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I'm sure the thought of "eating, drinking and being merry" during the busy season may seem unrealistic to most tax and accounting professionals, but there are numerous health benefits that may surprise you. During busy season, you can do several things to increase your physical and mental health, increase blood circulation, and reduce stress and fatigue.

Eating

It is very important to start your day with a nutritional breakfast.

Research has shown that eating a nutritional breakfast will increase your energy and ability to focus. Even if you start your day with a 7 a.m. appointment with a long-time client, it is still very important to start your day with a breakfast that is high in protein, such as eggs and peanut butter. Protein will last longer throughout the morning, working to decrease your hunger.

Eating a breakfast that is high in sugar will give you a short energy high along with a mid-morning decrease in energy and ability to focus. Mid-morning and in the afternoon, you should give yourself an instant energy boost by nibbling on a handful of almonds or cashews. Almonds and cashews are high in magnesium, which helps prevent fatigue.

Your schedule may be packed with client prep time and interaction with clients. It is still very beneficial to take time to eat a nutritional lunch to give your body fuel and your mind a short break. You should avoid snacks or beverages that are high in sugar and caffeine.

Drinking

We've all heard how important it is to drink at least eight glasses of water each day, but how many of us actually do that?

During busy and stressful times, it is even more important to make sure we

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The short break from work and the bottle of water will help re-energize you and increase your ability to concentrate and continue working.

Here are some helpful tips to help ensure you drink enough water:

- You are naturally thirsty in the morning. Help “jump start” your day by drinking a full glass of water first thing in the morning.
- Drink warm water if you are cold instead of coffee or tea, which have caffeine. Caffeine dehydrates your body.
- If you drink coffee, tea or sodas with caffeine, you will need to drink a few extra glasses of water to make up for the water that these diuretic beverages remove from your body.
- Make it a habit to take a few swallows of water every time you open a client file in your tax prep software. Don't wait until you are thirsty to have a drink, you are already dehydrated if you feel thirsty. Keeping a full water bottle within reach at your desk will help remind you to drink throughout the day.

Being Merry

We have all heard the saying “Laughter is the best medicine.” Have you ever sat with friends or watched a comedy and laughed so hard you really felt refreshed?

When we laugh, our blood vessels dilate due to the release of the protective chemical nitric oxide. Laughter increases our blood circulation, eases muscle tension, reduces stress hormones and boosts our immune system. The Fisher Institute

has identified the following additional benefits of laughing:

- Improved physical health
- Improved mental health

- Improved emotional health

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Find what makes you laugh whether it is visiting with friends, watching a comedy, or clipping a cartoon and placing it where you can see it during the day. Help your fellow workers relieve stress by sharing a cartoon, funny story or taking time to briefly visit between clients. Take time to laugh!

You should also listen to music when you can. Researchers for Seattle University determined that listening to the rhythms in music relaxes blood vessels and assists in the production of stress hormones. Music can be very calming and can also reduce distractions from office noise, allowing you to focus and concentrate on the work at hand. Listening to soothing classical music may actually help when trying out those deferred tax credit carry forwards!

Office Exercises

During busy season, many hours are spent at our desks. Here are a few exercises you can do that involve stretching and strengthening your body, all within the comfort of your office chair. All you need is a chair and a full water bottle or light to medium weight dumbbell.

Wrist Stretch: Extend your arm in front, palm up and grab the fingers with the other hand. Gently pull the fingers towards you to stretch the forearm, holding for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

Wrist and Forearm: Press hands together in front of your chest, elbows bent and parallel to the floor. Gently bend wrists to the right and left for 10 repetitions.

Lower Back Stretch: Sit tall and place the left arm behind left hip. Gently twist to the left, using the right hand to deepen the stretch, holding for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

Bicep Curl: Hold the water bottle in your right hand and,

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repetition).

Abdominal Twists: Hold the water bottle at chest level and, keeping your knees and hips forward, gently twist to the left as far as you comfortably can, feeling the abdominal muscles contract. Twist back to the center, and move to the right for a total of 10 repetitions. As you approach busy season, remember the importance of “eating, drinking and being merry.”

It's well within your ability.

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