: get up and get your blood pumping. Take a quick walk around the block, or if you have a standing desk / elevated surface, work standing up.

6. You can’t work your best, if you are not feeling the best.

As a recovering workaholic, remembering this is what allows me to fully shut off once I walk out of the office. You weren’t hired to do your job in a single day, or in a single week. Meet your deadlines, get it done, but take care of yourself. If you’re stressed, running low on sleep, and in a constant gaslit state- there is no way you are going to be as creative or strategic as you need to be on the job.

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4. Better Mood, More Meaning

People with pets are generally happier, more trusting, and less lonely than those who don’t have pets. They also visit the doctor less often for minor problems.

One reason for that may be that your pet gives you a sense of belonging and meaning, McConnell says. “You feel like you have greater control of your life.”

5. Benefits for Baby’s Immune System

Babies raised in families that have pets may be less likely to get allergies and asthma, some studies show.

It has to start early, ideally before a baby is 6 months old, says Beck.

Babies with dogs or cats at home have fewer colds and ear infections during their first year than babies living in pet-free homes, one study found.

6. Social Support for Autistic Children

Kids tend to relate better to their classmates who have autism when pets are in the classroom, Beck has found in his research.

“Animals change the classroom environment and help to integrate those who are a little less typical,” Beck says. “Once the children get involved with animals, they view each other more positively and work together better.”

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