

# 7 Commitments for lifestyle balance



## Sleep

### Maintain a healthy sleep schedule

The restoration cycle that is activated when you sleep is one of the most important ways your body is naturally designed to clear away stress.

**TIP:** Work on establishing a routine that promotes rest. As bedtime nears, avoid the bright lights of phone and computer screens.



## Take Breaks

### Create space to restore cognitive and emotional reserves

Most of us have increased attention, higher creativity, and greater emotional stamina when we take breaks both during the day and at the end of the week.



## Nutrition

### Think of your brain as an expensive car and give it premium fuel

Diet affects brain function and mood. Processed foods and diets high in refined sugars negatively impact the body's regulation of insulin, increase inflammation, and increase oxidative stress.

**TIP:** Try decreasing processed foods and sugar in your diet for two to three weeks, and monitor how you feel!



## Exercise

### Physical fitness is good for your brain

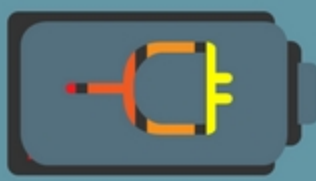
Regular aerobic exercise is associated with brain cell growth in areas of the brain that are responsible for memory, mood regulation, and contextual threat analysis. Studies show marked improvements in mood with as little as 20 minutes of aerobic exercise a day.



## Problem Solve

### Engage challenges

The ability to "lean in" to problems with curiosity and adapt to new circumstances is a huge advantage in life. Setting realistic goals, acknowledging mistakes, letting go of grudges, and asking for help are all important steps towards developing adaptive engagement.



## Energize

### Recover from tasks that sap your energy

Find outlets that are fun or creative. Entering a fictional world, joining a sports team, or losing yourself in the flow of an art project are all ways that can make invigoration a weekly habit.



## Invest

### Spend where it matters

Study after study indicates that investing in relationships and spending time on things that hold deep value or meaning help people navigate challenges. We all need connection and purpose.

### <References>

- Meerlo, P., Sgoifo, A., Suchecki, D. (2008). Restricted and disrupted sleep: Effects on autonomic function, neuroendocrine stress systems and stress reactivity. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 12: 197-210.
- Ariga, A., & Lleras, A. (2011). Brief and rare mental 'breaks' keep you focused: Deactivation and reactivation of task goals preempt vigilance decrements. *Cognition*.
- Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2010). Stress, food, and inflammation: Psychoneuroimmunology and nutrition at the cutting edge. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 72(4): 365-369.
- Forcier, K., et al. (2006). Links between physical fitness and cardiovascular reactivity and recovery to psychological stressors: A meta-analysis. *Health Psychology*, 25(6): 723-739.
- Eskreis-Winkler, L., Shulman, E. P., Beal, S. A., & Duckworth, A. (2014). The grit effect: Predicting retention in the military, the workplace, school and marriage. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5.
- Eschleman, K. J., Madsen, J., Alarcon, G., & Bareka, A. (2014). Benefiting from creative activity: The positive relationships between creative activity, recovery experiences, and performance-related outcomes. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87: 579-598.
- Prati, G., & Pietrantonio, L. (2009). Optimism, social support, and coping strategies as factors contributing to posttraumatic growth: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Loss and Trauma: International Perspectives on Stress & Coping*, 14(5): 364-388.