

## Treat Your Body Like a Computer

Have you ever compared your body to a computer? Both need daily care and maintenance to improve their performance and keep them from “crashing.” When your body takes longer to “start,” runs slower or receives “error” messages, put these computer trouble-shooting tips into action for a fresh start.

### **Keep Your Anti-Virus Software Up-to-Date & Running**

Practice a healthy lifestyle to make yourself less susceptible to every “bug” that comes along. Preventing an illness costs less in both money and time than getting sick.

Here are four important ways to take control of your health.

- Eat healthfully.
- Get up and get moving.
- Sleep peacefully at least 7 hours every night.
- Reduce stress in your life.

To eat healthfully, consume a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods (e.g. fish, beans, peas, nuts, lean meats, poultry and eggs). Be physically active every day to reduce risk for diseases (e.g. heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer). Adults should get two hours and 30 minutes or more a week of activity that requires moderate effort, such as brisk walking. Children and teens should get one hour or more every day.

### **Shut Down Some Programs**

Do one thing at a time. Multi-tasking may cause you to accomplish less, especially if the jobs are complex. When switching from task to task, you can't pay attention to everything around you at the same time, according to researcher Dr. Earl Miller,

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Picower professor of neuroscience. If you must multi-task, combine an easy task with one that demands more input from your system. Instead of taking phone calls, listen to music while cooking dinner. Or, watch TV while working out on the treadmill.

Physical activity is very important to your health, and there are many ways to work it into your busy schedule. If you don't have time to work out and style your hair afterwards, get an easy-care hairstyle or cover your hair with interesting headgear. Plan a casserole or stew that can cook while you take a walk or do yoga. Or, alternate workout days with cooking days. If you like to entertain, invite friends for a potluck meal rather than cook a special dinner from “scratch.”

### **Remove Unneeded Files & Programs**

Unneeded files and programs can slow down your overall performance. Drop your membership in any club or organization that no longer meets your needs or interests, and use that time to do something more meaningful.

Do a job only as thoroughly as it needs to be done. Why iron the whole shirt when only the collar will show under your sweater? Why mow the lawn just because it's Saturday, especially if the grass hasn't grown since the last time you mowed it?

### **Recharge Your Battery**

In Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*, “sharpen the saw” is Habit #7. Covey tells the story of a man in the woods trying to saw down a tree. For several hours the woodcutter saws feverishly and will not take a break to sharpen his saw. The blade becomes duller and duller, making

the job take longer than it should and reducing his productivity.

Get into the habit of taking breaks to “sharpen your saw” or “recharge your battery.” This prevents exhaustion, improves your performance and renews your body.

Achieve a balance of self-renewal in the four dimensions of your life by following these tips.

**Physical:** Eat healthful foods, reduce stress and get plenty of physical activity and sleep.

**Mental:** Stimulate your mind by writing letters, keeping a journal, reading books, planning, visualizing, working crossword puzzles, etc.

**Spiritual:** Spend time in nature, music, prayer or service to others.

**Social/Emotional:** Make meaningful connections with other people, empathize and exercise patience.

### Hit “Escape,” “Undo” or “Delete”

Give yourself the same options with your life that you have with your computer. If you change your mind about a decision, hit “escape,” “undo” or “delete.” Instead of always saying “yes” when asked to help, give one of these explanations, regardless of how busy you are.

- “I’m sorry, but I’m not available that night.”  
Or, “I have another commitment for that time.”

- “I can’t help you right now, but I could (in a half hour, next week, next month...).”
- “I can only help you for an hour, and then I have to leave.” Mean what you say and leave after an hour, even if you’re at your office.
- “I can’t do \_\_\_ (name of task) right now, but I could help with \_\_\_.” (name of a less time-consuming task)

### Reboot

Put this advice into action, seeking help from your doctor or other health care professional if necessary. After trouble-shooting your body’s personal system, consider making some permanent changes to prevent “crashing.” Get a fresh start and enjoy the benefits, including improved performance!

#### Source:

Henneman, Alice. University of Nebraska Extension, Lancaster County. Food Reflections. *Treating Your Body Like A Computer: Trouble-shooting Tips*. <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/ftdec09.shtml>

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