

# Take Five:

## Tips for a healthier, happier you!

### Work • Life Tips

▶ Are you “low carbing” to lose weight? If so, you don’t have to wonder how many milligrams of carbohydrates are in your food anymore. A free web resource, [www.carbohydrate-counter.org](http://www.carbohydrate-counter.org), helps dieters find the carbohydrate content in thousands of foods — even by brand name! Use it to pick low-carb foods for a low-carbohydrate diet. It also is useful for diabetics who need to watch carbohydrate levels. (Before dieting, always consult your doctor.)

▶ Laughter reduces stress hormones, increases antibodies that fight upper respiratory disease, increases tolerance to pain, and increases heart rate. Humor is essential to mental health because it assists us in connecting with others, shifts the ways in which we think, and replaces distressing emotions with pleasurable feelings. You cannot feel angry, depressed, anxious, guilty, or resentful and experience humor at the same time. Humor changes how we behave, causes us to talk more, and to make eye contact with others. In experiencing humor we touch others more, increase our energy, and, as a result, may perform activities that we might otherwise avoid. (Source: Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, [www.aath.org](http://www.aath.org).)

▶ Time pockets are unplanned, short periods of unfilled time in a busy day that are opportunities for you to be surprisingly productive and get things done. Take advantage of time pockets with a list of to-dos at the ready. Items that are important but not urgent are ideal—planning a meal, penning a letter, having a spare key made, getting a haircut, putting air in your tires, picking up the next greeting card. Have fun with time pockets, keep a list of completed tasks, and watch your productivity soar.

## Be a Pro at Defusing Workplace Tension



**C**onflicts can be costly in time, energy, and productivity. You can’t eliminate them, but you can create workplace communication and team traditions that intervene with them sooner. The key is spotting conflicts in their initial stages of *workplace tension*. For example, a coworker on your team comes to work late, causing others to pick up the slack. Often, employees cope and adapt, and tolerate such behaviors. Resentments build, and a crisis erupts. Create opportunities to regularly communicate, perhaps at the end of meetings, to offer each other praise and social reinforcement and to discuss any workplace tensions. Doing so will reinforce a positive workplace, grow value within your relationships, capitalize on the power of peer influence, and allow you to feel happier in your job. Tensions may become smaller and fewer over time, but keep the tradition.

## Worrying on the Clock

**A**ccording to a recent Colonial Penn Life Insurance study, 20% of workers are spending up to five hours per week on the clock thinking about their stressors and worries. Worrying may be the single most costly personal and business problem in existence, yet finding relief from it can feel so elusive. When you worry, your mind becomes stuck in a cycle of stress as it tries to analyze, prevent, or find a solution for some threat in order to prevent its negative effect. When fears are vague and you don’t have all the information, exaggerated worries mount. Rather than suffer in this cycle, contact your EAP or a professional counselor and find the relief your mind is failing to deliver. Source: [www.coloniallife.com/about/newsroom](http://www.coloniallife.com/about/newsroom) [search: “worry”]



## Parents and Teen Driving Tips

**33%** of teenagers who die between the ages of 16 and 19 are killed in vehicle crashes, and those teens 16 to 17 years old have three times the likelihood of a crash than 18-to-19-year-olds do. The first 12 months for a novice driver is the riskiest period. Here’s how parents can make a big difference to reduce risk. Start with a parent-teen driving agreement. You can find one at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) [search: “parent-teen driving agreement”]. You can also learn dozens of effective, tried and true ways of teaching your teen to drive safely with the information found at [www.libertymutual.com](http://www.libertymutual.com) [search: “coach your teen driver”]. Discover how to prevent bad driving habits before they start, the mistakes parents often make when coaching teens to drive, and much more.



# Signs an Alcohol Use Assessment Is Needed

Not all early-stage signs and symptoms of alcoholism are distressful or problematic to the drinker. Some may erroneously be viewed as evidence to self and others that “everything is just fine.” Consider arranging an interview/assessment with a professional counselor if any of the following are part of your experience: 1) You feel fortunate that you can drink more than your friends and “not feel drunk.” This is explained by growing nervous system adaptation to alcohol; 2) You believe you can drive a vehicle safely, even after moderately heavy drinking. (Note: You can’t.); 3) Despite drinking the same amount as your friends, you rarely suffer hangovers or ill effects; 4) Your friends drink as much and as frequently as you do, which convinces you that your drinking is normal; 5) You are sure alcoholism is not an issue because there are many symptoms you do not experience that you believe would be evident. These are based upon your life and family experience with others who had alcohol disorders. Other symptoms are ignored.



# Is Your Body Saying, “Enough!”



Fatigue is a result of prolonged mental or physical exertion; it can affect people’s performance and impair their mental alertness. This leads to dangerous errors, accidents, and losses. With long hours, little sleep, and skimpy nutrition, you can easily experience fatigue. But will you be aware enough to know it? Lack of sleep is often a major contributor to fatigue, but feeling tired and sleepy won’t necessarily be a symptom of fatigue. Instead, you lack motivation and energy. Your body will give you signals to quit. Pay attention to them. It’s time to unplug, rest, and rejuvenate when these symptoms show up: 1) inability to concentrate increases; 2) emotions fluctuate, especially irritability; 3) conversational forgetfulness occurs—people may speak, and moments later, you won’t recall what they said; 4) incidences of dizziness, clumsiness, forgetfulness, and misplacing things increase; 5) those who know you may say, “You look sad.” (Research has shown “looking sad” is the key observation by others of those who are fatigued.\*); 6) increase in acne and skin irritations may appear. When you are fatigued, think “SNL”—increase *sleep*, improve *nutrition*, lower your stress. See your doctor, EAP, or counselor if fatigue is frequent so you can get a better clinical assessment/referral as to its cause. \*www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc [search: 3738045]

# Work-Life Balance: Try This

With all there is to do in our lives, it’s easy to get on autopilot and lose track of work-life balance. This is normal, but relief comes with the habit of checking yourself. Here’s how. Periodically ask yourself: 1) Am I using my time effectively in this task, or could I make changes to be more efficient? 2) Can I delegate this task? (For example, could you hire someone to rake the leaves and use the time for another purpose?) 3) Am I using my time for my life’s priorities, or am I filling time with tasks that are less important? 4) Am I consciously planning my time with my family and loved ones or just letting the next event happen, whenever that might occur? Asking these questions causes you to hit a “reset button” to get you more of what you want to achieve in work-life balance.



# Less Concern about Child Day Care



Entrusting a child to a day care center for the first time produces feelings of apprehension. You want a healthy and secure experience so you can focus on work and not worry all day. Visit the web site of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) [search: “your child care checklist”] and also visit [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org) [search: “child care center checklist”]. These resources will help you evaluate day care issues quickly and ask the right questions. Knowledge is power, and you’ll have it with these resources and, along with it, the peace of mind every new parent deserves.

