

# CHAPTER THREE

## TODAY'S EXECUTIVE

There is no such thing as banker's hours any longer. In the past, people in "office clothes," although respected, were often teased about the lack of hours or effort that went into a full days work. The tables have turned; the average executive or businessperson puts in many hours of overtime and often works to the point of mental exhaustion. In the world of executives, there are no time clocks to punch and no one to take over on the next shift. Instead, all the deadlines rest on the shoulders of the person responsible for meeting them. These deadlines sometimes overpower the important things in life, such as family, relaxation, and mealtime, resulting in an unbalanced and overstressed human being. This is not exactly what was intended for the human race.

### **Power Lunches**

Somewhere in time, it not only became acceptable to work through lunch, but it became fashion-

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able. Power lunches, networking lunches, and lunch meetings are all too common in the work place. Our society thinks that stopping to eat a meal without distraction is simply a waste of good time. This way of thinking is social injustice to the digestive tract!

From a medical standpoint, multiple lunch meetings are unhealthy and a bad habit to fall into. The occasional meeting is ok, but getting into a daily routine of “eating while meeting” is dangerous. First, the lunch hour should be reserved for a break from the daily stress, a moment of reflection and enjoyment. It should also be a time when you can take in food, hopefully healthy, and digest it properly. In order to do so, you must chew properly and eat at a rate comparable to your digestive system. Gulping down a big lunch without an ounce of relaxation is a perfect prescription for developing digestive disorders, such as ulcers and acid reflux.

You can avoid lunch hour meetings by simply refusing to have more than one a month, or if you are extremely pressed, no more than one a week. During your crunch lunch, order light and be sure to slow down and chew properly. If you anticipate the meeting to be especially stressful, choose low fat and low carbohydrate foods (the opposite of what you will crave). Remember that you are in charge of your time and your health.

### **Travel, Travel, Travel**

According to recent United States Bureau of

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Transportation Statistics, an estimated 399 million long-distance trips in the US are related to business each year. This means nights away from home, many times cramped for hours in a hotel. If you are like most executives, this also paints a picture of a mini-bar raid for nuts and a beer during the wee hours of the night. Do yourself a favor and don't make this a habit.

Traveling for long hours, whether in a car or an airplane, decreases circulation and causes fluid retention. If you travel often, this could cause long lasting damage to your circulatory system. Keep track of the hours you have been sitting and try to exercise for at least 10 minutes for every hour that you have been sedentary. For example, if you have a four-hour flight, hit the hotel gym for at least 40 minutes to relieve tension and increase circulation. The 10:1 ratio will also help reduce fatigue common with travel, as well as reduce mental stress associated with your trip.

Technology is advancing, and the world is becoming more and more adaptive to a global work environment. Everywhere you turn, you have the option to get a little more work done. Cell phones, lap tops, temporary internet connections and more have all but turned us into robots. Do not get into the trap of "have lap-top and cell phone, will travel 24/7" or you will soon be in the business of "have coffin, will travel-one-way." Take time to see, hear, and smell your surroundings. Stop arriving and won-

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dering how you got there; instead, take time to live in the moment and for the moment whenever possible.

You may be able to mentally remove yourself from the conscious state of “work” and bring yourself back to the here and now. If this does not come easy to you, sign up for meditation classes or attend a seminar on relaxation. Learning how to shut your brain down for a few moments will keep you from reaching overload. This process, we refer to as “resetting your brain,” is quite helpful in reducing stress and clearing the mental junk from the corners of your mind. This is similar to shutting down and restarting a computer in order for it to run more efficiently.

In addition to exercise and relaxation, it is important to follow a healthy diet and drink plenty of water. Water is very important to the proper function of the body, and proper hydration is a requirement for healthy traveling. Some people find drinking bottled water to be an easier way of keeping track of their intake.

The bottom line for traveling is to take extra notice of your actions during a trip. Remember that your body is under the stress of traveling and needs a little extra attention. Business trips should not be a signal to work 14-hour days, and if your days do become long and tedious, take the time to relax and remember that you are human.

### **Juggling Act**

As much as we would all like to think that

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things are always peachy at home and at the office, it is just not reality. Chances are you are running around juggling the job, kids, and home responsibilities as best you can. Between soccer practices, piano lessons, a date with your spouse, and that report that is due—there is not much time for you. Finding a way to organize the chaos is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Each day seems to run into the next, weeks into months, months into years. Take the time to set your priorities and be loyal to them. If you are too tired to go to church with your family, stop staying up so late, or arrange your travel so that you are home from your trips earlier. If you have neglected a “date-night” with your spouse, put it on the calendar and make it a priority. Date nights are much cheaper than a divorce, and proper communication between you and your spouse is vital to a healthy relationship. Besides, you may just remember what attracted you to them in the first place. Every family should have a family calendar. These are usually quite large and find their home on the refrigerator door. Give each person a different color marker and log his or her schedule in their color. Family events should be logged in black. This will allow each person to see the “big picture” for each day. Although this seems like a simple task, it is vital to becoming organized.

**Here are a few tips on how to  
make your life easier.**

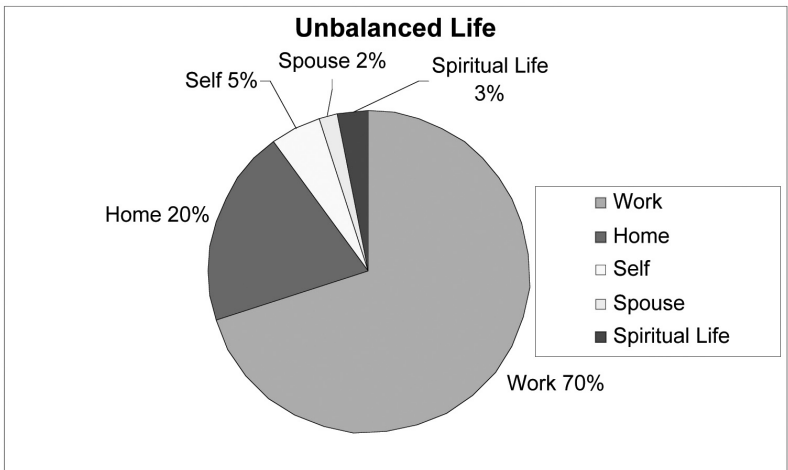
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- Join a car pool for children's sport practices
- Choose a dry cleaner that picks up and delivers
- Hire a housekeeper and have them also do laundry
- Give the kids chores!
- Schedule time for you, and ensure that your spouse has some personal time as well
- Eat at least 3 meals a week at the family table, especially if you have kids (Every Dinner is preferable, but may not fit your travel schedule)
- Make a point of saying at least one good thing to one person each day
- If you have a lawn, hire a lawn service (you can still plant flowers if you enjoy yard work)
- Meditate or spend time in prayer every day
- Always keep healthy snacks in the kitchen to avoid binge eating before bed
- Be your own personal boss (your attitude and health is your responsibility)
- A busy lifestyle is not necessarily a healthy one. Learn to say no to things that take up precious time

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that could be spent with your family and optimizing your professional duties. If you overload your plate with committees, volunteering, more projects at work, etc., you will become the Jack or Jill of all trades, but master of none. Life should be about balance, and finding the right balance is crucial to optimizing your chances for a longer life.

Unfortunately, this is how many executives would graph their time. An unbalanced life can add to stress, depression and a multitude of other health problems.



## Importance of Efficiency and Mental Capacity

In the class room of a fifth grade teacher, a sign hangs that says, "If you do not have enough time to do it right, you must have enough time to do it over;

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because if it is not done right, you WILL be doing it over.” This principle not only applies to school aged children, but also applies to almost everything in life. Therefore, it is so important that your efficiency and accuracy levels are as high as possible, because both are equally important.

Having a lifestyle, fitness, and nutritional assessment during your executive physical is a good way to summarize what you are doing right, and what you could improve upon. Your brain cannot possibly be in great shape when the rest of your body is not. Taking care of your body as a whole is an important and basic requirement for success.

Adequate sleep is defined as 8 hours of sleep per night. Some people, and you may be one of them, think that 6 hours is sufficient. While 6 hours of sleep may leave you feeling rested, it is not enough for the body to recuperate and the brain to recharge. Sleep should be a priority on your list of things to do. Recently, a man who turned 100, celebrated his birthday with his brothers. They reported that they all sleep a full night and took an hour nap each day, which they had done for as long as they could remember. It was a delight to see how sharp this *young* man was at age 100.

There are some tricks to getting a good night sleep, especially if you have a type A personality and have trouble turning your thoughts off. One trick is to make a list of what you have to do the next day, along with any important things you want to be sure to remember. The list will reassure you that tomor-

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row is another day, and things can be accomplished then. Another trick is to take a warm bath and have a light healthy snack. The bath will relax you, and the snack will keep you from waking up hungry. If you are trying to loose weight, skip the snack or have it at least 3 hours before bed.

Sleeping pills are always the last resort, and any alternative is better than getting into an addictive habit that can ultimately reduce your mental awareness. Some people laugh at the warm milk advice, but it is a fact that warm milk actually causes the brain to go into relaxation and sleep mode. Tuna and dark meat turkey also have the same sleeping aid properties.

Still can't sleep? Is your mattress comfortable and your pillow the right thickness? If the answer is no, you must invest in proper sleeping materials. Take the time to shop out the right mattress, bedding, and pillow. If you have allergies, you may want to resist feather and down materials, whereas they may cause a stuffy nose and restless sleep.

Often, people have adequate sleep hours but still feel tired and mentally drained. If you experience this, especially if you snore at night, you may need a sleep study. Sleep studies are a great way to diagnose sleep apnea, a condition in which a person stops breathing during the night. The word "apnea" is from Greek origin, and actually translates to "without breath." Sleep apnea is a serious condition and is very common, but often undiagnosed. Although this condition can strike anyone, it is most common in

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males over 40 years of age that are somewhat overweight. If left untreated, serious side effects can occur. Sleep apnea can cause high blood pressure, weight gain, heart disease, memory loss, headaches, and even impotence. Depending on the cause of sleep apnea, different treatment options exist.

### **Stress and the Executive**

All people experience stress at some level, and in varying degrees. Executives are unique in that they experience stress in moderate to high levels for extended periods. Meeting deadlines, making important decisions, and carrying the weight of a company on their shoulders only adds to the stress of other daily responsibilities. For most of us, there is no time to feel sorry for ourselves or just give in. Instead, it is a constant steady stream of an exhaustive to work, home, and back to work schedule.

Research over the past few years has led to conclusions that stress can actually have a negative effect on the body and be biologically destructive. Free radicals, chemicals found in the body, are unpaired and electrically charged. Because they are unpaired and non-selective, they choose to attack anything around them and steal the charge. This creates a chain reaction, making the once healthy molecule a free radical. When levels of stress are heightened, a process called oxidative stress worsens, and the free radicals continue targeting proteins, DNA, and other important molecules. Oxidative stress has

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been linked to premature aging, hypertension, and many other problems. The body actually begins to deteriorate if steps are not taken to prevent the process.

Prevention begins with a comprehensive physical exam that will determine your levels of stress and overall health risks. Another, and more inclusive, way to access oxidative stress is through a genetic screening for free radical scavengers. These scavengers can be higher or lower in some individuals, and make the ability to fight off free radicals either harder or easier. To find out if you are at risk for oxidative stress, a genetic test for Oxidative Stress-1 (OS-1) can check for Superoxide Dismutase (SOD). SOD is an enzyme in the body that protects against radiation and rids the body of Super Oxides. Another test, Oxidative Stress-2 (OS- 2), tests for Glutathione Peridase (GPX). GPX detoxifies hydrogen peroxide, which can have damaging effects on protein, DNA, and lipids. These tests are not readily available at all doctor's offices, you may need to go to a clinic that specializes in executive medicine or genetic testing.

