

CLEAN *Energy* *Policy*

Eavesdrop on any given group of women these days, and you may hear “I’m so tired” even before “I’m not eating gluten/sugar/nightshades.” “Technology is keeping our brains in a constant state of fatigue,” says Sandra Bond Chapman, a cognitive neuroscientist and the founder of the Center for BrainHealth in Dallas. Yes, the needy little anchor in your hand is an energy-sucking vortex. Considering that about 76 percent of people feel tired most days of the week (according to one survey by the Virgin Pulse Institute), you probably already knew that. The good news is that there are ways to navigate through all that fog. And the even better news is that none of them involve pledging neo-Luddism. Because then how would you Google that? **By Chloe Metzger**

If you can't go for a run on the sand (or a Karlie Kloss sprint), just look at a photograph of a beach—or any outdoor scene. Research suggests that's enough to pump your energy.



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1 MEDITATE. (BUT NOT THAT WAY.)

You might think you know how to focus—and you might be wrong. “Constant distractions rob us of our mental energy,” says Chapman, who notes that a tired mind can make the body feel like shutting down. Texts, iPhones, YouTube, tweeting, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*—they all conspire to “keep our brains on high alert,” says Chapman. This doesn’t have to be a dire scenario, though: “Our brains reboot very quickly. Just 30 minutes without mental stimulation will allow your brain to focus and overcome fatigue.” If you don’t have a cozy, snugly dark cave to crawl into, Chapman suggests creating a bubble of quiet. For 30 minutes, toggle your phone to airplane mode, put on your biggest pair of noise-muffling headphones (no music, though—your brain has to work to cancel out even white noise), turn off your computer (or at least the pop-up notifications), and stop talking. “We have primed our brains to constantly be anticipating the next interruption, so we have become addicted to those intrusions,” says Chapman. “Once you eliminate the interruptions, even through small changes, your brain will reach a calmer state and deeper level of focus in as little as 15 minutes.”

2 EMBRACE THE GREAT OUTDOORS.

Or even the mild to mediocre outdoors. The simple act of being outside will give you more energy, according to a study from the University of Rochester, which found that being in nature (there has to be a tree or two involved) for just 20 minutes a day made participants feel more alive. Better yet, break a sweat. A review of relevant studies done by the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry in England found that compared to working out inside, increasing your heart rate while you’re outside can make you feel more energetic. Of course, January is a cold and dreary bummer of a month for many of us, but your photo album can do the trick if a nor’easter is blowing through. Look at snapshots of your trip to Sayulita—research indicates that even seeing pictures of nature can increase energy levels.

3 SNACK WELL.

You have a case of 3 P.M. fatigue; you eat a Super Muscle Monster XXXL Power Protein Bar and feel superior to all the Cheetos eaters of the world—that is, until you’re nodding off at your desk. “The biggest snacking mistake I see is fueling up with protein bars,” says

Adina Smarandache, an internist at Scripps Coastal Medical Center in San Diego. “A lot of bars and prepackaged meals are loaded with highly concentrated simple sugars without good fats and fiber, so they spike your insulin, drop your blood-sugar level, and leave you feeling weak and tired within 30 minutes.” But not all bars are akin to Ambien. Make sure that whatever snack bar you stash in your bag passes three tests: 1) Your grandmother would recognize all the ingredients. 2) Grams of sugar have to be in the single digits. 3) Grams of fiber should be in the double digits. (NuGo Fiber d’Lish bars are a good place to start.)

4 GET IN BED BY 10:30 P.M.

Yes, when he was president, Bill Clinton famously slept only four hours a night. Let it go. Nobody else can—or should—do that. Even if you think you’ve somehow cracked the code on circadian rhythms and can bring your A game to work after a mere five hours between the sheets, a bunch of scientists would like to respectfully disagree. A panel of over a dozen sleep experts reviewed previous sleep studies and “agreed that seven hours is the recommended minimum an adult needs for optimal cognitive, emotional, and physical health,” says Orfeu Buxton, an associate professor of biobehavioral health at Pennsylvania State University, scaring us into an earlier bedtime. Basically, seven hours is no longer a lofty goal—it’s a necessity. To help your sleep schedule get on track painlessly, make it gradual: Buxton recommends moving up your bedtime by ten-minute increments each night until you hit the seven-hour mark.

5 LOOK AWAY.

Whether you know it or not, and we’re betting you don’t, most of us blink about 18 times a minute. But when you’re sitting in front of a computer, you blink almost half as frequently, resulting in a case of dry, strained zombie eyes. “Staring at a computer screen for too long can cause eye fatigue, which eventually can cause headaches, dizziness, and overall exhaustion,” says Smarandache. If your job requires you to, you know, keep your eyes open and generally function, your best bet is to live by a rule of 20: Every 20 minutes, stare at a spot 20 feet away for 20 seconds (get in the habit by setting an alarm on your phone if you won’t remember). Boom: refreshed eyes, and therefore, body. And while you’re at it, make sure your computer screen is no closer than 20 inches from your face—to gauge the measurement, that’s about two paper lengths away—to help prevent eye strain, suggests the Occupational Safety & Health Administration.



PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

Just being outside in nature (à la Naomi Campbell) can invigorate you.

6 THROW SOME SHADE AT THE BREAD BASKET.

We have every reason to believe that early man had a ton of energy. And as much as you may want to roll your eyes at your Whole30 friends blowing up your Instagram feed, we bet they don't get as tired as you do. "There are no secret tricks or magic here. It's just simple math: Protein plus healthy carbs, like whole grains, plus healthy fats equals energy," says Holly Phillips, the author of *The Exhaustion Breakthrough* (Rodale). If nothing else, you can do a world of good just by redoing your breakfast-food rotation. Eggs, whole-grain waffles, oatmeal, whole-grain toast with smoked fish, apples, and pears will all keep your energy level up during the day. (And if you really need to hear it: No more bagels. They are as bad for your energy as they are wonderful and glorious and delicious. Sorry.)

7 PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR THIRST.

If you get even moderately dehydrated, you could find that your energy level (not to mention your mood) takes a hit, according to a study in *The Journal of Nutrition*. That's not to say you need to go guzzle a pitcher of water right this second. In fact, according to experts, staying on top of your hydration is really pretty simple: We should be drinking water when—wait for it—we're thirsty. The body is actually pretty good at judging when we're low on water; we're just bad at listening to it. Instead of worrying about ounces and counting water bottles, watch your urine. If the color is darker than pale straw, you may need to drink more, says Phillips. (One caveat: Certain medications, supplements, and foods, such as asparagus, beets, and rhubarb, can change its color.)

8 DRINK COFFEE AT EXACTLY 10:30 A.M. EVERY DAY.

Who knew? Levels of the hormone cortisol peak between 8 A.M. and 9 A.M., which means your morning energy does, too. Research suggests that if you drink coffee during this peak hour, the caffeine's magical, energy-boosting, mood-lifting effects will be a whole lot weaker than if you wait for your cortisol levels drop before taking a sip. Time your coffee breaks according to your body's cortisol schedule—for most people, post-peak is sometime between 9:30 A.M. and 11:30 A.M. That perfectly timed Americano will give you the biggest bang for your caffeine jolt.

9 CUE UP YOUR BEST SPOTIFY PLAYLIST.

Ever since high-school sports teams discovered Queen's "We Will Rock You," mankind has known that music has motivating powers. And a study from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, found that audience participation is key: Singing and tapping their feet or fingers along to a song significantly increased energy levels and decreased fatigue in subjects. If midday karaoke is unrealistic, put on Vivaldi's "Spring" concerto at your desk—that piece has been found to boost mental alertness. ♦

BEAUTY SCHOOL: For tips on how to get more energy in a hurry, turn to page 97.