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## Soft Skills...The Ability to Listen

**L**istening well isn't just about hearing information. Listening well builds relationships. Remember this crucial role of communication and you may be motivated to do away with some of these common annoyances that sabotage relationships: 1) Distracting yourself—texting, picking up, straightening things—when someone is speaking. 2) Interrupting because you are suddenly reminded of something "more important" to say. 3) Showing impatience by responding to the speaker before information has been completely conveyed. 4) Listening only enough to grasp the nature of a problem and ignoring the speaker's need to tell the story. 5) Asking the speaker to hurry up and finish. 6) Ceasing to listen when you hear something with which you disagree, and instead starting to think of how to respond.



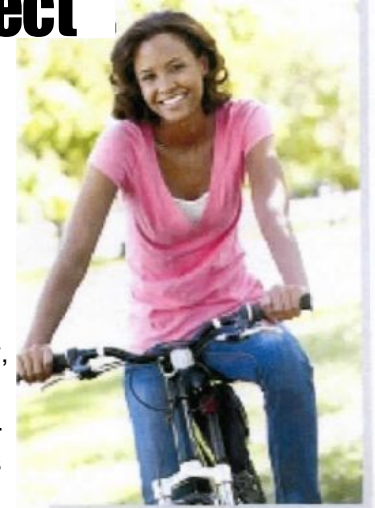
## Building More Authentic Relationships

**A**uthentic relationships are those that allow us to show our true selves. Authentic relationships at work have value because they reduce stress, allow us to feel more connected, and give our jobs meaning. It can be riskier at work to let our guard down and allow our limitations and vulnerabilities to show, so building authentic relationships must be a conscious process. Step one is do your job well. Be a team player. Getting the work done is still priority one, and it's critical to building a foundation of trust. Second, be genuine. People are attracted to those who are genuine because they project safety, honesty, acceptance, and a willingness to be vulnerable; in turn, their real personality becomes more visible. Genuine people are approachable, so growing relationships with them is easier. Third, show genuine interest in others' needs and concerns. Then, notice how the reciprocity of coworkers grows more authenticity in your relationships with them.



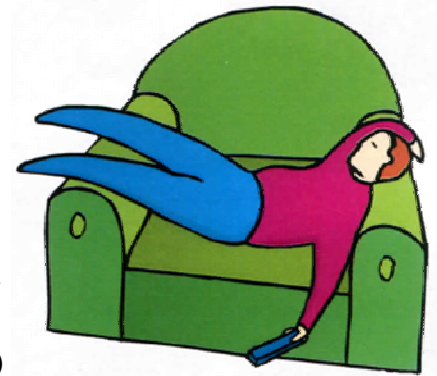
## How Attitude and Exercise Connect

**N**otice how your mood improves and personal energy increases after exercise. Also notice how proactive you feel in making decisions. Lack of exercise and sluggishness can inhibit motivation to take action on projects important to you. They can inhibit creativity, reduce productivity, and lessen your desire to resolve work problems. Once you see and feel this "exercise—attitude" connection, and observe yourself getting more done, your desire to exercise regularly may dramatically increase. Getting fit takes time, but the emotional effects of exercise can often be spotted almost immediately. Discover them today.



## Finding More Energy When You Come Home

**I**f you're flopping on the couch at the end of the day instead of tackling your to-do list, try these energizing tips: 1) Revive with 20 minutes of exercise. 2) Take a 25-minute nap. (Studies show a short snooze is perfect for improving alertness.) 3) Stave off afternoon blahs with snacks of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and protein. Avoid candy and chips. 4) Become a better night sleeper by easing into bed. Read, take a hot bath, and avoid computer screens before bedtime. Try these four strategies over the next seven days, and see if you get more stuff done.



# Increasing Your Intrinsic Motivation

**I**ntrinsic motivation is inner drive. It is your ability to do something without being prompted by an external or outside stimulus. It is also the ability to act according to the way you think instead succumbing to how you feel at the moment. Thinking you should exercise, for example, and summoning intrinsic motivation to do it instead of slouching on the couch is intrinsic motivation in action. To acquire more of this life-changing behavioral trait, follow these steps: When deciding on a goal, come up with as many "reasons" to do it as possible. This is called finding the "big why." The more reasons produced, the more urgency you'll feel. Also list positive feelings you have for your success. This will multiply the effect. Break your goal into small pieces to overcome mental resistance to this new behavior. If daily exercise requires getting off the couch to put on running shoes, write it down as a step. If the very next step is putting your hand on a door knob to leave, write it down. This highly conscious process can start you toward having better reflexes to respond immediately to goals with action steps. That old internal debate of "should I or shouldn't I" will diminish or vanish. Practice is the key to developing intrinsic motivation, but acquiring this skill will lead you to the achievements that come from it.



# How to Be More Proactive

**A**re you a proactive employee? Being proactive means acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes. Proactive employees naturally get more stuff done with fewer crises and less work strain. Not being proactive does not mean you don't act or respond to critical issues, but that you may just act later on these things. This means being prompted by a crisis that includes more stress. To be proactive: 1) Pay attention to your gut telling you to act now on what you're facing. 2) Resist the temptation to use procrastination as a way to manage work, causing you to respond daily to only what's urgent. 3) On the job, keep the big picture in mind. Doing so will cause you to feel more energized by work tasks, rather than perceive them as burdens to avoid or postpone.



# Good-to-Know Soft Skills Collaboration

**I**f you are a good workplace collaborator, you are prized by your employer because you are a goal achiever. Effective collaboration is a learned skill to



maximize productivity by teaming with others. Don't confuse collaboration with simple cooperation. Both are positive behaviors, but collaboration is proactive and heavy on taking initiative. Think of bicycle pedals. One pedal does not "cooperate" with the other. Instead, it is an equal push. This is collaboration. Enhance your ability to collaborate: 1) Know what each team member's role will be. 2) Have fast and efficient ways of communicating to address key issues. 3) Create a tradition of team members seeking immediate clarification when unsure or unclear about tactics, tasks, or goals. 4) Spot conflicts early, and resolve them before moving forward. 5) Put group goals above an individual member's personal reward for success. Failure to do so will create hidden agendas and adversely affect communication and lessen your achievements. 6) Good team collaborators are tolerant of each other's quirks and shortcomings, but when personal behaviors threaten progress, make them a group concern for problem resolution.

# Are You Addicted to Your Smartphone?

**S**martphone addiction is not a recognized mental disorder, but it gets a lot of attention in the news. One in three people can't get through a meal without looking at their phones, according to one study. Signs of problematic phone use may include



feeling anxious without your phone, constantly checking your phone without a reason, reaching for your phone when bored, losing track of time while using your phone, being distracted while with friends or watching TV because you are on your phone, and texting while driving—especially after attempts to stop the practice following a near accident or close call. Compulsive behaviors are actions people engage in repeatedly even though they wish they could stop. Smartphone addiction can be one of them. Don't stay frustrated, feeling out of control. Talk with a counselor or your EAP.