



# solutions

## STAY SHARP

Cultivating a Clear Mind with EAP



### SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING YOUR MIND HEALTHY AND FREE OF CLUTTER

Have you ever found yourself looking at a blank web page and were not sure what you were planning on typing in the search bar? We sometimes laugh it off as temporary memory loss, but it probably is more likely that it is simple information overload — with a little stress added in for good measure — that is keeping us from remembering our original intention.

**The mind, like the body, needs a balance of both activity and rest to keep it in good form.**

Some ideas to consider for keeping your mind in top shape:

#### 1. WATCH FOR OVERLOAD

Just knowing that you are starting to experience overload is the first step to making the necessary adjustments to keep the mind from being overwhelmed — and muddled — by too much input. Try not to have too many things on your schedule or your agenda. Realize that sometimes you cannot do it all and you need to say “no” to adding another project or activity. When possible, delegate to someone on your team that you trust to carry the ball to the goal line.

#### 2. SHARPEN YOUR TOOLS

There are also times where you need to take a moment to sharpen

your skills or perfect your process. You might feel like you are losing time, but you may actually find that you have a better and more efficient outcome afterward. Imagine if a chef just kept cutting vegetables without taking the time to sharpen her knives. Eventually, she will reach a point where the knives are not sharp enough and the work becomes increasingly more difficult. Taking the time to sharpen your skills can bring you back refreshed and with a new perspective that could allow you to be even more effective. Consider:

- Scheduling a weekly review of your process and how things are organized
- Taking a course — in person or online — to hone your skills or follow your interests
- Reading newsfeeds and journals for inspiration and best practices



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The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to you and your family at no cost.



### 3. ORGANIZE

Organizing your desk, projects, and other processes can help free up head space and avoid overload. Even something as simple as a to-do list can free your mind to work on other things. Instead of looking for your keys every morning, make sure you put them in the same spot each evening. This simple organization tactic can save one less mental gymnastic in the morning. Writing things down — rather than trying to hold them in your memory — and having things well organized can save your mind power for other things.

### 4. RELAX

Take the time to relax the body and the mind. Simply taking a 10- to 15-minute break from your computer can make a big difference. A short break from your current task allows the mind to reset, so that you can come back fresh — maybe even able to see a new angle or solution that was not readily available because of an overloaded and fatigued mind.

### 5. DO ONE THING WELL

Part of overload is the mistaken notion that if we do two or more things at once, we are saving time and being more efficient. However, recent research is supporting that this task-switching behavior takes more time and can cause more stress.

### 6. CLEAR THE MIND

Take the time to regularly allow the mind to slow down. Meditation is a good vehicle for this. Like physical exercise, the more you do it, the easier it becomes. As you go deeper into a regular meditation practice, the mind becomes more thoroughly calm. The regular practice of relaxing the mind can be a welcome respite from constant mental activity. There are a number of apps that provide guided meditations, breathing instructions, and other features to motivate you to meditate consistently.

### 7. GET SOCIAL

Social interaction can provide so many healthful fringe benefits that can help sharpen, and at times, relax the mind. These situations require you to use a number of complex processes like memory, communication, and interpretation of social cues. The complexity of these interactions can keep the mind sharp and engaged. At the same time, being with like-minded people can also help you relax the mind, body, and emotions — allowing you an opportunity to recharge.

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Find the best balance of mental activity and rest for yourself to live a healthy and enjoyable life.

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