



Manage Your Energy to do Your Job Well

5 tips for constant self-renewal

FranklinCovey



Essential human skills like emotional intelligence, proactive problem-solving, building high-trust relationships, and self-leadership don't come easily to everyone on a given team. Yet they're critical to achieving an organization's most important goals.

Most ambitious people care deeply about their work and want to perform at the highest level. So it's easy to fall into the common trap of putting work and other life obligations first, while leaving self-care (things you do for your health, well-being, and energy) last on your list of priorities. But that kind of lifestyle is unsustainable, especially when you have a demanding, high-energy job in stressful times or when you need to adapt.

So how are you doing at managing your prime sources of energy? The tips below will help you build good habits in areas many people struggle with. Think of forming these habits as an investment in becoming happier and more effective both at work and in your personal life.



1. Are you getting enough sleep?

Your mind is racing, thinking about what went wrong today or what could go wrong tomorrow.



Rather than hitting snooze twice every morning, just set your alarm to ring 20 minutes later.

You struggle to fall asleep, spring wide awake at 4 a.m., or feel like you've already lived a full day in your head by the time your alarm goes off.

Many busy professionals struggle to sleep well and sleep enough. But according to sleep and workplace expert Els van der Helm, you can make adjustments to your nighttime routine that will improve your energy, focus, judgment, and how you handle your emotions at work. "People have more control than they think to change things around them and improve their sleep."

To do so:

- **Determine whether you're getting enough sleep.** You can't necessarily say, "I'm getting seven hours per night, so I'm good." Everyone has a unique, ideal sleep pattern that changes over the course of their lives. Do you zone out during afternoon meetings? Do you tend to catch up on sleep during the weekends? Then you likely need more sleep. During one full workweek, try setting a bedtime that's 30 minutes earlier than usual. Do you feel alert all day, with no catch-up on weekends? If not, keep adding 30-minute increments until you do.

- **Create physical and mental space between your waking activities and your bed.** Keep your phone out of the bedroom, or if you feel you must have it, leave it in airplane or silent mode while you sleep, says Van der Helm. And to help you unwind, devise a brief presleep ritual that has nothing to do with checking emails or making to-do lists. For example, you could read your kids a story, brush your teeth, then get into bed.
- **When struggling to fall back asleep, shift your attention to something else for a while.** Try distracting your brain with soft music, 15 minutes of reading, or a brief meditation. Or pull out your journal; writing down the thoughts that are racing through your mind can help you let go of them until morning.
- **Stop hitting the snooze button in the morning.** Rather than hitting snooze twice every morning, just set your alarm to ring 20 minutes later. You'll end up with more consolidated, high-quality sleep. Van der Helm says this is one of the most effective strategies she recommends in her workshops on improving sleep.



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Constant energy comes from a pattern of constant self-renewal.”

— Kory Kogon

Bestselling Coauthor, *The 5 Choices*

2. How well are you coping with the emotional stress of your job?

You learn in a meeting that executives have canceled your big initiative. Your closest colleague is making noises about leaving. Your manager asks you daily about whether you're on budget for a high-pressure client project.



Acknowledging your emotions can be an important step toward reining them in.

Conscientious workers can experience dramatic shifts in moods and emotions under all the pressure. Left unchecked, work stress can negatively impact your home life as well.

Many high achievers struggle with the emotional burden that comes with their job. While you can't easily change how stressful work is, you can change how you react to the stress.

- **Practice accepting your emotions and seeing them as separate from your sense of self.** By identifying and observing your own emotions, you can decrease the negativity you experience. Try imagining that you're hovering above the room and observing your situation. Or list all of your worries in two columns labeled Circle of Influence® (things you can control) and Circle of Concern® (things you can't control). Focus on the first column and let the other things go.

- **Notice and challenge your "worst-case scenario" thinking.** It's easy to get caught in a spiral of negative thinking that, if you stop to analyze it, defies logic. Is your company's new strategy really an absolute disaster, or does it just need some tweaking before it can be effective? When you challenge your original thinking, you'll be surprised by how often things aren't quite as dire as you first thought.
- **Adopt rituals to help you transition in and out of work mode.** If you wake up stressed about all there is to do, taking a mindful moment to release signs of tension before you get to the office can help you center yourself. An end-of-day routine, like making a to-do list for the next day or listening to a podcast during your commute, can help free your brain from the workday.



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Leaders encourage others to have a life by having one themselves.”

— Sue Dathe-Douglass

Coauthor, *The Ultimate Competitive Advantage*

3. How strong are your personal connections?

Many busy professionals struggle to have healthy personal relationships. With long hours and a tendency to bring work home (or keep it at home if you're working remotely), relationships outside of work can slip or suffer neglect.



When you learn about your colleagues as people, you'll build relationships that help everyone feel more engaged.

But with just a little bit of thoughtful attention, you can make and maintain connections that fuel your engagement at work and enrich your life outside of work.

For example:

- **Learn about your colleagues as people.** When you learn more about their backgrounds, career motivations, and goals in both work and life, you'll build stronger professional relationships that'll help everyone feel more connected and engaged. Commit to asking a few of your colleagues three new questions this week—like about their hobbies or long-term goals.
- **Build a strong peer network.** Because of their similar level in the organization, peers are in a unique position to become confidants who can help you deal with company change, manage work-life stress (maybe they have coping tips), and think about your career progression.

- **Stop work from infringing on your personal life.** If you sacrifice hobbies and time with friends and loved ones in the name of work, you're setting yourself up for some lifelong regrets. Be determined in setting work-life boundaries, and be sure you're mentally unplugging from work enough that work stress doesn't spill over into the rest of your life.



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“If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.”

— Stephen R. Covey

4. Are you getting enough exercise?

All too often, aspiring leaders sacrifice their own well-being in a heroic effort to make a dent in their to-do lists: foregoing a morning workout to take a client call, having lunch delivered to save the 10-minute walk to get it, or stacking meetings back-to-back with no chance of a break to walk around.



Take an inventory of your exercise habits and devise a plan for improvement.

These kinds of behaviors may help you get things done in the short term. But if you rely on them daily to get by, your body and brain will suffer. Keeping your body strong and active gives you more stamina and resilience to handle the stresses of your job.

To be sure you're moving enough, take a personal inventory of your exercise habits, and devise a plan for improvement.

For example, you might plan to:

- Schedule a workout with a friend or colleague as a regular practice. This creates accountability, increases connection, and gets some movement in.
- Build more incidental exercise into your daily routine by using the stairs instead of the elevator and pacing during conference calls.

- Take breaks to stand and move every 60 minutes or so.
 - » Turn the camera off and stand up and stretch during your virtual meetings.
 - » Schedule a call instead of a virtual meeting so that you can walk while talking.
 - » Schedule 1-on-1s to be walk-and-talks.
 - » Take short breaks to walk a loop around the building, climb a few flights of stairs, or do a few push-ups.

Start by making one small change to your routine until it becomes a habit, and notice how it makes you feel. Enlist friends to join you—research suggests people have more success starting and sticking to new behaviors when they have an accountability partner.



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Most of us think we don't have enough time to exercise. What a distorted paradigm! We don't have time not to.”

— Stephen R. Covey

5. How healthy are your eating habits?

You didn't start your day with the intention of eating poorly—yet, here you are. Many people struggle to eat nutritious meals during their busy days.



Eat a healthy breakfast every morning to boost your energy level, mood, and short-term memory.

But if you can find ways to eat more healthfully, even just by a little bit, you'll be nourishing your mind to make better decisions and better handle the things that irritate you, both at work and at home.

For example:

- **Stock your work area with good-for-you snacks.** You could stash fruit, nuts, or energy bars, or dark chocolate in your work or home office desk, locker, or break room. If you go to the trouble of bringing it and have it right there in front of you, you're less likely to binge on the food that won't give you energy or serve your long-term needs.

- **Hold healthy lunch meetings.** If your Tuesday lunch is catching up with a peer in person or on a call while eating a hearty salad, you're scoring a Win-Win of social connection and healthy eating—way better than eating a slice of pizza alone at your desk.
- **Set postwork eating routines.** After work is about the most tired and irritated you'll be all day. Off the clock, have healthy snacks—like precut vegetables or a handful of nuts—ready, you don't end up at the bottom of a potato chip bag. And plan to eat a nutritious dinner as soon as possible to refuel.



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This is the single most powerful investment we can ever make in life—investment in ourselves.”

— Stephen R. Covey

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