

# Make it happy – **RECHARGE**

April 2014 Newsletter



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I really like “re”. “Re” says there's a chance to try again. **More...**

## Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

# Recharging to avoid burnout

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Stress levels are soaring these days. Ask most people and they'll tell you they feel it at work, at home and in their personal lives, too. They're constantly trying to juggle all the pressures.

## Take stress seriously

If stress goes on too long, it can lead to burnout. That's when you feel like you've "hit a wall." When you're burned out, you feel numb and exhausted. You can lose your motivation and enthusiasm. Burnout can affect your work performance, your home life and even your health.

## Steps to prevent burnout

Getting burned out? Time to recharge. And we're not referring to your AA batteries — but to your personal energy sources that keep you going. Here are some tips for recharging:

- **Disconnect.** Today's technologies allow us to feel "connected" all the time. Always plugged in to our smart phones, tablets, PCs and other devices, we rarely get a break from texts, e-mails, phone calls and information alerts.

But everyone needs some time off. So consider turning off all your devices for a part of each day. Or create a space in your home where no devices are allowed. For example, make your bedroom a "device-free" zone. When you go into that room, tune out for a much needed break. The texts, voicemails and news will all be waiting for you when you plug in again.

- **Expand your interests.** Feel like you do the same things day in and day out? Take on some new activities and challenges. Try a new hobby. Take a class or volunteer for a good cause. Changing up your everyday routine can help you see things in a new way.
- **Pay attention to your own basic needs.** You can't feel good if you don't take care of yourself. Healthy diet, sleep and exercise regimes help keep stress under control and also help improve your outlook and mood. Are you thinking you have no time to take care of yourself? Think again.

You need to make time for you. Create new routines that give you slots of time to work out, eat healthy meals and snacks and get 6 to 8 hours of sleep each night. There's no way to fool your body long-term: If you ignore your basic needs now, you could pay the price with unwelcome health issues.

## These steps can help renew your spirit

It may sound hard to take new actions when you're feeling low on energy and interest. But you need to push yourself in order to fight burnout.

Get a start on rebuilding your energy, interest and motivation today. If you continue to feel stressed or depressed for more than a few weeks, seek professional help.

# Reconnecting family ties at the dinner table

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In many households, dinnertime isn't any different from the rest of the day. Cellphones ring and beep, TVs blare and family members come and go. No one can sit down for more than five minutes or even hear themselves think — much less talk to — anyone else. Seem familiar?

If this sounds like your house, it may be time to bring some “law and order” to dinnertime. It's also time to rediscover one of the basic reasons why families sit and eat together: to reconnect.

## **Pick one night a week for family dinner**

It's a reality that family members have commitments and distractions that can often keep dinners from being relaxing “together time”. So just try for one night a week for starters.

Take a poll to identify a night and time where everyone can sit down for at least 30 minutes. Once you've all agreed to a time, plan an easy dinner. This is not about a gourmet meal. It's about spending time as a family.

## **Turn off all screens and electrical devices**

No TV, cellphones, iPods, tablets, laptops or earphones during the meal. One way to connect to each other is to disconnect from everything else for a little while.

## **Each person takes a turn to share**

Ask each person to share something positive or special from his or her day. This helps you bond with each other and also keeps stress at bay. It can help you all enjoy an oasis from your hectic day.

## **Look around the table and be in the moment**

Sure, families have lots to deal with. But time moves on. Most older people will tell you it moves on much more quickly than you expect.

Kids grow up and leave the nest. Things can change from year to year and day to day. Remind yourself to enjoy the moment because life is always shifting.

## **Compliment the cook and share cleanup time**

Be sure to thank whoever prepared the meal. Appreciation and help go a long way.

## **What do you get out of these efforts?**

If you can have a calm, quiet dinnertime one night a week, you'll be starting a new family tradition. Don't fret if one week slips by and it doesn't happen. Just try hard to go back to your new routine the next week.

Family dinners can help you all feel more connected. Eating together and sharing your stories gives you all nourishment — of body and mind.

# Rethinking your caregiving tasks

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Millions of Americans care for loved ones who are aging, sick or disabled. They may shop and cook for them, pay bills, do chores, take them to doctors' visits, help them with personal care and more.

## Caregiving has rewards... but it's also hard work

Many caregivers leave their paying jobs at 5:00 each day — to go to their unpaid jobs helping loved ones. It can be a tough schedule for caregivers and their families.

## Reassess from time to time

Caregivers need to reassess what they're doing every few months. They need to ask themselves:

- **Am I doing things that my loved one can do for himself or herself?** You start out taking on responsibilities and soon they're just part of your routine. But what if your loved one can take back some tasks?

Caregivers shouldn't do things their loved ones can do on their own. Sure, those tasks may not get done as quickly or expertly as you do them. But think how good it is for care recipients to feel they can do more for themselves.

- **Do I need to ask for help?** Caregiving can be exhausting. At times, your own happiness and health may suffer. You need to know when to ask for help.

There are national, community and private organizations that help with caregiving. Some can provide aides, home-delivered meals, rides to doctors, banks and supermarkets. Call your town Health Department, local Area Agency on

Aging or visit [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org) for more information on services, costs and availability.

Also, you know those friends who say "call me when you need help"? Do you hesitate to ask? Do you dismiss the offers as vague or insincere?

People may be happy to help if you let them know your needs. Try to be specific:

- "Can you please pick up some bread and milk for my Dad?"
- "Can you stay with my Mom for an hour so I can go to the gym?"

- **Should I expect my out-of-town siblings to help?**

Caregivers often think relatives who live far away can't help. That can cause resentment. Plus, it's not true.

Again, you may need to speak up. Try to be specific:

- "Can you please chip in on a home health aide for Dad so I can get some relief?"
- "Can you call Mom to check on her on Wednesday nights so I can go to yoga then?"
- "Can you come for a weekend to watch Mom so I can get away for a few days?"

## Respect your own needs

Caregiving can be a chance to give back to parents and others you love. But it also takes great effort — both physical and emotional.

Remember to reassess what you're doing every so often. Ask for help when you need it. If you're a caregiver, you need to care for you, too.

# e-Thoughts - I really like “re”

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*Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.*

I really like “re”. You know, as in: redo, reconnect, revisit, recharge, reenergize, rethink, restate, review, restart, relearn and the like.

“Re” says there’s a chance to try again. The fact that I can “re” so many things helps me control:

- My need to do things perfectly the first time
- My fear of making a mistake
- My anxiety that I’ll only get one try at something

“Re” frees me up to give things my best shot and not worry that I’ll never get another opportunity.

## **Think about all the ways you can use “re” in your life**

Are there people you haven’t seen in a long time? Would you like to reconnect? Have you given up on goals you set for yourself? Would you like to recommit? Have you closed the door on new undertakings or relationships? Would you like to reopen it?

## **Get the idea?**

When you think of how many things you can “re”, you see that life is full of opportunities to go back and do it again, do it better or just give it another good try.

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