

CONNECTIONS

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Fidgeting at your Desk

Safety and Health Magazine

Spontaneous activity, such as moving your feet back and forth, while seated can burn more calories than using a standing workstation, according to the results of a recent study.

Researchers from the University of Illinois at Chicago and Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights, IL, studied 16 participants' metabolic rate and heart rate as they progressed through three types of desk workstations: seated, standing and seated with a device designed to stimulate leg movement. Participants spent 15 minutes at each desk.

The researchers found that "modest" movement—the kind unrelated to structured exercise—elevated metabolic rates 17 percent more than sitting at a desk and 7 percent more than using a standing workstation.



The results are similar to those of a 10-year study conducted by Mayo Clinic that found even small, sometimes fidgety, movements such as tapping your toes—called non-exercise activity thermogenesis, or NEAT—can help counteract a sedentary lifestyle.

Studies have linked prolonged sitting to an increased risk of early death, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, among other ailments.

"These results suggest that non-exercise active thermogenesis ... can increase movement and calorie burning, and may have the potential to impact health," Craig Horswill, lead author and clinical professor of kinesiology and nutrition at UIC, said in a Dec. 19 press release. "We expected to see the metabolic rate increase with each progressive stage, but instead found that metabolic rates from movement while seated were either equal to or higher than rates while standing."

Horswill cautioned that additional research is needed but said the results are promising for people who don't use a standing workstation because of disability, injury or discomfort.

The study was **published** Dec. 13 in the journal *WORK*.



Greetings City Employees!

This month we have included articles on a variety of topics that have stood out to us lately. Many of us often want guidance on how to talk to people at work or home about challenges we may be facing or issues we want to address, but rarely do we seek guidance on how to better listen. Because listening is a pretty important component of communicating, we have included an article on effective listening techniques. Additionally, as summer vacation fast approaches and children and teens begin spending more time at home, we wanted to include an article on what many teenagers want parents to know about how they are thinking and the internal struggles they may face but have trouble expressing. It can be easy for parents and teens to be swept up in the challenges of clashing perspectives and fights that emerge out of the transition from dependence to independence. Please keep the EAP in mind as a place to be able to talk about parenting struggles or gain referral or resource information. We also have included workplace specific articles on the impact of worker fatigue, why it might be okay to fidget at your desk, and for our Leadership Matters segment, the impact of financial stress on the workplace.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hailey Krueger".



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LEADERSHIP *Matters*

The Elephant in the Workroom: Financial Stress

Amara Lang, FEI Behavioral Health

The environment we live and work in affects perception, outlook, mood and physical and mental health. From the physical layout of a workplace to the people and culture within, multiple variables shape how we view the world. Sometimes these variables can be good and others can be not-so-good.

While some employees may have a comfortable position and make comfortable money, others aren't feeling so comfortable. According to the Social Security Administration, half of American workers make less than or equal to \$30,533.31 per year. To put this into perspective, the federal poverty line for the same period for a family of three is \$20,160.

Productivity in the U.S. has continually risen alongside wages since the 1940s. Beginning in the 1970s, this changed. Even though productivity continued to rise, wages stagnated. While one might challenge this narrative in saying "but I just read that wages have increased over the past couple of years!," real wages, or wages adjusted for inflation, have been stagnant or even decreased for most workers for a generation. It's no wonder that out of the 150 million Americans in the workforce, roughly one out of three work multiple jobs.

It's also not surprising to learn that eight out of ten workers live paycheck to paycheck. While that might be manageable with expected expenses, emergencies inevitably occur. Alarming, 46 percent of American workers can't afford a \$400 emergency and most workers can't afford a \$1,000 emergency. Well, why don't we just budget? With flat wages and rising expenditures, Americans are budgeting—or at least trying to. In fact, most paychecks are spent on essentials like housing, transportation, food, health care and utilities. Even with a paycheck, 80 percent of Americans are in debt.

While your City EAP does not offer a financial benefit, we do recommend **GreenPath Financial Wellness** as a resource if you have financial concerns. Call the Madison office at (608) 221-1695.

Also, many banks and credit unions will help you to create a personal budget and/or may offer money management seminars. Check with your financial institution for more information.

The American workplace is, no doubt, physically and emotionally taxing. Unfortunately, most workers now report feeling financial stress as well, a number that's been rising since the recession. Stress leads to poor health outcomes.

Whether it means supporting open communication, encouraging work amongst different departments/groups/individuals, or promoting social gatherings or potlucks, supporting a working environment that fosters relationships amongst team members is an effective way to reduce stress, including financial. Moreover, a recent study showed that the most important factor for reducing stress and thereby negative health outcomes is having strong relationships. In short, having a support system is key, especially having a supportive boss.

In lieu of supportive humans, animals can be a major stress buster. Petting an animal has been found to increase the release of happy hormones, reduce stress and improve mental health. Other stress busters include journaling, deep breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, napping, yoga or meditation. Don't forget the little things like putting down the smartphone, avoiding multitasking, planning ahead, getting organized and using humor (laughter is the best medicine after all).

Even encouraging employees to take some time for themselves, like daily 10-minute brain breaks or a day at the spa, can decrease stress. And of course, exercise and diet play major roles in reducing stress. Evidence is increasingly pointing to a linkage between the gut biome effecting brain health, with a healthy diet leading to a healthy brain.

Financial stress is common, and tools exist to help managers and their employees cope with the burdens money can create. For information and resources on stress and tips for managing it, the workforce can always contact its Employee Assistance Program (EAP). For those who have a financial benefit as part of their EAP, contact a representative about paying down debts, budgeting and attempting to save.

Citations are included in the [online article](#).

The Negative Voices in Your Teenager's Head and 7 Ways to Quiet Them

by Sean Grover, LCSW, *Psychology Today* (Used by permission of the author)

This is what a teen might say to you about his or her self-talk:

- "I'm mad. I don't know why. Sometimes I wake up mad; other days it creeps up on me. I don't like it. It doesn't feel good. I wish I wasn't so mad, but I am. I can't help it.
- "Every day is a prison, trapped inside this changing body, repeating the same day over and over. My whole life is made up of things I have to do, not things I want to do. Tests, quizzes, reading assignments, papers, group projects—I spend the entire day with people I am forced to be with: teenagers who feel just as messed up as me.
- "Sometimes my feelings get hurt at school—by teachers, deans, counselors, but mostly by other students. I don't tell you this, because I'm ashamed to feel hurt. I don't want you to know how hurt I feel all the time.
- "My whole life has become 'I don't want to...' I don't want to wake up. I don't want to go to bed. I don't want to go to school. I don't want to...I don't want to...I don't want to.
- "I can't think of a single thing that I want to do—except sleep. It's the only time I'm not stressing, the only time I'm not worried, the only time I'm not upset.
- "Sometimes I hide in my room and binge watch Netflix, YouTube, or mindless videos over and over, because I can't stand to be with my own thoughts. I'm distracting myself from me. Does that sound crazy?
- "And, yes, I know that my room is a mess. I like it that way: It looks how I feel inside. And please don't ask me what's wrong, because I don't know. I don't know where these feelings came from.
- "I know that you're mad at me. I can't blame you. I stopped talking to you. Sometimes I say such mean things to you, horrible things. I blame you, curse at you, push you away. Sometimes I break things, because I feel broken inside.
- "It wasn't always this way. When I look at old photos of me in elementary school, I see a little kid who was so happy all the time. A little kid who loved to dance and sing, who loved to be silly, who didn't care what people thought.
- "I feel like that little kid is dead.
- "I'm going to tell you something now that's hard to say. Please listen, because I really mean it: Don't give up on me. Don't hate me back. I need you to be stronger than me. I need you to be my parent, even though I say I don't want one. I need you to be more patient than I can be, more understanding, more accepting. Even when I am yelling at you, even when I tell you that I hate you, I still need you to love me.

- "If I could tell you how to help me, this is what I would say:

1. Give me space.

Don't come in my room, corner me, or make demands. I don't have any answers. When you push me or yell at me, I feel worse. I need to be alone. I need space.

2. Don't yell at me.

The noise in my head is so loud sometimes that I can barely hear my own thoughts. I can't stand it. When you yell, I feel worse about myself. I feel unloved. I feel like I am your biggest disappointment.

3. Take my electronics away.

I can't put my phone down; I try, but I just can't. I know it's devouring all my time, but I can't help myself; I can't stop checking it. I need your help. I need you to set limits on technology. Please. I will fight you, but it's what I need. Don't try to reason with me: Just do it.

4. Bring me someplace quiet.

I say I don't want anything to do with you. But if you could bring me somewhere quiet, somewhere we could walk together and not argue, somewhere I can feel the sun and listen to the wind in the trees, somewhere I can breathe and forget about everything that's bothering me, I think I would like that. Even if we don't speak, I will feel comforted.

5. Stop spoiling me.

Stop giving me everything I want. The more you give me, the more I resent you. I want to earn things. It helps me feel grown up. I want to learn how to save money, spend money, share money. And I'm never going to learn that if you keep giving it to me. I hate being dependent on you; please help me become independent.

6. Find me someone to talk to.

I need someone to look up to who isn't you. I need an adult to admire, someone I want to be like, a person who believes in me, who pushes me, and who understands me. A mentor, a counselor, a therapist...anyone who can give me hope when I have too little for myself.

7. Tell me that you love me.

I pretend not to care. But I really need to hear you say the words, 'I love you.' Because right now, I don't love me. Even though I'm making your life hell, I still need to feel loved. Especially by you.

- "I guess that's it. I know that being a parent is really hard. Sometimes you probably wonder why you did it. But I'll get better. I promise. I'll get older and we'll enjoy each other again. Until then, understand that I appreciate you.
- "I may not say it often, but still I love you."

The Great Unknown: Sending Your Child to College

As a high school student's junior or senior year approaches, parents are often confronted with mixed emotions regarding their child's future. It can be a bittersweet time as parents struggle with anxiety over tuition costs, their child's reaction to a new environment or simply letting go. Meanwhile, the child is working overtime to assert their independence.

It's important to realize that your son or daughter is often feeling the same emotions you are, although they may seem distant. Enjoy the remaining time with your child and assist where you can, but allow them this opportunity to learn and grow. If you feel you need some of your own assistance, contact your EAP for a variety of resources that can provide aid during this transition.



WEBINAR

06.20.2018

12:00pm EST

REGISTER

Sending Your Child to College

Not sure where to start when it comes to saving for college? We're working with Ameriprise Financial to give you the knowledge and resources you'll need to make informed college savings decisions. Learn to choose the college savings goal that's right for you, balance retirement and college savings, and determine today's costs and various payment options.

Carol Busche

Financial Advisor, Ameriprise Financial



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Fatigue – You're More Than Just Tired

National Safety Council

Our 24/7 Workforce

People often make light of how little sleep they get; an over-worked, over-tired condition has become the norm for many. But a good night's sleep is not just a novelty, it's a necessity. The effects of fatigue are far-reaching and can have an adverse impact on all areas of our lives.

Our bodies are programmed to be tired at night and alert during the day, but work often requires us to override those natural sleep patterns. More than 43% of workers are sleep-deprived, and those most at risk work the night shift, long shifts or irregular shifts. Following are a few facts for employers:

- Safety performance decreases as employees become tired
- 62% of night shift workers complain about sleep loss
- Fatigued worker productivity costs employers \$1,200 to \$3,100 per employee annually
- Employees on rotating shifts are particularly vulnerable because they cannot adapt their "body clocks" to an alternative sleep pattern

On the Road

We wouldn't allow a friend to drive drunk, but we rarely take the keys away from our tired friends or insist that they take a nap before heading out on the road. Drowsy driving is impaired driving. NSC has gathered research that shows:

- You are three times more likely to be in a car crash if you are fatigued
- More than 5,000 people died in drowsy-driving related crashes in 2014
- Losing even two hours of sleep is similar to the effect of having three beers
- Being awake for more than 20 hours is the equivalent of being legally drunk

We're Getting Sick Over It

Adults need an average of seven to nine hours of sleep each night, but 30% report averaging less than six hours, according to the National Health Interview Survey. Sleep is a vital factor in overall health.

- Chronic sleep-deprivation causes depression, obesity, cardiovascular disease and other illnesses
- Fatigue is estimated to cost employers \$136 billion a year in health-related lost productivity
- More than 70 million Americans suffer from a sleep disorder

Time for Change

Americans receive little education on the importance of sleep, sleep disorders and the consequences of fatigue, but industry leaders recently have been drawing attention to this issue. Employers, too, are in an ideal position to educate employees on how to avoid fatigue-related safety incidents.

Change begins with the individual. The National Safety Council supports science-based fatigue risk management systems in the workplace and recently convened a panel of experts to explore fatigue and its effect on occupational safety. We look forward to sharing the results of this discussion.

What You Can Do to Prevent Fatigue

Feelings of fatigue are somewhat subjective, and signs of fatigue are not always easy to identify. Some people cannot even tell when they are fatigued.

The reality is, more than 1 in 3 people are not getting enough sleep. To avoid fatigue, make sure to:

- Get enough sleep and provide for adequate rest between physically or cognitively demanding activities
- Talk to your doctor about getting screened for sleeping disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea
- Align your natural body clock with your work schedule; some people who regularly fly through different time zones, for example, use melatonin to reset their circadian rhythms
- If you work the night shift, try to maintain a consistent sleep schedule even on your days off, and be sure to use blackout curtains to keep your bedroom dark
- Instead of tossing and turning, give this **sleep habits assessment tool** a try and find out what's keeping you awake; your answer is likely to differ greatly from your colleague or neighbor

JUNE IS NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

The National Safety Council provides a wealth of information on many workplace-related safety topics at <https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/safety-topics>

SAFETY FIRST

Ask More Questions

Ask questions — it's one of the best ways to listen well.

By Rick Hanson, Ph.D., *Psychology Today* (Used by permission of the author)

Why?

My dad grew up on a ranch in North Dakota. He has a saying from his childhood—you may have heard it elsewhere—that's: "You learn more by listening than by talking."

Sure, we often gain by thinking out loud, including discovering our truth by speaking it. But on the whole, listening brings lots more valuable information than talking does.

Nonetheless, many people are not the greatest listeners. (You've probably noticed this already: at work, at home, when you're trying to work something out with your partner ...) What's it feel like when they don't listen to you? Or maybe listen, but don't inquire further? It's not good. Besides missing out on important information—including, often most importantly, your underlying feelings and wants—they're sending the implicit message that they're not that interested (even though, deep down, they might be).

Then turn it around: what do you think they feel like if you don't listen that well to them? Not very good either.

Being a good listener brings many benefits: gathering useful information, making others feel like they matter to you, sustaining a sense of connection with people, and stepping out of your own familiar frame of reference.

One of the best ways to listen well is to ask questions. It makes you an active listener, it shows that you've been paying attention, it can get things out in the open ("Mommy, is that emperor parading in his boxers?!"), and it slows down emotional conversations so they don't get out of hand.

How?

As a therapist, I ask questions for a living. Plus I've been married a long time through thick and thin, and raised two kids. As they say in medicine: good judgment comes from experience ... and experience comes from bad judgment. So, I offer some fruits of my bad judgments!

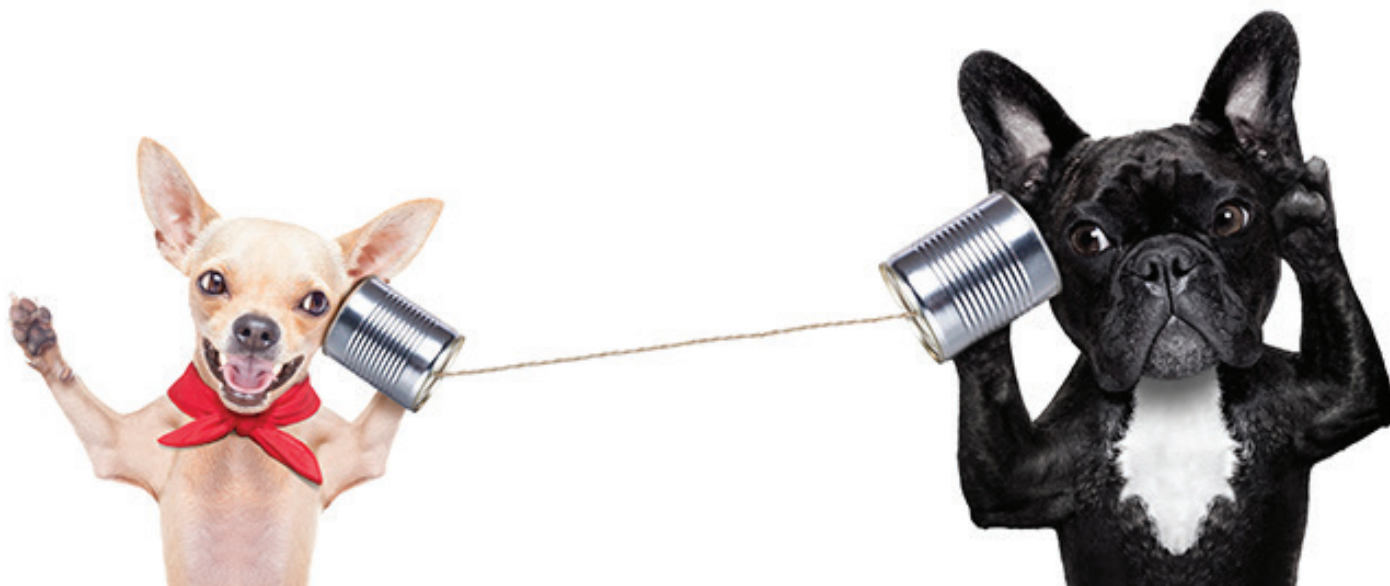
- Questions can be nonverbal. A raised eyebrow, a nod to say more, or simply letting there be a bit of silence are all signals to the other person to keep going.
- Have good intentions. Don't ask questions like a prosecutor. It's fine to try to get to the bottom of things—whether it's what bothered your mate the most about her conversation with her friend, or what your son is actually doing this Saturday night, or what your role is supposed to be in an upcoming business meeting. But don't use questions to make others look bad.
- Keep the tone gentle. Remember that being asked a question—particularly, a series of questions—can feel invasive, critical, or controlling to the person on the receiving end; think of all the times that kids get asked questions as a prelude to a scolding or other punishment. You could check in with the other person to make sure your questions are welcome. Slow questions down so they don't come rat-tat-tat. And intersperse them with self-disclosure that matches, more or less, the emotional depth of what the other person is saying; this way they're not putting all their cards on the table while you keep yours close to the chest.
- As appropriate, persist in getting a clear answer. If you sense there's still some problematic fuzziness or wiggle room in the other person's answers, or simply more to learn, you could ask the question again, maybe in a different way. Or, explain—without accusation—why you're still unclear about what the other person is saying. Or, ask additional questions that could help surface the deeper layers of the other person's thoughts, feelings, and intentions.



- Different kinds of questions are appropriate for different situations. For example, trying to get clearer about a project your boss wants you to do is definitely not like a delicate inquiry into what might help things go better in a physically intimate relationship. Questions about facts or plans are usually pretty straightforward. For the murkier, more emotionally charged territory of friends and family, here are some possibilities:
 - » How was _____ for you?
 - » What do you appreciate about _____?
 - » What bothers (or worries) you about _____?
 - » Are there other things you're feeling (or wanting) besides _____?
 - » What did this remind you of?
 - » What did you wish had happened, instead?
 - » What's the most important thing here, for you?
 - » What would it look like if you got what you wanted here? (Or: "... what you wanted from me?")
 - » How would you like it to be from now on?
 - » Could you say more about _____?

If your intentions are good, it's really OK to ask questions. Usually, people welcome them. Take confidence in your good intentions and good heart.

Learn more about Rick Hanson's work on his website: www.rickhanson.net



*Thanks for reading,
we hope you found the information useful!*

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