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EMPLOYEE
NEWSLETTER

IMPACT

July-September 2017

Downtime:

Make the Most of Your Breaks

You're rushed. You're overbooked.

You're going at top speed.

Yet the more you do, the less you seem to get done.

But there's a way to stop this stressful cycle.



IN THIS ISSUE

Downtime: Make the Most of Your Breaks
pages 1-2

Making a Good Decision in Seven Steps
page 2

Preventing Identity Theft
page 3

Why Device-Free Dinners are a Healthy Choice
page 4

"Pull the plug and give yourself some downtime," suggests Maryann Troiani, Psy.D., a psychologist in Barrington, Ill., and co-author of *"Spontaneous Optimism: Proven Strategies for Health, Prosperity and Happiness."* "Everybody needs some time just for themselves, to refresh and recharge both mentally and physically. When you come back after a break, you feel better and you work better, too."

Dr. Troiani defines downtime as a "break from the gottas -- as in I gotta do this and I gotta do that." It's unstructured and usually unplanned time when you do something you really want to do -- or, even better, nothing at all. She prescribes at least one hour of downtime two or three times per week.

Most Americans don't get even this small amount of time to themselves. "Even when you're alone, there are too many ways the world can intrude on you and vice versa -- cell phones, e-mail, voice mail. All those distractions dilute your creativity and energy," she says.

People also become experts at multitasking. Juggling family, career and other demands leaves little time for oneself.

Those lucky enough to have leisure time often believe they have to fill it with hobbies or errands. "But that's not downtime," says Dr. Troiani.

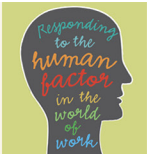
By the same token, you're missing the point if you obsessively schedule periods of downtime at the same time each week, whether you're in the mood or not.

Instead, just go with the flow. Give in to that urge to take a walk or to pick up that book you've been wanting to read. Pour a cup of tea and stop to watch the sunset.

Continued on next page

Claremont EAP distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

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Continued on previous page

Find the time

"Don't think of downtime as goofing off," says Dr. Troiani. "It's an investment that helps you get control of your life -- particularly of the stress and tension. It calms down your body and makes your mind more focused so you can deal with things more effectively."

Even when you give yourself permission, though, it can still be hard to spot opportunities to take a break -- at least at first. The following suggestions can help you find more time for yourself:

- **Cut the cords.** Don't feel you have to respond to every signal from the outside world. Turn off your computer and leave the cell phone behind.
- **Say no to "emotional vampires."** "People who use you as a sounding board for whining and complaints can drain away a lot of your time and energy," says Dr. Troiani. If someone is constantly coming to you with gripes, set boundaries. Tell the person you have only five minutes, then use the time to focus on solutions.
- **Play hooky.** Look over your daily routine to see what's truly important and where you might cut yourself some slack. Can you miss that meeting or put off that trip to the store?

- **Brown-bag it.** Instead of fighting the crowds at the cafeteria, bring lunch from home and find a quiet, pleasant place to enjoy it. Use the extra time to take a walk.
- **Seize the moment.** The best downtime opportunities are often unplanned. Open your mind to what's happening around you and be willing to respond.
- **Free your mind.** Worries and other negative feelings can keep you from enjoying your downtime. To get rid of the clutter, visualize a vacuum cleaner as it pulls the bad feelings out of your head.
- **Relieve the pressure.** Don't expect too much of your downtime. The point isn't to write the great American novel, it's just to relax. Keep your expectations simple.

"Listen to your inner voice," advises Dr. Troiani. "See what your mind and body need at that moment. You don't need to make a lot of plans -- just do what feels right."

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MAKING A GOOD DECISION IN SEVEN STEPS

When making important decisions, you should take time to consider the possible outcomes and consequences that may follow. Pay close attention for the various aspects that are weighing in on your decision and make sure they align with your priorities and future goals. Think before you act, and let these steps guide your decision-making process:

Step 1 Analyze the situation:

- Is this the issue that you should be focusing on?
- Has the problem and direct root of the problem been identified?
- Do you have the knowledge, facts, and input you need to make a good decision?

Step 2 Think about why you are making the decision. Find an objective:

- What will be accomplished by the decision?
- What do you hope the end results will be? What could other end results be?
- Are you focusing on the path, rather than the end point?

Step 3 Think about elements you need to consider before making the decision:

- In order to make the decision, have requirements for the decision been met?
- Are you violating any restrictions by making the decision?
- Are you in the position to best make the decision?

Step 4 Consider other alternatives.

This can include reviewing other alternatives you have previously thought of, or brainstorming for other alternatives you haven't yet thought of:

- Are there other ways to reach the end result?
- Can you chat with trusted colleagues or friends for additional ideas?
- Are there books, articles, charts, or diagrams that could guide you with ideas on alternative ways to reach the objective?
- Have you given yourself enough time to think of and weigh out alternatives?

Step 5 Consider the impact of the decision. Evaluate and answer questions like:

- How much will the decision cost?
- Is the decision realistic?
- Are availability requirements met?
- What will the impact be on others?
- Does the decision work within your time constraints?
- Are all other important elements considered?

Step 6 Remember the alternative decisions you thought of? Let's go back to them and evaluate each one:

- Does any other alternative decision provide better impacts?
- How can you best make an objective evaluation of the decision and its alternatives? Is there someone you could bounce ideas off of?
- Are the subjective assessments you are making accurate and realistic?

Step 7 Make a decision and reflect:

- Did the decision you chose provide the best impacts? If not, why did you decide this was best? Are your reasons clear?

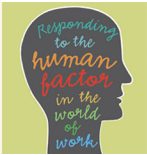
Written by Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremadi ©2017

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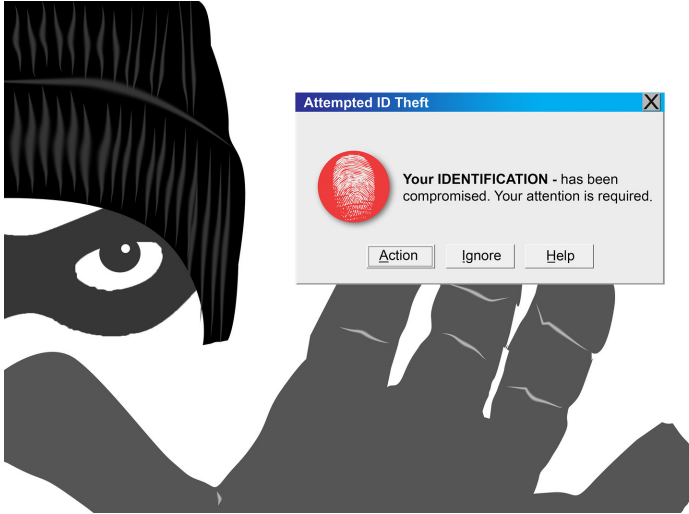
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PREVENTING IDENTITY THEFT



Identity theft is an increasingly popular crime — there's a new victim almost every minute. Thieves steal critical information about their victims: names, addresses, telephone numbers, bank account or credit card numbers, and — most dangerous of all — Social Security numbers. They put this sensitive information to work in many ways: applying for additional credit cards or auto loans, opening bank accounts, setting up telephone services, and going on shopping sprees. Some identity thieves even go so far as to file bankruptcy in a victim's name or give the victim's name to police during an arrest.

If your identity is stolen, you could spend months or even years cleaning up the mess. You may be denied credit and refused loans, lose job opportunities, or even be suspected of crimes you didn't commit. Fortunately, there are ways to minimize the risk of falling prey to an identity thief.

HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE THINGS TO DO:

Secure your personal records. Ensure that your personal information is safely secured, especially if you have roommates or employ outside help.

- At work, verify that your personnel records are maintained securely and that sensitive records are shredded during disposal.
- Deposit outgoing mail at the post office or in a post office collection box (not in an unsecured bin or mailbox), and collect your incoming mail promptly.
- Protect your trash by tearing up or shredding sensitive materials: credit applications or credit offers, insurance forms, medical statements, charge receipts, checks and bank statements, and canceled or expired credit and ATM cards.

Watch your wallet. Keep your wallet (and your purse) in a safe place at work. When you are out in public, carry your wallet on your person at all times. In a restaurant, do not hang your purse on the back of your chair; this is easy-pickings for an identity thief.

Limit your load. Carry only the personal identification, credit cards, and debit cards that you need. Store little-used identification and cards in a secure location.

Protect your Social Security number (SSN). Keep your Social Security card in a secure location, and give out your SSN only when absolutely required. If your state uses Social Security numbers as your driver's license number, request that it substitute another number.

Use passwords. Place passwords on your credit cards, bank, and telephone accounts. Use passwords that are not easily guessed or found. Avoid using your mother's maiden name, the last four digits of your SSN, or other personal data as your password.

Guard against tele-theft. Any time you are asked to provide personal information by telephone, through the mail, or over the Internet, be wary. Even when you have initiated the contact, confirm that the other party is legitimate. Call the organization's customer service number and validate the exchange — before you provide any personal information. Also, ask how the information will be shared with others; request that the information be kept confidential.

Protect your PC. Take several steps to protect your identity as stored on your PC:

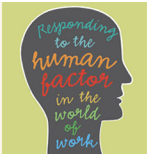
- Use a firewall and secure browser.
- Don't download files from strangers.
- Maintain current virus protection.
- Password-protect any personal or financial information.
- Avoid automatic log-in processes (which store your account name and password).
- When you dispose of your computer, delete personal information and completely overwrite the hard drive.

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Why Device-Free Dinners Are a Healthy Choice

Technology offers plenty of benefits and opportunities for families, but nothing replaces face-to-face time with the ones we love.

It may seem obvious that [eating dinner with your family is a good thing](#). Research provides plenty of support for the importance of family dinner for kids: [Learning vocabulary](#), [fewer behavior problems](#), [less substance abuse](#), and [healthier eating](#) are some of the positive outcomes.

But how is family dinner changing in response to the massive technological changes in American society? To find out more about how [families are managing devices](#) during family dinner, Common Sense Media commissioned a poll of nearly 900 families with children between the ages of 2 and 17 years old. Here's what we found:

- **Family dinner is an institution.** Seventy percent of families eat dinner together five or more times a week.
- **Dinner is a time for sharing.** Almost all (93 percent of) parents think conversations at family dinners are important for talking about things happening in their children's lives.
- **Devices aren't welcome but often have a seat at the table anyway.** Even though [previous research](#) has found that 88 percent of adults don't think it's OK to use a phone at a family dinner, 47 percent of parents said they or a family member used a mobile device at dinner in the last week. Thirty-four percent said they had the TV on for all or most dinners.

For families whose dinners involved a device, parents felt conflicted:

- ⊗ A majority (51 percent) of parents said mobile devices made them feel disconnected from their families.
- ⊗ Over half (58 percent) were concerned that devices were hurting their conversations.
- ⊗ A third (35 percent) said mobile devices at dinner caused arguments.
- ⊗ And yet, 61 percent of parents thought mobile devices helped bring families together through sharing content, such as pictures, videos, or posts.



No one is arguing that occasionally sharing a YouTube video or showing off pictures from the day is harmful. And yet, in the digital age, it's easy to let devices occupy more and more of our family time. As more kids and parents bring their devices to the table, we wonder if a prime opportunity to connect with family without distractions is getting lost. Past research suggests caution. One study found that parents in a fast food restaurant [who were using devices](#) spoke less to their children and their children were more likely to act out to get attention. Other research has found that even the [presence of a phone](#) on the table can hurt the quality of conversation.

Common Sense Media promotes technology use for learning, fun, and bringing people together, but we also see a need to [balance media and tech](#) with undistracted face-to-face time. There are still times when it's good to focus just on the people in front of you.

So, when you have a family dinner, commit to putting devices away for those 30 minutes (or, if you have small children, the six minutes of dinner!). Turn your devices on silent. Better yet, put them somewhere where you can't see them and where a notification won't tempt you to check it. Enjoy a [device-free dinner](#) as part of a healthy digital lifestyle, and make the most of family time.

By [Michael Robb](#), Common Sense Media 8/4/2016

Claremont EAP can help with all of these choices! Call: **800-834-3773**
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