

# WORK • LIFE • EXCEL

## Work • Life Tips

- ▶ Summer trampolines in the backyard are fun, but to prevent severe injury or death, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission warns against permitting somersaults. Accidentally landing on the head or neck on a trampoline can still create a tremendous force. The policy position of the American Pediatrics Association is to avoid their purchase and use. Source: American Pediatrics Association.
- ▶ Reduce your stress and put customers first by 1) never arguing with customers; 2) understanding that being successful with a customer is more important than being "right"; and 3) using "active listening skills" (a little trickier) to demonstrate that a person was truly heard and their needs understood. Active listening involves voice inflection, energy, a good use of nonverbal cues, empathy, and letting the customers know you heard them, by restating their needs to assure them that you understand them.
- ▶ Sometimes managing stress isn't about you changing but changing the little things around you that add to stress. They may not be at the top of your "stressors list", but little things can add up. They can include such things as poor lighting, disturbing noises, a sticky plastic chair, too high or low a temperature (and you may barely be aware of them)—look for the controllable factors. "Whittle" away at these...and you gradually whittle away at stress.
- ▶ A key conflict management tip is to keep conflict within the group. Although it's tempting to take frustrations to best friends and colleagues outside your team, this venting diminishes motivation to bring issues to team members. You may feel better, but your group suffers from lack of conflict resolution and mistrust that can result when team issues are discussed with those who can't help your team resolve conflict.
- ▶ Have you left your children between the ages of 11 and 13 alone at home for an hour or two? What about the whole day? According to a recent study, 25 percent of parents who've done so admit they haven't spoken enough with their children about safety issues. Learn about the laws in your state concerning children left at home. Go to <http://www.latchkey-kids.com>.

## Getting Back on Your Bike

With the price of gas continuing to rise, this might be the ideal time to get back on your bicycle to save some money, for the pure enjoyment of the ride, and for a regular aerobic workout. Be sure to refresh your skills by investigating bicycling rules of the road. Also build confidence with some short-distance rides. Bikes keep changing, so take a trip to your local bike store for education on what's new. There are lots of gadgets and bikes for different conditions, and you can learn about what will work best for you. Remember to have the right air pressure in your tires and investigate the safety status of your existing bicycle, especially if you're heading off to the garage or basement to put your old bike back into service. You'll have a safer and more enjoyable experience as you spin away.



## E-Cycling: Making Your Computer a Green Machine



Computers are getting cheaper. That means it can be tempting to purchase the latest technology and dump the old. Even if it is obsolete, think twice before tossing your desktop or laptop in the trash. It contains toxic substances that are stacking up in landfills. Find out about recycling computers and other electronics in your town. Recycling electronics can divert more than 95 percent of these materials from our landfills while also helping to dramatically reduce the amount of lead and the many hazardous substances found in old PC equipment from ultimately making their way into our nation's watersheds.



## Try a Walking Meeting

If your appointment calendar is filled with meetings and you long to get some fresh air, why not combine both? Try a "walking meeting." You'll need to do some research to find the ideal 15-, 30-, or 60-minute route. Try taking a small digital recorder with you that can be clipped to your pocket or clothing. A voice-activated device for hands-free dictation can be had for about \$50. When you get back from your meeting, download the recording to your computer.

# Follow the Two-Minute Rule

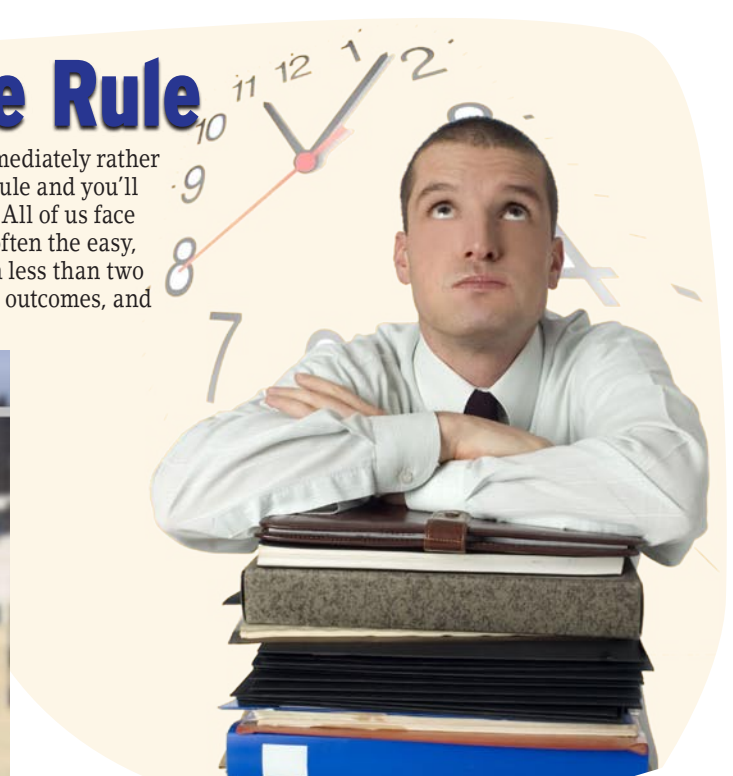
Can a task you have to do be done in two minutes or less? If so, do it immediately rather than postpone it because you don't feel like doing it now. Live by this rule and you'll accomplish more and procrastinate less—and your productivity will soar. All of us face many tasks, and life is a never-ending parade of them. Postponement is often the easy, but temporary, crisis-building fix for this stress. But can a task be done in less than two minutes? If so, act on it. Test this organizational tactic, keep track of your outcomes, and discover how much you get done.



If you're heading to an off-site team-building retreat this summer, here are a couple of tips to squeeze the most benefit from your experience. 1) Don't skip out on the planning process. You'll be more willing to participate and will gain more from activities if you and your coworkers collaborate beforehand about the off-site agenda. 2) Have a post-event meeting to discuss the lessons learned and insights gained from your retreat experience. 3) Brainstorming sessions at retreats can produce powerful results. Follow up later so you don't lose momentum, and keep the excitement going from your team-building experience. 4) After the retreat, consider having discussions 30, 60, and 90 days later to gauge progress on new initiatives.



No one likes the idea of getting older, but how you respond mentally, physically, and spiritually to aging has a tremendous impact on your quality of life. Many studies over the past decade consistently show that happiness actually increases with age. This shouldn't be surprising. With age comes wisdom, perspective, a lowering of expectations, and a tendency to be more easily content with what you have. Being proactive in living a healthful lifestyle gives you your best chance at preserving your vitality. Get more sleep, exercise regularly, eat right, and get annual checkups. Accept and adapt to your limitations. Growing older slows us down, but it doesn't mean giving up activities you love. Try moderating instead. Studies also show that optimists live longer, more satisfying lives. So, be an optimist or at least begin practicing to be one. Vow to make your first thought of the day a positive one, and read inspirational quotes and affirmations to start your day. It will work. Try new things. It will keep your mind sharp and prevent you from getting into a rut. Don't look back—stay in the creative mind. Regret is an awful and destructive emotion. If your life isn't how you imagined it would be, forgive yourself for your mistakes and move forward with what you've learned from them.



## Building Workplace Trust



How would you rate your ability to trust others at work? The ability to trust others is a powerful asset for relationship-building and productivity. If you struggle with trusting others, you might trust coworkers who over time have proved they won't let you down. But can you trust others without this trial period? Harmful life experiences in our past can make it hard to risk trusting others, but a world of opportunity can open to you if you can overcome this obstacle. Your employee assistance program or a professional counselor can help discover ways to overcome these trust-related challenges, including feeling unable to rely on others, feeling an inability to be close to other team members, feeling unsafe with others without good cause, questioning others' competence without reason, resisting taking safe risks, and finding it hard to believe what others are telling you.