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Productive Wellness

*Become More Successful by Paying
Attention to Your Health*

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Productive Wellness

Become more successful by paying attention to your health

by Rich Bingaman, CPA

Our profession is riddled with looming deadlines that must be met without fail. These deadlines can cause stress that hinders our productivity, health and endeavors to be successful in our careers. To reduce these stresses, we often seek to improve our productivity at every turn by implementing better processes, technology and staff talent. How do we attain a higher level of productivity that allows us to achieve greater success without sacrificing our health?

Early in my career I was out to prove I could be a great accountant. I worked very long hours, said “yes” to all work assignments and volunteered for every special work project I could. At the age of 24, my primary focus was succeeding in my career. Not much thought was given to maintaining a healthy lifestyle amidst the strenuous work schedule and constant stress from deadlines. I lacked awareness of maintaining my wellness and didn’t have a mentor guiding me in that endeavor.

Today, as the principal of my own firm, I am just as driven as I was when I was that young, energetic 24 year old, but now I am keenly aware of how these stresses and challenges impact my overall health. My desire is not just to live a long life, but to have quality of life in my remaining years. By making wellness a priority, I’ve dramatically improved my professional and personal relationships and know that it is responsible for the tremendous growth in the health and wealth of my public accounting practice and career.

The following routines will help you pursue a higher level of productive wellness in your life.

Get Your Sleep – According to the Mayo Clinic, the optimal amount of sleep for adults each night is seven to eight hours. Their studies show that being deprived of this amount of sleep on a regular basis depresses our immune system making it more difficult for our bodies to fight off physical ailments and disease. Our bodies were designed to function optimally when we receive sufficient rest. I’ve lived through the days of not functioning properly when tackling my day without enough sleep. The detriment to my productivity during the day was evident. Balancing and prioritizing daily responsibilities is the key so that we don’t make up for not doing so by knocking a couple hours off our sleep schedule.

✓The time of day that is most productive for me is early in the morning instead of late at night, so my sleep schedule is 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., and I stick with that schedule through the busy time. I also reduce the desire to dip into my sleep schedule by having confidence in my workload tracking system.

Eat Well – Numerous documentaries such as *Food Inc.* and books on wellness such as *Breakthrough* by Suzanne Somers show that eating the wrong foods is very detrimental to our physical health. When we eat and drink the food and beverages our bodies were designed to live on, we feel good. Being more productive demands that our bodies function at optimal levels. We can all admit that we are more productive and successful throughout the day when we feel good. To achieve this, we must endeavor to create and maintain a routine that ensures a proper level of nutritional intake during the day. Minimize carbohydrates and sugar and maximize protein and vegetable intake. Avoid processed foods and drinks at all costs by sticking with organic options that are not loaded with preservatives, artificial ingredients and sugar. The key to keeping these good foods in our diet during a busy schedule is advance preparation.

✓ I love to eat lots of protein during busy days to increase my energy level, so I prepare grilled chicken and beef on Sunday to last me the week and then throw in cold vegetables and nuts with the cooked meat when I pack meals during the week.

Manage The Stress – The National Institute of Mental Health, American Heart Association and the Mayo Clinic found that 43% of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress, 75-90% of doctor visits are for stress-related ailments and the lifetime prevalence of emotional disorder is more than 50% when stress reactions are untreated. Since we have many stresses interwoven throughout our busy schedules, avoiding the ill effects of it become very important in our goal of overall productive wellness. A more organized and prioritized workload and project completion system is tremendously helpful in minimizing the stresses that naturally occur in a busy and hectic environment every day.

✓ My secret here is the organization I've built into my practice. It allows me to have confidence that clients are taken care of each day, therefore minimizing my stress. I also make time to socialize with friends even during a busy schedule. While it is not a lot of social time, it creates an opportunity for me to "balance" and think about something other than work.

Stay Active – If you go to the gym twice a week, great! If you walk around your neighborhood for half an hour every morning, fantastic! If you play tennis once a week with friends, keep it up! This is the type of routine that must continue during the busy times in our schedule. The Mayo Clinic advises that regular physical activity has the following benefits: controls weight, combats health ailments, improves mood, boosts energy and promotes better sleep. Even if you feel you need to cut back due to the deadlines, don't eliminate it altogether. We must continue to have a good balance between our active time and the office to counter balance the effects of the sedentary aspects of our profession. ➡

Ideas for Stress Relief

ASCPA members on the Connect Tax group discussed what they do for stress relief during busy season. Here are some of their creative solutions!

We have a massage therapist come to the office on Fridays and provide massages to any team member who works over 60 hours a week during tax season. We also stock our kitchen during tax season with whatever the team members want for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Those of us who don't have family at home may not even grocery shop for our households during all of busy season because all of our meals are in the office! Occasionally, we will have a "runner" take the CPAs' cars for washes and fill-ups. — **Lori Preder, Mccauley, Nicholson & Preder CPAs PC**

I take a boxing class once a week. Helps me tackle anything mentally that comes my way and is a GREAT stress reliever! I try to eat healthy, take my vitamins, and get at least 6 hours of sleep. When I have less sleep, I am not as efficient at work and I feel stressed. I stopped drinking coffee. For some reason, that has really helped me manage stress. — **Heidi Hintze CPA, Heidi Hintze CPA PLLC**

I display a relaxing picture on my third computer screen or maybe a webcam of Minneapolis buried under 40 inches of snow and ice with minus 30 degrees temperature. Maybe tax season in Phoenix isn't so bad after all. — **Allen Nahrwold, CPA, Allen L. Nahrwold CPA PC**

Setting aside an hour or so in a gym three days a week does a tremendous job in my stress relief. Last tax season went much smoother and more "real" work was accomplished. I had more focus, better communication with staff and clients, and additionally, I LOST 20 pounds during a part of the year I always gained weight. On the home front, the spouse noticed my positive attitude, which made her tax season better also. PUMP IT UP!!! — **William Bandi CPA, William Bandi, CPA**

I have a couple of days with no client appointments and I include what days appointments are available in my tax letter. KBAQ has online streaming, which I like listening to.— **Tess Ridgway, CPA, Tess L. Ridgway, CPA**

Recognize that "multitasking" has a cognitive cost. You lose efficiency, and you actually create a condition that can cause mental blocks that slow progress. Try to avoid interruptions when working on a difficult project. After such interruptions, it can take up to 20 minutes to get back into the groove you were in prior to the interruption.

Find some funny YouTube videos ... If you have never seen the "Screaming goats" video, find it. Just Google it. Watch a screaming goats video with your staff. (Those who don't laugh, fire them. Seriously. You do not need that type of personality in your office.)

Read the Connect section of the ASCPA website. It's nice to read about others' goofy clients and odd-ball situations. — **Gregg Goodsell, Gregg G. Goodsell, EA Inc.**

Check out the ASCPA Connect site to see more stress relieving solutions and join in the discussion. Knowing you are not alone this time of year is also very therapeutic.



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✓ While I cut back on some of my activities when I'm busy, I still take the opportunity to ride a bicycle on the weekend, go to a cross-fit class, play some soccer or walk the dog. These activities are meditative for me and provide a chance to briefly escape the stresses of the busy schedule.

What's at stake? If we seek to optimize the value of our businesses when we retire, procure more client referrals from our existing clients and business colleagues, and have more energy each day we work, then we must always endeavor to attain the level of wellness that allows us to achieve greater professional success.

Getting proper rest, managing stress, eating well and staying active are the cornerstones to health. Greater productive wellness inevitably leads to a better quality of life both professionally and personally.

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