

Self-Care in Challenging Times: The New Non-Negotiable for Senior Leaders

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2. Create a Strong Healthy Body

The best way to build a strong and healthy body is through eating well and movement. Our cells are constantly regenerating. According to a Stanford University study, it only takes 7-10 years for the body to completely regenerate itself. So, any action you take today to be healthier, really does have a positive impact on your body.

Changing your habits and daily routines to create long-term health and stamina allows you to fuel your body as a leader.

Eating Well

We often think of eating well as the path to losing weight. And it certainly is. However, it serves a much greater purpose of making us healthier and stronger. Each bite we take either positively or negatively influences our regenerating cells. Our recommendation is to understand [how many calories your body needs](#) and to maximize the amount of nutrient rich foods you eat in those calories. A quick way to do that is to eat more vegetables and fruit. Here's a list of [nutrient rich foods](#).

Cutting things out and fad diets are not the way to make healthy changes, unless of course you have a medical condition or allergies that require you to eliminate certain foods. Fad diets only tend to help lose weight temporarily because they often create caloric deficits. Exercise is very important, but if you eat only fast food, while you could burn it off through exercise, you're going to be very unhealthy and feel horrible.

Remember:

- Eating well shouldn't be about deprivation, it's about choosing healthy food that makes your body feel better.
- It's better to make a few key changes that will positively impact your life, than to try to make a huge dietary overhaul that won't stick.
- You can't outwork a bad diet! Your diet is most of the battle.

Movement

Exercise is all about finding the right cadence and type of movement that you enjoy. Focus on building strength and cardiovascular health with some regularity. Each body is different. Too much exercise can be just as bad as not enough. In fact, too much high-intensity exercise is mentally and physically exhausting, wears on the body, and is not sustainable.

The key is to incorporate some movement every day. Consider these tips.

- Make movement more about wellness and less about body building and weight loss
 - ❑ Getting 10,000 steps a day has more of a positive impact on long-term health than going to the gym sporadically.

- Getting outside in nature is particularly beneficial because being in a [forest reduces stress, improves mood, lowers blood pressure, and boosts the immune system](#).
- Accept that some days will be better than others. If you can't do your full workout, do a 30-minute workout at home instead
- Try an [on-line yoga class](#)
- Take a fitness break periodically and do some sit ups, pushups, crunches or stair climbing
- Get outside and hike, snowboard, ski or snowshoe – combine being in a different space, letting go, and having fun.

According to Clemens G. Arvey, biologist, author of [THE BIOPHILIA EFFECT](#),

"Forest air, for example, contains a rich mixture of bioactive substances that trees use to communicate to each other. When we breathe in (this air), our immune system reacts with an increase of natural killer cells that protect us from viruses. Forest air also contains secondary plant compounds that support our defenses against cancer. Being in nature not only lowers the levels of stress hormones in our blood, but also boosts our own production of natural hormones that protect us from heart attack."