

May is Mental Health Month

When was the last time you did something to relax? In today's fast-paced world, many of us have multiple demands on our time – family responsibilities, career or job related pressures, and church or civic obligations. How prepared are you to handle these stressors? At the end of most days, do you feel drained or full of energy? If you are drained and dragging, STOP, take a seat in your recliner, close your eyes and allow yourself to take a few deep breaths and exhale.

I realize that dinner has to be made, the kids need help with homework, your spouse wants some quality time, your boss wants a report in the morning, and Fido needs to be walked. Look for ways to better balance your day. Order in a veggie pizza and supplement it with a salad or fruit and milk. Eat together as a family so you can reconnect with your kids. Ask your spouse for help with the kids so you can unwind and relax with him or her later. Take the dog for a short walk to get some fresh air and clear your head. Shifting your focus and asking for others to help will free up some time for you to work on the report your boss requested.

If you are seeking ways to get control of your time and your life, try some of the following quick tips to re-energize and balance your day:

- **Shorten your workday by 30 minutes.** If you commit to leaving earlier some days, you may work more efficiently than if you stayed nine or ten hours.
- **Learn to delegate.** Insisting on doing everything yourself burdens you and prevents others from feeling valuable and needed. Look for opportunities at home or work to free up time for things you love and want to focus your efforts on.
- **Consolidate your to-do list.** People who haphazardly write lists on scrap paper and Post-its waste time wondering what to do next, and worry that they're forgetting something. Choose only one master calendar to track things you need to do. Prioritize your list and work from the top down. Conquering the big "to-dos" gives meaning to your day.
- **Fit in physical activity most days of the week.** Even if you only have 10 or 15 minutes to spare some days, take a brisk walk to clear your head and unwind. On days when you have more time, you can fit in 30 or more minutes of exercise. Your lunch break or while you are waiting for your kids to finish their sporting activities, might be your best opportunities to fit in extra activity.
- **Schedule at least one fun activity each week.** Think of an activity -- dancing, reading, going to a movie or sporting event -- that you haven't done for awhile that brings you happiness and relaxation. Put it in your datebook as a non-negotiable appointment with yourself, and watch the quality of your life transform.

If you feel you are always on a merry-go-round, trying to please everyone except yourself, try following at least a few of these quick tips in an effort to rebalance your life. For more information, contact the International Stress Management Association at www.isma.org.uk.

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