

# BALANCE

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## Take Charge of Morale

Everyone wants high morale, but when morale suffers, help often arrives too late. Whose job is it to improve morale? Most people might think it is management's responsibility, but this is frequently not the case. Instead, you may be the best first line of defense. A danger signal for morale is a deterioration of your or your group's commitment to the mission of your employer, or a diminishing belief in the importance of your work. If you detect these signals, it's time to gather your group before rumors and backbiting begin. What can the group or its members do together to intervene and improve morale? Poor morale increases absenteeism and turnover, lowers productivity, and contributes to the likelihood of inappropriate behavior, even violence. This meeting must not be a blame session, but a strategy session. Warning: Do not ask, "What's wrong with us?" Ask instead, "What works to improve morale?" This strategic tip removes conflicts from your discussion. Assign a monitor to keep this rule and hold everyone to it. Now ask, "What works to 1) make communication between us more effective, 2) improve our ability to feel recognized for our contributions, 3) help us feel more control over what we do and how it is done, and 4) improve positive feelings we have toward each other?" You may generate suggestions for your supervisor, but don't drift away from your primary goal of improving morale. Hold a follow-up meeting and repeat the process.

## Recover Your Recovery Program

If you manage a chronic condition prone to relapse, did you find support for your recovery program this past holiday season? Millions of people manage personal programs of recovery from relapse-prone illnesses such as substance addictions and disorders associated with eating, gambling, smoking, and other behavioral health issues. If you relapsed over the holidays or more recently, don't delay in reestablishing your program of recovery. You may be waiting for the "right" opportunity, but move this one off your 'to-do' list and on to your 'just do it now' list. Don't kick yourself for relapsing. This just adds to your procrastination and is not constructive. Instead, put your energy into reestablishing your recovery program without delay. A relapse may have started with some destructive thoughts, or rationalizations. Rebounding from a relapse is easier when started in the early days or weeks and you have not yet rekindled strong defenses that prevent you from accepting help. Talk with your sponsor or a counselor to gain insight from your relapse experience so that it becomes part of your armament to help prevent future relapses. Recapture the promises of recovery in your life.



## Goal Achievement

There are thousands of books available on achieving goals, but few have truly unique messages. Most of them boil down to four essential principles:

- 1) Decide precisely what you are going to achieve and accept no substitute for achievement;
- 2) Decide that you will act vigorously and relentlessly to make the goal reality;
- 3) Recognize progress and lack of progress so you can repeat, add to, or not repeat action steps accordingly;
- 4) Abandon preconceived notions of what should or will ultimately work.

## Working after Retirement

A new national study shows that retirees who transition from full-time work into a temporary or part-time job experience fewer major diseases and are able to function better day-to-day than people who stop working altogether. And the findings were significant even after controlling for people's physical and mental health before retirement. The coined term is "bridge employment," defined as employment during the period of time between one's career and complete retirement. This can be a part-time job, self-employment, or a temporary job.

## Fat Burning Secrets of Nutrition

If you're exercising and not losing weight, are you avoiding weight training? Muscle has enormous fat-burning capacity, even at rest. Building only five pounds of muscle can help you to burn 150 to 250 extra calories per day! Talk to your doctor and an exercise or diet expert. Visit the websites of local health and fitness centers. You may discover a wealth of free tips, videos, and even meal plans on those sites.

## Office Safety

It's not a construction site, so why should you need to think safety in a quiet office setting? Although the odds of getting hit by a flying file cabinet are extremely remote, accidental injuries in office settings are plentiful nationwide. The perception that workplace injuries are less likely in office settings increases risk because precautions and prevention are afterthoughts. Musculoskeletal disorders are the most common type of accidental injury in an office, and the back is the most commonly affected body part. Back injuries in offices are usually caused by lifting heavy objects or being in the wrong position when trying to lift something. Slips and falls are also common in office settings. You're more likely to be off work longer recuperating from an injury if you are an older worker, but the younger you are, the more likely you will get injured! Reduce injuries in the workplace by asking for help when moving something heavy—a box, a chair, a table, or a bookcase.. *Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2009, USDL 08-1716.*

## Financial Stress and Lost Sleep

If financial worries keep you awake, you are not alone. A study in June 2009 found that 69 percent of Americans are experiencing this problem to some degree. You can be penniless or an over-extended millionaire and still lose sleep due to financial stress. The top worries include lack of money for retirement, followed by health care expenses and concerns over the ability to make a mortgage or rent payment. Talk to your doctor to rule out a sleep disorder. Avoid using alcohol as a sedative to put you to sleep. It won't work – your nervous system will rebound and you'll wake up, or your deep sleep cycle will be disturbed. Check the website of the National Sleep Foundation ([www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)) for plenty of tips.

## Internet Addiction

When you limit your time on the Internet, do you notice yourself becoming restless and uneasy? Does relief come only when you are able to get back online? Think back over the past several years. Were you involved in hobbies and pastimes that you no longer spend time doing, like gardening, woodworking, basketball, meeting friends at the park, or fishing with buddies? If yes, it may be time to intervene and overcome an Internet addiction. There is a lot at stake, especially if you have relationships, educational plans, and career goals that are not getting the attention they deserve because you're online so much.

## You Seem Okay to Drive—Right?

Having a designated driver is a smart move to get home safely from a party or other event where alcohol has been served. But what if you did not plan ahead? Do not simply pick the drinker in your group judged to be the least affected by alcohol. That person could have the highest blood alcohol level but not look like it due to high tolerance. The drinker may feel fortunate having high tolerance, but this could also be what is medically referred to as the “adaptive stage” of alcoholism. Feeling drunk after over-drinking is normal. “Handling it” is not. A drinker with high tolerance may not look drunk or act drunk until he or she runs a red light. Instead, call a friend or family member, or taxi to drive everyone home safely.

## Internal Stressors

Common everyday stress includes traffic jams, work pressure, demands of the boss, parking tickets, and things that happen *to* us. We *can* manage the stressors, but their elimination is not likely. What about stress that you can control or eliminate, such as fear, unhelpful attitudes and beliefs, and unrealistic expectations? These stressors compound other types of stress. Deal with them to improve your sleep, quiet your mind, and better shield you from the external stress you can't eliminate.

## Self-Motivation: Struggling to Exercise

Structure and accountability are key when trying to establish an exercise routine. Structuring exercise is the how, what, when, and where of your exercise program. Accountability is answering to someone or something if you don't follow through. (Mutual support from an exercise buddy is a good example.) Accountability gets you past the “I-don't-feel-like-doing-this” hump. Stick with it, however, and before long the next phase will kick in—emotional reasons to keep exercising. Acquire strong enough reasons and almost anything is possible. So, here's a tip: Read about the “16 desires of life” first formulated by professor of psychology and psychiatry, Steven Reiss (easily found online). Reiss believes almost all these desires are inherent to humans. They include independence, acceptance, idealism, social contact, and tranquility. How many can you link to your reasons for exercising? Write them down and feel a new desire to exercise.

## Online Networking

By now you have probably heard of the free social networking sites Facebook and MySpace. There are hundreds more social networking sites, many predominantly professional. Some social networking sites have received negative press because of abuse, but hundreds more have great reputations. They may advance your career if you learn how to use their tools. You can showcase your expertise, find like-minded professionals solving complex problems at work, acquire mentors, or even get experts to endorse you publicly. Websites such as SlideShare and LinkedIn can increase your visibility, establish you as an expert, build connections for the future, or help you brainstorm new ideas. A quick search online will produce several lists.



## Subtle Sexual Harassment is Still Serious

Sexual harassment is becoming more subtle with new technology such as texting, PDAs, and instant messaging. However, it's still illegal and victimizes others. From the privacy of a tiny keyboard, it is easy to send a message with an unwelcome impact. Your best tool to avoid being accused of sexual harassment is "other awareness," which means paying attention to statements or actions of the person (or others around you) who do not welcome your comments or behaviors. "No," "not interested," "please stop," "don't do that," "no, thanks," silence, or even looks of disapproval all mean the same thing: Don't do that again. Understand when not to repeat the behavior. One mistake many perpetrators of sexual harassment make is practicing the unwanted behavior again, convinced that it will be accepted if only attempted in a different way.

## Keeping Your 2009 Memories

It's 2010, but don't throw away your 2009 business day planner! You may have transferred the phone numbers and dates of future meetings, but you have not transferred your memories! Hundreds of them are associated with the meetings and events you attended last year. You now have a "diary" to serve you in the future when you need it to recall crucial information for resumes, references, meetings, documentation of experience, and more.

To speak with an EAP professional,  
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