

The Value of Caring for You

As women in today's busy world, taking care of 'YOU' can be very challenging. We face a multitude of ever-changing needs and pressures, ranging from helping our children with their school work to meeting work demands or caring for our elderly parents. Since the 1950s, we have been promised that the many new technological innovations

would make our lives easier, faster and simpler. Yet, we seem to have no more 'free' or leisurely time today than we did decades ago. This disease of being 'busy' or 'rarely at ease' is spiritually and physically destructive to our health and wellbeing. It saps our ability to be fully present at work and at home, and keeps us from performing at our best and enjoying life to the fullest.

So what can we do reduce the busy-ness and increase our ability to enjoy life?

What's in a day – the art of multi-tasking

Most of us have resorted to the art of multi-tasking to complete the multitude of tasks that face us and create more space/time for ourselves. Human multi-



tasking is an apparent human ability to perform more than one task or activity at the same time. If you are the head of your household (i.e. you are responsible for someone other than yourself), the odds are that you are a serious multitasker. You might take a phone call while folding the laundry and cooking dinner, or take a phone call while typing an email and writing a report, or exercise while putting on your make-up and breast-feeding your child! Although it is commonly said that women may be slightly better multi-taskers than men, this leads to undesirable consequences as we tend to lack self-focus and do a poor job of taking care of ourselves. Research has also shown that multitasking can result in time wasted due to human context switching and also more errors due to insufficient attention. This can actually backfire and rob of us the precious time and space we are seeking to create for ourselves.

Sleep and stress: the science, evidence and facts

The research is very clear – sleep is precious and powerful! We are better able to help ourselves and those around us when we get enough sleep. But if you look around you, you will notice that many women are sleep-deprived. Women need nine hours of sleep per day, yet average around six hours and 40 minutes during the work week. Women surprisingly need 20 minutes more sleep than men! Lack of sleep affects brain function in terms of attention, working memory, ability to cope and focus, and even increases appetite. In addition, lack of sleep also leads to a higher risk of a variety of health conditions including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease (e.g. heart disease and stroke).

The ‘busy disease’ manifests itself as stress. The busyness we feel causes anxiety, frustration and a chronic feeling of being overwhelmed. Stress is cumulative and acute. The natural physiological response to stress is the ‘flight or fight’ reflex, which is good for safety and self-care, but is not good if it is a chronic

state. This leads to metabolic disorders, cancer, accidents, skin and respiratory disorders, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, menstrual irregularity and musculoskeletal disorders.

Self-care value proposition


Our lives are busy and somewhat complicated, but it is important that we find

a way, each and every day, to pause, be present with ourselves and be an active part of our families. So why is it important for you to manage your ‘busy-ness’, stress and sleep deprivation? If you are able to manage your stress and increase your sleep, you will be more productive, have lower healthcare costs, less time off, be more present at work and in

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everything you do, and will generally be happier.

Strategies for self-management

The National Sleep Foundation maintains that sleep is ‘vital to your well-being, as important as the air you breathe, the water you drink and the food you eat’. There are a number of relatively

simple things you can do to improve your sleep, such as:

1. **Building a sleep routine and removing technology.** Our brains are built for pattern and repetition, and therefore it is good to build a soothing bedtime routine - take a warm bath with lavender oil, stretch, have a cup of tea, and

then read before bed.

2. **Remove technology.** Stop watching TV, using computers and phones an hour before bedtime.
3. **Create a cosy bedroom environment.** Block outside light with window shades, cover light-emitting electronic devices, and silence your phone.
4. **Keep a worry pad by your bed.** If you fret in bed, jot it down. Tell yourself you’ll deal with it the morning. Replace that thought with something you feel grateful about.

There are a multitude of stress management techniques, however, some very simple things for you to try include:

1. **Saying NO!** Remember – just because you are able, doesn’t mean you have to do something. When we feel overwhelmed, one simple way to reduce our stress is to say ‘no’ to things that we can do to reduce our stress.
2. **Make time for ‘YOU’** – Allocate at least 10 minutes a day for YOU. Read a book, play a game, go for a walk, sing or do whatever sounds relaxing to you. Within time you will increase it, but 10 minutes can make the world of difference.
3. **Deep Breathing** – Controlled Tempo Breathing can help you relax and can be an immediate response to stress. The steps are:
Sit or lie down, find a quiet place;
Close your eyes;
 - Bring your awareness to normal diaphragmatic breathing that is effortless and natural;
 - Choose and say a three word sentence or saying that is meaningful to you; and
 - Now inhale and exhale continuously for two minutes.

Give these simple strategies a try. Take care of your most valuable asset.....YOU!



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