

# HEALTHIER LIVING

CREATE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION, AND LIFE BALANCE

## the power of micro-connections

*How short, positive daily interactions at work can improve mood and productivity.*

**A**t work, you might think meaningful connection requires longer conversations, vulnerability, or team-building activities, but research suggests otherwise. **Micro-communication**, the tiny social exchanges that punctuate our days, plays a surprisingly powerful role in shaping how we feel and how we work with others.

Micro-communication is the nod as you cross paths with a colleague, the quick 'hi' to a neighbor, the heart you tap on a friend's Instagram story, the 'thanks' you give the barista, or the simple 'good' you offer when someone casually asks how your day is going. These moments may seem inconsequential, yet collectively they are the building blocks of human connection.

Consider this: a brief greeting with a neighbor on the street or in the hallway barely registers in the moment. When repeated over days or weeks, that greeting becomes a pattern — an unspoken recognition that strengthens familiarity. Now imagine seeing that same neighbor at the store. Who would you be more likely to chat with: the familiar face you've acknowledged dozens of times or the stranger you've never greeted?

Our brains are wired for these micro-moments. Each small interaction triggers the release of feel-good chemicals, such as *oxytocin*, the 'social bonding hormone.' In professional settings, these brief exchanges act as relationship accelerators. Even a three-minute conversation can activate the same neural pathways as a longer interaction. By building trust and openness over time, these small interactions foster a sense of psychological safety, where team members feel comfortable speaking up and sharing ideas. This environment of safety and trust enhances team learning and contributes to a fearless organization.

You don't need hours of conversation to create meaningful professional bonds. Those quick chats by the printer or before a meeting are quietly shaping the foundation of collaboration. Strong workplace relationships are how we learn, influence, mobilize others, and get things done. When they flourish, teams thrive. ♦

## challenge of the month: craft your own affirmations

**Craft your own affirmations by tuning into what you need to hear the most.**

Start by identifying the beliefs you want to strengthen. These could be your confidence, resilience, or self-worth. Write statements in the present tense, focusing on what's true, possible, and empowering. Keep them **positive, personal, and specific**. Repeat your affirmations daily and let them guide your mindset toward growth. This challenge encourages you to **create a language that nurtures your inner voice and supports your goals**. What you write can become a powerful reminder of your strength. Use them to inspire your daily intentions. ♦



**“Positive thinking doesn't mean that you ignore life's less pleasant situations. Positive thinking just means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst.”**

— Positive Thinking, Mayo Clinic

# Snack Smarter

*Energizing options for work or home: go-to snacks that fuel focus, mood, and energy without a sugar crash.*

**S**nacks, chosen mindfully to satisfy hunger, can do more than curb cravings. They provide key nutrients that are often in short supply throughout the day. Choosing snacks that include more **fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or fat-free dairy** in your routine helps you feel energized, focused, and balanced. Unlike sugary snacks, which can lead to a quick energy spike followed by a crash, **nutrient-rich snacks** support steady energy, improve mood, and enhance concentration throughout the day.

How do you create a balanced and nutritious snack? Pair at least two food groups and keep them readily available for grab-and-go, whether at home or on the go. Here are some ideas to get started:

- Apple slices with peanut butter
- Yogurt with berries
- Whole-grain crackers with cheese
- Carrots or celery with hummus
- A small handful of nuts with dried fruit
- String cheese with whole-grain pretzels



These combinations provide fiber, protein, and healthy fats, fueling both the brain and the body. So, whether you are on the go or at home, planning and keeping healthy snacks on hand sets you up for lasting success. Start building this smart, healthy habit today for lasting energy that helps you feel your best. ◆



## Q. If I have pain while exercising, what should I do?

Experiencing pain during exercise can be confusing, and uncomfortable, and learning to listen to your body is critical for your wellbeing. Start by noticing the difference between general discomfort and actual pain. Normal exercise discomfort feels like muscle fatigue or a mild burn, but sharp, sudden, or lingering pain is a warning sign. When this happens, stop the movement immediately. Pushing through real pain can worsen an injury.

Assess where and how the pain started. If it eases quickly with rest or by modifying the exercise, such as reducing the range of motion or lowering the weight, you may simply need an adjustment to your form or intensity. However, if the pain persists, feels unstable, or is accompanied by swelling or numbness, it's best to pause your workout for the day.

Check your technique, warm-up routine, and recovery habits, as inadequate preparation and incorrect form often contributes to pain. If you're unsure, consult a certified trainer to evaluate your movement patterns.

Finally, if pain continues for more than a few days or interferes with daily activities, seek guidance from a medical professional. Your long-term progress depends on a body that's strong, supported, and cared for, so never ignore the signals it sends! ◆