

[IMAGE]

Top 5 Healthy Habits (We Tend to Ignore)

By Editorial Staff

For the sake of this discussion, let's assume you're exercising regularly and eating a balanced, nutritious diet – the two most common habits people think of when they hear the phrase "healthy habits." In fact, we're also not going to delve into the topics of sleep and stress, both of which can dramatically impact health and overall life satisfaction. No, today's lesson is on the top five healthy habits you probably *haven't* adopted yet – and failure to do so is damaging your health and wellness in ways you can't imagine.

1. *Make More Calls (Without Your Phone)*: There's a reason we're starting with this one: With an estimated 270 million mobile-phone users in the U.S. alone as of 2018 (the U.S. population is 325 million, 20 million of whom are under the age of 5 and – we hope – not in possession of their own mobile phone), we are indeed a phone culture, and not primarily for audible talking. Texting, chatting and posting (often in anonymous, disparaging fashion) have become our primary methods of communication. Research suggests mobile-phone use not only has physical consequences ("text claw," "cell phone elbow," forward head posture, etc.), but also psychological ones, including anxiety related to receiving (or *not* receiving) messages, reduced face-to-face communication skills, and even a condition coined "nomophobia" (fear of being without your phone).

So write a letter (yes, on paper) or card to a loved one; set up a regular get-together spot with your best friend (yes, you can use your phone to coordinate it) ... and make conscious, deliberate, *empowering* decisions to leave your phone at home more often (yes, you can do it). It's one of the healthiest habits you'll ever adopt.

new you - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark 2. *Don't Misplace Your Keys*: No, we're not talking about the literal keys to your car or house, although misplacing them can cause considerable angst; we're referring to the keys that open doorways to continually learn, grow and build the life you want. Too many people consider themselves "locked in" to their existing state in life: their job, their home, their routines ... even their own body or mind. But dreams don't have to die, especially when your despair at not fulfilling (or in some cases, even pursuing) them can be equally as life-threatening.

Go back to school. Learn a new skill. Pursue a hobby. Change the way you do *anything* if there's a better, more fulfilling way. Think about whether the path you're on in *any* aspect of your life is the right one. Life is a journey with many roads, all deserving exploration. Don't be afraid to try a different route, no matter your age – especially if the road you're currently on is taking you in the wrong direction.

3. *Complete "The List"*: We all have lists, whether on paper or in our heads; lists of things we want to do, need to do or both. But how many of us actually complete our lists? Do you find your "to-do's" traveling from one list to the next, day after day, week after week, or even longer? That's a problem. Procrastination leads to pressure and guilt, neither of which benefits your health. And when it comes to longer-term goals or "resolutions," if you will, there's a reason you wrote "clean out the garage," "start reading every night" or "take a vacation this year" on a list. If every day is another "why haven't I done it yet" conversation in your head (or with your significant other), you'll quickly find yourself in an entirely *unhealthy* place.

4. *Do a Little Prep Work*: It's 9 p.m. and your day has felt like just about every day lately: rushed, overflowing with responsibilities, and with absolutely no opportunity for even a few precious moments of "you time." Common sense tells you relaxation time has finally arrived ... but wait: If you take just a few minutes to prepare for the next manic morning, you'll lighten your proverbial load and start the day in a better place. Whether that means getting school lunches ready, pre-scrambling eggs for breakfast, picking out tomorrow's outfit, or getting something else done instead of waiting until morning, you can save considerable time (and stress) by doing a little prep work. And no, this advice doesn't just apply to busy parents; everyone can benefit from more preparation. Figure out what you could do sooner, rather than later, in your life and then get it done!

5. *Believe in the Power of No*: This one works in both directions and covers habits 1-4 above. As soon as you learn to say no, your life takes on an entirely new meaning. Can't leave work on time because you just "have to get everything done"? Guess what: You'll probably never get it all done (which is what the next workday is for), but if you continually overdo it, you'll find yourself burned out before you know it. Learn to say no to the constant threats to your moments of "you time." (Yes, do a little prep work, as discussed above, but not if it means you *never* get to relax.)

On the other hand, also learn to say no to the tendency to *avoid doing* the things you know would improve your life (such as these habits). Don't let fear, comfort (or discomfort) or anything else keep you from achieving what you want and know you can achieve. Learning to find balance in your life– now that may be

the ultimate healthy habit of them all.

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