



Setting Wellness Goals: Why Grad School is the Perfect Time to Start

As you find yourself immersed in the world of graduate school, you may think you are just too busy to work out or worry about wellness. But think about it, says wellness coach Sam Hester, CWC, CPT, LWMC. “The president of the

United States exercises regularly, and so did his two predecessors. You’re not busier than the president.”

Hester is author of *Soar to Success Minus the Stress* and owner of Executive Wellness in Houston. His clients include busy chief

Please don’t be seated (too long)

Like most knowledge-based workers, students spend much of their time sitting down. These tips, offered by the Centers for Disease Control for administrative professionals, are also good for anyone who spends a great deal of time sitting.

Create a comfortable work space. Arrange your chair, desk, and items so that you can work comfortably without needing to overreach, sit or stand too long, or use awkward postures. Use a back or foot rest if needed.

Take breaks. Stretch your legs, arms and neck to recover from muscle fatigue.

Manage stress. Early warning signs of stress include headache, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating, short temper, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction and low morale. Take steps to recognize and manage stress.

Eat healthy meals and snacks. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day. Limit foods and drinks high in calories, sugar, salt, fat and alcohol.

Get physical activity. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Include activities that raise your breathing and heart rates and that strengthen your muscles and bones.

HELPS

Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students
Newsletter

executive officers, physicians, attorneys and other professionals.

The sooner you start setting wellness goals, the better. “What we know is that when you’re young—under 35—you can be fit without being truly healthy,” says Hester. “Youth allows us to get away with a lot more than we can when we get older. After 40, to be fit you almost always have to be healthy.”

Move it, move it!

An active lifestyle, combined with healthy eating, is the key to a higher degree of wellness.

The human body is meant to move miles a day, says Hester. The typical lifestyle of a graduate or professional student, a department chair, a CEO or any knowledge-based worker is sedentary. Sitting too many hours a day puts people at risk for diabetes and a host of other serious diseases. Too much sitting also leaves us less resilient to stress.

At least 80 percent of

all physical illnesses are caused by stress or have a stress-related component, says Hester. Managing chronic stress can help you avoid hypertension, metabolic syndrome, anxiety, depression and insomnia. The solution is deceptively simple, Hester notes. “*Move.* Just like the sun burns off the dew in the morning, when we move the large muscles, we burn off the stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol. One practical way of doing this is to make a point of getting up and walking for five minutes out of every hour we work sitting down.”

You’re in control

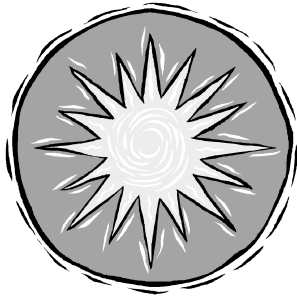
People have more control of their overall wellness than they think.

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The Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students program can assist when you’re not sure where to turn.

HELPS is available for you 24/7: 813-870-0184



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Acting on your wellness goals

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“Seventy percent of our health and wellness is within our control,” says Hester. “Only 30 percent is genetics. Our lifestyle can interfere with our wellness. So in my coaching I guide people to focus on the fundamentals. We can’t *think* our way into a new way of behaving. We have to *act* our way into changing our thinking.”

By the time his clients decide to ask for the help of a wellness coach, they

have given up their excuses, Hester says.

“They’ve already reached the action phase described in the transtheoretical model of behavior change.”

Specific fundamental behavior changes you can make to gain control of your wellness include getting enough sleep, eating breakfast, drinking plenty of water, keeping blood sugar stable, and getting a flu shot.

Beginning a diet and exercise program isn’t

easy, but the concepts are straightforward, and age is on your side. “If you take in fewer calories than you burn, you will lose weight,” says Hester. “And since the human body was meant to be in constant motion, the more activity you engage in, the more calories you will burn, and the more weight you will lose.”

Hester’s advice for you at this very moment? Put down this article and go for a walk.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control “Healthy Weight” website offers tips, tools and success stories
www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html

National Weight Control Registry has data and success tips from people who have lost weight
www.nwcr.ws/Research/default.htm

Soar to Success Minus the Stress, by Sam Hester (2008)

<http://executivewellnesscoach.net/Book.html>

Research About Alcohol and College Drinking Prevention
www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

Can you answer these health and safety questions?

1. What condition can run in families, usually starts between the ages of 15 and 30, and is experienced by more than 20 million people in the United States?
2. How many drinks for males in one setting is considered binge drinking? How many drinks for females in one setting is considered binge drinking?
3. True or false: On average, underage drinkers consume more drinks per drinking occasion than adult [of age] drinkers.
4. Among persons aged 12–20 years, drinking alcohol contributes to which three leading causes of death?
5. Are males or females more likely to be a victim of sexual violence?
6. True or false: Teens and young adults who do not get enough sleep are at risk for automobile crashes, poor grades and performance in school, depressed moods, and problems with peer and adult relationships.

Answers: 1) depression; 2) males-five, females-four or more; 3) true; 4) unintentional injury, homicide, suicide; 5) females; 6) true

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA 30333, USA

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