Dear Alice,

I am lacking energy. What tips can you give me to increase my energy levels?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Energy levels can be tricky; certain foods, activities or emotions may trigger high- or low-levels of energy, and these triggers are different for different people. Rather than focusing on increasing your energy levels, it may be helpful to think about how to maintain consistent, healthy energy levels throughout your days. First, if you suspect your lethargy may be due to a medical conditions, it would be a good idea to visit a health care provider to rule out any problems that could be making you feel de-energized.

Many of us face personal, school, and/or professional demands that seem to sap our energy and leave us feeling out of sorts. If you suspect your daily routine could be playing a role in your lack of energy, here are some energy boosting tips to help you feel more like that battery-powered bunny:

**Sleep:** Get an adequate amount of sleep each and every night. Although this varies from person to person, try to sleep at least seven or eight hours a night. In addition, depending on the individual, "power" naps may either revive you or leave you feeling more tired. In the latter case, add that nap time to your nightly sleep so you will wake up feeling more rested.

**Exercise:** Exercise regularly three to four times a week for at least thirty minutes each time, but preferably every day for thirty minutes. Exercise may make you feel tired initially if you have not exercised or do not exercise regularly, but your body will adjust and feel more invigorated. Exercise outdoors, not only to get away from the sweaty smell of gyms, but also to breathe in fresh air and get some sun, which can help energize you (and make exercise seem less of a burden and more enjoyable).
Eat: Consume enough calories from a varied and healthy eating plan. Add more fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet, and also eat more complex carbohydrates, which will provide you with sustaining energy. Eat fewer simple carbohydrates (sugar from candy, for example), which give you a quick burst of energy, but soon leave you feeling tired from the sugar blues (hypoglycemia). Eating a balanced breakfast can also help you maintain steady energy levels throughout the day.

Meditate: One of the most consistent benefits reported by meditators is increased energy. Improved quality of sleep and heightened concentration rank up there, too. Meditation is usually performed for ten to twenty minutes once or twice a day, and is easy to learn. There are a variety of books and tapes that provide meditation instruction - you can find them in most major bookstores in the self-help and alternative medicine sections.

Enjoy Yourself!: Let your friends, partner(s), and family members know of your need to be energized so they can help motivate you to get involved and become more active. Their encouragement and support will help you follow through with your revitalization program. Also, being preoccupied can leave you stressed out and exhausted (physically and mentally). Instead, do something you enjoy. Have fun while improving your physical and emotional energy levels to help lift your spirits.

For a boost, you can likely figure out some personal re-energizers by thinking about a few questions, such as: Do I feel energized, or more tired, after hanging out with friends and family? Does zoning out for 30 minutes in front of the computer or TV give me some needed down time, or make me want to fall asleep? What foods make me feel best after eating them? Does taking a 15 minute break from work or studying help me focus better when I return? Also, it would be helpful to think about ways you might balance eating, sleeping, exercise, work, and play in your life for sustained energy. Carpe diem!

Alice!
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Published date:
Oct 04, 1996
Last reviewed on: