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Massage Envy Magazine

PLUS

Learn how  
social media  
can help  
your health

MassageEnvy.com | FALL 2009

This alternative  
therapy may be  
just what the  
doctor ordered

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## Rev Up Your Energy

When your gas gauge in your car says empty, it's time to fill up. Unfortunately, your body doesn't have the same type of indicator to tell you when it's time to stop and refuel. So, when your energy levels start to dip, pick one of these simple ways to ensure you're working on a full tank:

### Get on your feet.

Studies have shown that brisk 10-minute walks can improve your energy for more than two hours.

**Light a candle.** Rejuvenate with naturally energizing scents like lemon or ginger.

**Get a massage.** Regular sessions can help you relax and recharge.

**Have a snack.** Healthy snacks low in sugar, like nuts or low-fat cheese, can help keep your energy stable.



## Mind Games

You know it's healthy to keep your body in shape, but did you know it's just as essential to exercise your mind?

A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that regular brain exercises help combat memory loss. Seniors who participated in the study experienced reduced cognitive decline more than five years after the brain training.

But don't worry—you don't need to enroll in brain boot camp to get mentally fit. Pick one—or all—of these enjoyable games and get ready to feel the brain burn:

**Make a list, but don't check it twice.** Prepare your grocery list. An hour later, try to recall the information without peeking.

**Parlez vous français?** The different sounds and memorization requirements of learning a foreign language stimulate your brain.

**Solve a Sudoku.** This mind game is like no other—it requires you to use neural pathways more advanced than modern computers.

**Sauté or stir-fry.** Join a cooking class or explore new recipes. All your senses are stimulated during this delicious activity.

**Find 5 down.** Crossword puzzles are a great way to get your mind moving and improve your vocabulary. Start out with some easy ones before you graduate to *The New York Times'* puzzle.

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## Party of One

In this overconnected world, solitude is rare. So break away from the pack and try one of these solo activities:

>> If you've been hesitant to dine solo before, start slowly. Bring a book or magazine and pick a casual location.



>> Pick up in-season fruits and a few artisan cheeses from your local market, grab a blanket and venture out to the park or beach. Enjoy people-watching while noshing on your delicious snacks.

>> Can't find anyone to join you for that cheesy romantic comedy you're craving? Check out a matinee movie alone—you aren't supposed to chit chat during a movie anyway!

## Put Your Best Face Forward

Looking to achieve a healthy glow? A well-rounded skin regimen is the answer. Howard Murad, M.D., associate clinical professor of medicine at UCLA and founder of Murad Inc., who has been a leader in skin care for the past two decades, says you can have a healthy complexion in four easy steps:

**Cleanse and tone.** "Focus on cleaning skin in the evening to remove dirt that has accumulated throughout the day," Dr. Murad says. A toner completes the cleansing process and prepares the skin for moisturizing.

**Treat and repair.** Address your personal needs during this step. If you have acne, use a treatment with retinol. To fight wrinkles, pick an anti-aging serum that is right for you.

**Moisturize and protect.** Replenish your skin with a

moisturizer and don't forget a sunscreen. Dr. Murad recommends one with SPF 15 or higher.

**Treating the whole body.** Dr. Murad says that nothing complements a skin care routine better than a healthy diet and lifestyle:

"What is healthy for your body is also healthy for your skin.

I encourage people to apply the Science of Cellular Water™ as the basis for building better health from the cellular level up. Take an inclusive approach to health that addresses your needs topically through skin care, internally through diet and supplements, and emotionally through self-care in the form of massage, facials, meditation and interpersonal connection."

**Massage Envy has partnered with Murad Inc. to bring signature facial treatments to some locations.**



## Q & Ahhh

Massage Envy experts answer your questions



### Q: What benefits does massage offer women during pregnancy?

**A:** Massage therapy is a wonderful complementary choice for prenatal care. It is a healthy way to reduce stress and promote general well-being. Massage relieves many of the normal discomforts experienced during pregnancy, such as backaches, stiff neck, leg cramps, headaches and edema (or swelling). In addition, massage reduces stress on weight-bearing joints, increases blood and lymph circulation, helps to relax nervous tension, which aids in better sleep, and can help relieve depression or anxiety caused by hormonal changes.

At Massage Envy, our therapists will place all prenatal clients in side-lying positioning. This positioning alleviates the extra strain on the lower back and pelvic areas when the pressure of massage techniques are applied. Extra strain in these areas can cause unnecessary back pain and discomfort. During the first trimester, it is also acceptable for clients to lie on their backs with a slight elevation under one hip.—C.G. Funk, *Licensed Massage Therapist and Vice President of Industry Relations and Product Development for Massage Envy*

Do you have a question for our experts about massage therapy? Contact [info@MassageEnvy.com](mailto:info@MassageEnvy.com). Type "Ask CG" in the subject line.



## What's Your Story?

Tell us how massage improves your life, and you could be featured in our next issue. Simply send an e-mail to [memberstories@MassageEnvy.com](mailto:memberstories@MassageEnvy.com) with your full name, phone number and a brief description of how you benefit from being a Massage Envy member. We'll take it from there.

# Play Ball!

Massage has become this 17-year-old athlete's secret weapon on the diamond

**RYAN DEROSA THROWS**, bats and catches. He plays pitcher, infield and outfield. The 17-year-old plays for his high school team and a traveling team. He's been chosen to play for two national teams. When he's not playing baseball, he's training for baseball season.

But two years ago, DeRosa added something new to his routine that changed everything. He became a member of Massage Envy in Glen Ellyn, Ill.

"My massage therapist, Jon, has been my secret weapon," DeRosa says. "I felt a lot of shoulder pain. I had some issues with my throwing arm. My legs were sore, and I was having problems with my knees and hips."

After his first massage, he immediately noticed the difference. "I felt funny, because my body felt right."

His mother, Amy, thinks back to Ryan's first massage. "I remember him telling me, 'I feel like I'm 6 again!'" she says.

Today, DeRosa gets a sports massage every week during the season to help him perform his best.

"It relaxes me physically and mentally," he says. "My best pitching performances come the day after a massage—without a doubt."

But the experience has been about more than relieving pain.

"What I really like about having Jon is that in the past two years, he's not only helped my problems physically," he says. "I've also learned so much about my body."

When he discusses his soreness, his therapist explains what the muscle is. "And he'll tell me about the things I can do before and after games and during the week to strengthen and help stretch those muscles out," he says.

DeRosa has been playing baseball since he was 3, and with just one more year remaining in his high school career, he aspires to play in college. And after that? Who knows. But one thing he does know is that massage plays a part in his future.

"I couldn't imagine not having massage as part of my plan," he says.





Massage for the Cure goes Nationwide

On Sept. 15, nearly 600 Massage Envy clinics across the country will unite in a goal to raise \$500,000 for Massage for the Cure, an event that so far has raised more than \$800,000 to fight breast cancer. Beginning Aug. 15, you can contact your local clinic to schedule a one-hour massage session for only \$35. Massage Envy will then donate \$10 of that massage to this wonderful cause. Additionally, Susan G. Komen for the Cure will allow any money raised by our clinics to stay with your local affiliate—donations generated and received by your clinic will benefit your community 100 percent. Visit [massageenvy.com](http://massageenvy.com) for more information.



# Eating to Beat Breast Cancer

You are what you eat, so choose wisely

**YOU'VE HEARD OF SOME FOODS** that may increase your risk of getting breast cancer—it has been estimated that diet is partly responsible for 30 to 40 percent of all cancers—but how about foods that might *decrease* the risk?

Groups such as the American Cancer Society and Susan G. Komen for the Cure don't endorse specific foods as likely to prevent or cure cancer. Instead, they recommend a healthy, balanced diet with at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day to help prevent obesity, since women who gain weight after menopause are at a higher risk for breast cancer.

Another reason: With so many fruits, vegetables and other foods showing promise in the fight against cancer, you'll need to graze far and wide to maximize the possible benefits. Here are few foods to keep piling on your plate:

- + The vitamin A and carotenoids in dark yellow vegetables may lower the risk of cancer in epithelial cells, which are the site of 90 percent of cancers, including breast cancer. The best-known carotenoid, beta carotene, is probably most associated with carrots, but don't forget about sweet potatoes and squashes. And fall is the perfect time to find fresh pumpkins!
- + A study presented at the 2009 meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research suggests that the omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants in walnuts can reduce the risk of breast cancer and slow the growth of tumors that do develop.
- + Scientists at the University of California, Santa Barbara report that broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and other cruciferous vegetables contain cancer-preventive compounds called isothiocyanates that inhibit tumor cells from developing and multiplying.—By Sam Mittelsteadt



# The Gym Misses You

Making time to work out means making health a priority

**A LOT OF PEOPLE** default to the I'm-just-too-busy excuse to justify the fact they can't seem to find the time to workout.

Exercise physiologist Richard Cotton laughs at this notion. "Yeah, I'm one of them," he confesses.

As the national director of certification for the American College of Sports Medicine, you'd think Cotton would be the last person to admit such a crime, but he's not afraid to own up to his faults.

"The bottom line is, it's not that people don't have the time, it's that they don't take the time," he says. Admitting this is the first step to recovery. The next step is to stop making excuses, and start making health a priority in your life.

### Exercise Does More Than Just a Body Good

"You should start with a values clarification," says Cotton. "Where do your values lie? What's important to you? People typically list health, family, career and community."

So, says Cotton, consider the fact that stress stands in the way of your productivity at work, and exercise can relieve that stress. Exercise can also help ensure you'll see your children and their children grow up.

"Exercise directly impacts many of these priorities people list," he says.

### Finding the Time

How can one get past that busy-life barrier? By carving time out in small increments during the week, rather than putting the pressure on to find two-hour blocks of time to spare.

You may want to consider trying the Exercise Time Finder tool at [myexerciseplan.com/assessment](http://myexerciseplan.com/assessment). This free, simple chart will help you map out your schedule in hour-blocks of time, showing you exactly where your available exercise time exists.

And, as you stare at the running shoes that you haven't taken out of their box yet, keep these tips in mind for finding the time to get fit:

>> **Wednesdays and weekends.** Make it your goal to exercise on these three days. That means you only have to allot one of your busy workdays to hit the gym.

>> **20 minutes.** Start out striving for just under a half-hour of exercise a day. "In 20 minutes, you can do a lot," says Cotton.

>> **Morning mojo.** "Ideally, get your exercise in first thing in the morning and then it's out of the way," he says.

>> **Never have more than two days off at a time.** So, you fall off the wagon for a couple of days—don't give up. Get back on that treadmill on day 3, advises Cotton, or you'll begin to lose the momentum you've been building up.

>> **Lunch on the go.** For working people, lunchtime is a great time to exercise. If your gym is close, you can get in a good, 20-minute workout. If it's not, change shoes and take a walk outside.

### An Affordable Personal Trainer

Sometimes, we need another person to help us get back on track with our exercise plan. A new website—[skinnymenow.com](http://skinnymenow.com)—might just be the answer. Personal trainer to the stars Marc Montemerlo can be your personal trainer. And the beauty of it is, you never even have to leave your house. Montemerlo offers his secrets to getting fit through

online videos, interactive tools, an online eating plan and daily e-mails. A member of the American Fitness Association of America and the American Council on Exercise, Montemerlo's program promises a transformed body in just four weeks.

### Rewards That Won't Derail Your Success

Don't forget, keeping up with a consistent workout routine isn't easy, and you should give yourself kudos for staying focused. But instead of rewarding yourself with that tub of chocolate ice cream, go for something that won't backtrack your plan, such as a massage. Massage can actually help maintain your flexibility by stimulating the production and retention of the body's natural lubricants between connective tissue fibers, making that next workout even easier.

"Massage is definitely a positive, self-care activity," says Cotton. "A massage can actually support your overall lifestyle habits." —By *Amanda Myers*



### What Could Be Easier?

According to [healthcalculators.org](http://healthcalculators.org), simply sitting—or, in the case of a massage, lying—quietly for 60 minutes will allow a 150-pound person to burn 80 calories.

### Challenge Yourself

Instead of hopping in your car to head out to your next Massage Envy appointment, leave yourself a little extra time and choose one of these alternate ways to get there. You'll burn calories and then reward yourself with some much-deserved pampering.

Walking briskly for 30 minutes: 198 calories

Bicycling on a flat surface for 30 minutes: 220 calories

Jogging for 30 minutes: 337 calories

Visit [massageenvy.com](http://massageenvy.com) to find all the locations in your area.

Source: [caloriecontrol.org](http://caloriecontrol.org). Calories burned based on a 150-pound person.



# Crock-Full of Goodness

Slow cooking gets a nutrition-makeover for healthier, delicious, hassle-free meals

**GUESS WHICH '70S FAD** is back? Nope, not hot pants or lava lamps. It's the slow cooker, aka the Crock-Pot®, and this time around there's a delicious twist. Healthy ingredients, like low-sodium broth, fresh veggies, wholesome beans and rich spices replace yesteryear's high-fat, high-sodium recipes, which often began with canned, calorie-laden, creamed soup. Mix in budget-friendly and timesaving benefits and slow is the way to go this fall.

## A Vitamin Bath

Similar to braising, slow cookers produce a low, steady, moist heat for several hours, which roughly translates to 300 degrees for four hours when the electric countertop appliance is set on high and 200 degrees for 10 hours on low. And if you put wholesome food in the pot, that's what comes out—especially the vitamin- and mineral-packed natural juice.

Sarah Krieger, R.D., MPH, LD/N, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association, explains: "Food loses vitamins and minerals through heat, oxygen and water. Since slow cookers require some sort of heated liquid, that's where a lot of vitamins and minerals go."

And that's where nutrients stay, since a slow cooker's tightly sealed lid prevents evaporation. As Krieger points out, "Slow cookers are great for soups, stews and casseroles because you eat everything, including the vitamin-charged liquid."

Though best known for beef- and chicken-based recipes, slow cookers are also great for meatless meals. "This is something we should all do at least twice a week—to lower risk of heart disease, certain cancers and to get nutrients only in vegetables," Krieger stresses.

Recipe favorites among vegetarians and carnivores alike include vegetable or minestrone soup and tomato sauce to dress up pasta. An avid slow cooker herself, Krieger reports "awesome" results with bean-based recipes like vegetarian chili.

### Perfect Cents

When it comes to money matters, slow cookers give you a twofer. First, they're ideal for cheaper beef cuts that are generally tasty but tough, such as chuck roasts, shoulder cuts or bottom-round roasts. Why? "The low, slow, moist-heat cooking process breaks down tough muscle fiber and connective tissue in less-expensive cuts," says Mary Bartz, spokeswoman for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. "The result is wonderfully tender—and all natural."

Slow cookers are also an economical alternative to pricey takeout—without forfeiting an ounce of convenience. Dinner is waiting at day's end, and no Styrofoam container necessary.

### Time on your Side

The slow cooker has forever been the busy cook's time saver, since there's no human intervention after loading it up. In fact, lifting the lid to peek or stir disturbs the cooking process. That means you prepare in the morning, let everything simmer as you go about your day, and come home to a wholesome dinner!

If time permits, newer slow cooker recipes introduce flavor layers with just a little extra effort. For example, browning beef first takes about 10 minutes at the front end but adds rich color, boosts flavor and reduces fat. In addition, certain ingredients fare better when added during the final 30 minutes, including fresh herbs, tender vegetables like tomatoes or zucchini, seafood and fiery spices like cayenne pepper or hot sauce.

Now how will you fill up your time normally spent in the kitchen? That's up to you. A healing massage might be nice, capped off with a warm, nourishing bowl of soup that's waiting in your slow cooker. —By Donna Shryer

### Slow-Cooking Tips

*Need a refresher course on slow-cooking basics?*

*Try these:*

- + Ground meats do better when browned before going in the pot.*
- + Dried herbs respond best to slow cooking, or add fresh spices during the last 30 minutes.*
- + Resist peeking, unless the recipe instructs otherwise, since lifting the lid breaks the natural vacuum seal and affects cooking time.*
- + Fill the pot no less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  full, to prevent burning, and no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  full, to ensure even cooking.*
- + Layer bigger ingredients or anything that requires more cooking time on the bottom.*
- + When you see condensation under the glass lid, that means everything is working right.*
- + To adjust timing, one hour on high generally equals two hours on low.*
- + Chop ingredients to similar sizes for even cooking.*
- + To thicken juices and concentrate flavors, remove the lid during the last 30 minutes and set your appliance to high.*



## Slow-Cooker Pumpkin Pie

Autumn is infused with orange tones—from bronze fall foliage to glowing jack-o-lanterns to home-made pumpkin pie. Of course, pies take time, and not everyone can master the fine art of a light, flaky crust. Here's a super-simple, crustless pumpkin pie recipe that's custom made for your slow cooker—and the sweet, spicy taste will please even the fussiest pastry chef.

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: high for 3 to 4 hours; low for 6 to 7 hours

Servings: 6

### Ingredients:

- 1 15-oz. can solid-pack pumpkin
- 1 12-oz. can evaporated milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$  c. white sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. biscuit mix
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- Whipped topping and ice cream, optional

### Directions:

Spray a 4-quart slow cooker with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

Place pumpkin in a bowl and stir until creamy. Gradually stir in evaporated milk. Add remaining ingredients and mix until blended and smooth. Pour batter into prepared slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 4 hours or 6 to 7 hours on low. Check halfway through. Like the traditional version, your crustless pumpkin pie is done when a knife inserted in center comes out clean. Spoon cooled dessert into glasses and top with whipped topping, ice cream or both!



# A Healing Touch

BY SHELLEY FLANNERY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
JEFF NEWTON

How one alternative therapy could be the solution for symptom-free success

**YOU'VE HEARD THE SAYING,** “Take two aspirin and call me in the morning.” But wouldn’t a more pleasant prescription be, “Have a *massage* and call me in the morning”? While massage may never replace traditional medicine, it has been found to be an effective complement to western treatment.

“Back when I was in massage school in the ’80s, the role of massage in public health practically didn’t exist. It was for people with a little money to burn,” says Ruth Werner, a licensed massage practitioner who is nationally certified in therapeutic massage and bodywork and author of *A Massage*

*Therapist’s Guide to Pathology*. “Within a very short period of time, people were talking about massage for health reasons. In 2009, the number of people using massage in healthcare has skyrocketed.”

And it’s not just stress and back pain being treated. Massage has been linked to the reduction or management of symptoms associated with many conditions. Here are just a few.

## **Fibromyalgia**

Scientists aren’t sure what causes fibromyalgia, a syndrome characterized by chronic pain, sleep



## Do Tell

Your massage therapist wants to help you feel better and the only way he or she can do that is if you disclose information about any ailments you have. The American Massage Therapy Association recommends telling your therapist if:

- + You're taking anti-inflammatory medications.
- + You have a circulatory disorder, heart problems, diabetes, blood clots or varicose veins.
- + You have been experiencing fever or other symptoms of infectious disease, bacterial infections or skin rashes.
- + You are pregnant.
- + You've recently had accidents, surgery or major illnesses.

When pain occurs inside the joints, it's natural for the body to want to protect itself. "Muscles around the affected joints tend to get tight in an effort to 'splint' the area, which actually only adds to the pain and reduces range of motion," Werner says. "Massage isn't going to fix arthritis, but it will help with the muscle pain and stiffness."

### Stress

A certain amount of stress is expected and even necessary, according to the American Institute of Stress. It can cause you to be alert, push you to do your best and even increase productivity. But too much stress can do the opposite.

"There is quite a bit of research out there about massage and the emotional component," says Diana Thompson, a licensed massage practitioner and president of the Massage Therapy Foundation. "In school, we separate the mind and body, but literature shows that massage may be really good at helping with stress and anxiety."

### TMJ

Temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ) causes pain and limited mobility in the jaw, and affects more than 10 million people in the United States, according to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. While not all causes are known, some include injury to the jaw, arthritis, certain dental procedures, infection, autoimmune disease, hormones and genetics.

A study published in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* in 2007 found a link between massage and the reduction of some TMJ-related symptoms, including pain, decreased mobility and jaw clicking. Of course, not all treatment works for everyone. The TMJ Association encourages patients to find out what works best for them. ❁

disturbances, fatigue and psychological distress, according to the National Fibromyalgia Association. Another symptom associated with fibromyalgia is having areas of the body that cause pain when touched even lightly. So, it's a wonder that massage is even possible—let alone helpful. But it is.

"No one has really answered how massage helps fibromyalgia," Werner says. "But it's been found to increase the amount of time a person has in stage 3 and stage 4 sleep, which is difficult to get to with fibromyalgia. It's also possible that massage 'works out' some of the pain-processing chemicals."

### Osteoarthritis

Nearly 27 million Americans have osteoarthritis, making it one of the most common forms of arthritis. Also known as wear-and-tear arthritis, it's caused by the breakdown of cartilage, the tissue between bones that allows joints to move easily and painlessly.

# A Balancing Act

All work and no play? Even in today's topsy-turvy world, you can still find your equilibrium

BY AMY LYNN SMITH

**D**

**DURING A RECENT ROUTINE PHYSICAL**, as the nurse was checking my blood pressure I said, "It's probably higher than it should be because I'm kind of stressed out." While she squeezed the cuff, I tried not to think about the work waiting at my desk, my responsibilities at home and the huge project I'm involved in at my local community theater.

The nurse smiled at me sympathetically and replied, "Everyone is feeling that way these days."

She's absolutely right, of course. Susan Bartell, Psy.D., a New York-based psychologist and author specializing in work-life balance, says people are finding it much harder to achieve a balance between their professional and personal lives.

"People are afraid of losing their jobs, or they're feeling guilty because the guy who was with the company for 20 years just got laid off," Dr. Bartell explains. "They feel like they need to work harder to keep their jobs or make more money, but they still want to be there for their kid's Little League game, too."

Achieving a healthy work-life balance has definitely become a juggling act that's more difficult than ever to pull off. At my doctor's office, I was frankly surprised that my blood pressure was only slightly elevated. But maybe it was because I'd started trying some of the techniques I learned while researching this story.

## Draw the Line

In many ways, creating a healthy work-life balance is about setting boundaries.

"When you're at work, work—the more time you spend being distracted by gossip or personal e-mails, the later you'll have to work," says Dr. Bartell. "And when you're home with your family, be fully focused on your family. Be present and in the moment wherever you are."





Dr. Bartell suggests turning off your PDA before you walk into your house. Otherwise, she says, you don't ever get a chance to de-stress and recharge. Plus, you're not giving your personal relationships your full attention, which is bad for your relationships and your own state of mind.

"Spending time with people you love fosters feelings of happiness and high self-worth," Dr. Bartell says. "And don't waste precious free time with people you don't like."

### Do the Math

People are watching every nickel these days, but that isn't always the best work-life balance strategy, says psychologist Debra Condren, Ph.D., author of *Ambition Is Not a Dirty Word* (Broadway Books).

"You might feel like you shouldn't pay someone to do work you could do," she explains. "But you might actually be losing money by doing the work yourself instead of hiring someone to do tasks like cleaning your house."

Dr. Condren suggests estimating how much you make per hour at work. Chances are, you could pay someone a lot less to run errands and do chores for you. Which means more time to spend with family and friends, pursue business opportunities or just take a break.

### Give Yourself Some "Me" Time

An important element of achieving a healthy work-life balance is taking good care of yourself. Dr. Bartell suggests eating right, getting plenty of sleep and practicing brief relaxation techniques throughout the day.

"It can be as simple as taking four or five really deep breaths every hour," she explains. "Everyone can do that."

Massage therapy can also be very helpful, Dr. Bartell adds. "Anything that can help relax you and make you feel like you're nurturing yourself is beneficial," she says.

Sounds good to me. In fact, I think I'll schedule a massage for myself. As soon as I finish writing this story, that is. ❀

*Instant  
Balancing Act*  
If you're feeling overwhelmed by your to-do list, try taking a quick walk, doing a few stretches, scheduling a massage to look forward to later in the week or sipping a cup of herbal tea. Little moments like these can help you slow down—and even leave you with a sense of accomplishment, because you were successful in doing something good for yourself.

## Hands-On Experience

Research proves that massage therapy can be effective for stress relief, says the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA). A number of studies have shown that massage therapy reduces blood pressure and levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. Plus, study subjects showed significant changes in emotional states and stress levels after receiving a massage.

Forms of massage that are especially helpful in reducing stress are Swedish massage, reflexology, cranial sacral therapy and hot stone massage.



# Social Media: Not Just Idle Chatter

A healthy dose of the world wide web might be just what the doctor ordered

**IN TODAY'S MUSIC-DOWNLOADING,** photo-uploading world, it's tempting to think social media is all about entertainment. But a healthy new horizon awaits health seekers savvy enough to tap into technology. "Social media is bringing health within arm's reach," says Jay Bernhardt, Ph.D., MPH, director of the National Center for Health Marketing at the Centers for Disease Control.

Here's how social media can help your health.

**>> Organizing goals.** When it comes to healthy decisions, setting goals is half the battle. Sites such as RememberTheMilk and Google Calendar help you organize your health-related tasks and send yourself reminders.

**>> Getting motivated.** If weight loss is on your mind, virtual weight-loss blogs and websites allow you to "see" a simulated version of yourself at a lower weight. Meetup can help you connect with others who are health-minded. Creating a Facebook group around a health goal can foster online accountability.

**>> Tracking your progress.** Sites such as Fitday and FitTracker can help chart your progress with

weight, exercise and food goals. At iStats, you can “work out” with friends, comparing your results. Search “online fitness communities” to find a good fit.

>> **Tapping health resources.** From 24/7 access to fitness videos and cooking shows to finding the proper technique for lifting weights, YouTube houses a veritable healthy living library. Need to find a healthy restaurant? Yelp can help. Another site called Healthranker invites participants to share and rank health-related news items.

>> **Gaining new perspectives.** “Mommy blogging” sites offer a forum for shared parenting tips and tricks. Work-life balance blogs invite discussions on how to manage family, work and friends. From job stress to caring for aging adults, the blogosphere provides fresh perspective.

>> **Finding information fast.** During the recent H1N1, or “swine flu,” outbreak, YouTube posted CDC videos on the virus on its home page. “During emergencies, sites like YouTube get health messages out almost in real time,” Dr. Bernhardt says.

>> **Making new “friends.”** Having friends is healthy. Just last year, Harvard researchers found that friends promote brain health. Enter Facebook, Twitter and MySpace. Not only can online friends foster a sense of connectedness, but they can be a major source of health information. “When people get accurate and relevant health information from their friends—Facebook, MySpace or real-life friends—that information is very important,” Dr. Bernhardt says.

>> **Seeking support.** When a health condition arises, knowing you are not alone is critical. Sites such as patientslikeme.com connect members living with serious health conditions. Imtooyoungforthis.org is a place for young cancer patients to convene. Dailystrength.org offers online groups where users can exchange advice, treatment experiences and support.

>> **Helping others.** If you have health insights to share with others, why not join an online community—or start your own? When author and new mom Amy Tenderich was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in 2004, she turned to the Internet for support.

*The Search for Health*  
Community-based blogs and other social platforms can help you feel empowered to make health decisions. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 74 percent of health seekers felt reassured they could make appropriate healthcare decisions following their last online health search.

## Sign Off for Serenity

Feeling too connected? Spending so much time on Facebook that you’re missing face time with family?

“There’s an almost compulsive behavior that develops around instantaneous and ongoing communication,” says David Shern, Ph.D., president and CEO of Mental Health America. And that, he says, can heighten stress.

If you’re chained to your BlackBerry or blog, Dr. Shern recommends the following steps:

**Prioritize.** Don’t compromise relationships with family and friends for the sake of being connected through online platforms.

**Take control of your calendar.** “Don’t let electronic media drive your schedule,” Dr. Shern says.

**Unplug.** “It’s good to disconnect for a while and get yourself back together,” says Dr. Shern, adding that unplugging will “help the noise level in your head go down.”



Finding none, she started her own diabetes information and support blog. “I was frustrated because I hadn’t found connections with other real people,” she says.

In the end, of course you can’t use Facebook to displace friendships or online communities to replace your neighbors, but social media sites are creating connections that can lead to healthier living. How tweet is that? —By Laurie Davies



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