Back to Basics

Take a hands-on approach to taming chronic back pain with massage

PLUS

don’t let fruit play second banana in your diet

happy hour

60 minutes of “me” time

take a swing at preventing sports injuries

SUMMER SUN SMARTS
Feel the Burn

If you’re watching your weight, and who isn’t, here’s some good news: You’re burning a lot of calories every day just going through your normal routine. With just a few small changes, you can supercharge some everyday activities and watch that extra weight go bye-bye.

### Lotion Lowdown
Massage Envy makes it easy to get a massage during your lunch hour or between the end of your work day and your dinner date. The lotions our Massage Therapists use leave your skin feeling moisturized, but not slick, so you can walk out of the clinic feeling as good outside as you do inside. The lotions are good for your skin, too, because the therapists at Massage Envy use only hypoallergenic and fragrance-free creams and lotions.

### Regular Activity | Time to Burn 100 Calories | Super-Charge It
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Vacuuming | 25-35 minutes | Move all of the furniture and vacuum under it
Mowing the lawn | 12-15 minutes | Rake up all the clippings to add to your compost pile
Washing your car | 20-25 minutes | Wax and vacuum it too!
Ironing | 45-50 minutes | Do a few squats each time you finish a garment

(Calorie estimates are based on a 120- to 150-pound healthy person.)
**Unplug & Unwind**

If you’re a wireless junkie, certain things strike fear into your heart. System failure. Trojan horses. Vacationing without your laptop. Sure, swapping megabytes for misty breezes sounds liberating, but you’re not sure if you can do it. Here are a few good reasons to try:

- **You’ll avoid burnout.** Unplugging for a few days can help you recharge your own battery pack.
- **You’ll reconnect with family.** Your family appreciates your hard work, but they want the fun-loving version of you too.
- **You’ll free up time for fun.** Use muscles you haven’t in awhile to bike, hike or swim your way to fun times.

**Q & Ahhh**

**Q: Can massage therapy enhance my exercise program?**

**A:** Yes, it can! Massage therapy aids in overall blood circulation in the body. Increasing circulation means that more oxygen is delivered to the muscles to allow for longer endurance periods and toxins are removed quicker, which reduces recovery time and residual pain. Massage therapy also has been shown to improve range of motion which creates more flexibility in the body. Increased flexibility allows you to perform movements of the exercise more effectively and with greater ease. Massage therapy also improves overall muscle and joint strength which, along with increased flexibility, helps to prevent injuries to muscles, joints and tendons.

Whether you are just getting started on an exercise program or are revising your current exercise routines, keep in mind that any new exercise activities require the body to engage in a variety of movements to perform effectively. The new movements introduced to the body will create different stress and strain on muscles and joints, which can often create increased stiffness and pain. Integrating massage therapy sessions into your regular schedule will enhance and benefit any exercise routine.

Massage therapy can benefit everyone from the elite athlete to the casual walker or weekend warrior. All that hard work won’t pay if our muscles and over-stressed and strained. Receiving massage therapy on a regular basis helps us maintain overall health and wellness and will keep us enjoying our favorite exercise activities.

—C.G. Funk, vice president of industry relations and product development for Massage Envy

**ON FIRE**

If you like to fire up the barbie, good for you—grilling is a healthy, low-fat way to cook. In fact, with lots of summer produce in season, try grilling your entire meal. Here are some tips from the American Dietetic Association:

- **Baste and season** firm veggies, such as peppers, corn, eggplant and onion—and cook right on the grill until tender.
- **Season and wrap** zucchini, tomatoes and carrots in foil with a little water. Grill until tender (about 6 to 8 minutes). Make pineapple, peach and banana kabobs, grilling on low heat until fruit is slightly golden.

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Like a Kid

School’s out and that means plenty of quality time with the kids. Sometimes, though, it’s the quantity of time they’re with you in the summer that can leave you counting down the days until fall. Don’t despair. Here are a few fun ideas for making the most of your together time.

+ **Hit the books.** Most local libraries and bookstores have regular story hours. While the kids listen to *The Berenstain Bears*, you can browse the best-sellers.

+ **Teach them about the good-old days.** You kids will probably be fascinated to learn that you didn’t have NeoPets and iPods when you were growing up. Teach them a few of your favorite games from childhood—anything from checkers and hopscotch to Red light, Green light.

+ **Find a partner.** More than likely there’s another parent you know who has a house full of kids for the summer. Set up a schedule where you take all the kids for a few hours one day a week and she takes them another.

+ **Make a date.** Sit down together with a calendar and plan out a few “special” events each week. They don’t have to be big or even cost anything. Maybe one day is a trip to a local museum and another is breakfast out at their favorite pancake place. When kids know there’s something to look forward to, you’ll be less likely to hear that dreaded “B” word: bored.

+ **Get moving.** The family that works out together, stays healthy together. Take a bike ride, find a new hike, play croquet or sign up for a parent-child yoga class.

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Deep Thoughts

If work stress leaves you feeling tense or your yoga class leaves you in knots, deep tissue massage might be right for you. The technique targets knots and releases chronic muscle tension by focusing on the deepest layers of muscle tissue, tendons and fascia—the protective layer surrounding your muscles, bones and joints. Talk with your Massage Therapist about what to expect both during and after a deep tissue massage.
Lovin’ Summer

Enjoy your season in the sun and still play it safe

**AS KIDS, SUMMERTIME MEANT** endless hours of outdoor fun. As adults, we know that the summer heat isn’t always cool. But you don’t have to become a summer shut-in. These tips will help you keep your sunny side up—safely.

**Miss the Midday:** The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends avoiding the sun’s peak hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. It’s not just important for protecting your skin, it will also help prevent heat exposure illnesses. Itching to get outdoors? Plan an early morning hike or picnic or find a park or tennis court nearby with lights so you can play even after sunset. If you do need to be in the sun, be sure to apply a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, 20 to 30 minutes beforehand so it has time to absorb into your skin. Don’t forget to reapply often—about every two hours while you’re outdoors, and every 45 minutes if you’re swimming.

**Hit the Bottle:** Staying hydrated when it’s hot can be a challenge because you won’t always feel thirsty. Try to drink eight to 10 eight-ounce glasses of water every day, more if you’re out in the heat, working out or if you’ve just had a massage.

**Go Under Cover:** You worked hard all spring for that bikini-ready body, but unless you’re actually in the water, you’re better off covered up. Try wearing tightknit, lightweight fabrics and add a wide-brimmed hat to protect the skin on your face, neck and ears from the sun’s aging effects. And don’t forget the specs. Prolonged sun exposure can damage your eyes, so look for sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

**Picnic Pointers:** Everything tastes better outdoors, but food and heat can be a recipe for disaster. Avoid foodborne illnesses by keeping cool foods cool—below 40 degrees—and hot foods hot—at or above 140 degrees. To avoid contamination, always keep raw foods separate from cooked foods. As for uninvited guests, such as mosquitoes and bees, use an insect repellent with DEET, don’t wear scented lotions or perfume, and remove food and garbage from the area as soon as you’re done eating. — *By J. Woolson*
In the Swing

Proper conditioning can keep you healthy on the course or the court

IF YOU THINK GOLF IS anything but a demanding and intensely physical sport, Johnny C. Benjamin, M.D., will set you straight.

Benjamin is a spine surgeon in Indian River County, Fla., home of 19 golf courses dotted with swaying palm trees and sparkling sand traps. Benjamin estimates that half his patients are golfers. They come to him complaining of lower back, shoulder and arm injuries they’ve suffered on the fairway. He also sees tennis players with aching backs, tender wrists and painful inner elbows.

A golfer himself, the surgeon says most tennis- and golf-related injuries occur because players don’t adequately train and then overdo it on the course or court.

“You have to look at them both as sports,” says Benjamin, chairman of the orthopedics department at Indian River Medical Center in Vero Beach. “It sounds absurd to say, ‘Hey, do you want to run five miles today?’ But is it any less absurd to say, ‘You want to play golf today? I’ve got a tee time,’?”

Tennis Anyone?

Like golf, tennis can be enjoyed at almost any age. Are you ready to join the nearly 25 million Americans who play tennis? Visit usta.com to find a U.S. Tennis Association partner, court or program in your area.
Get in Good Form
Smart sports enthusiasts use both cardio and strength training to prepare their bodies for competition. Golfers are more likely than tennis players to ignore that advice, perhaps because golf—thanks to golf carts and the sport’s popularity among retirees—is perceived as less strenuous.

Not any more, Benjamin says. “Golf used to be the ‘fat guy’s’ sport, but Tiger [Woods] has brought a new level of fitness to the game. He has a lot of core strength. He has broad shoulders. And he runs miles. He trains like a high-caliber athlete.” That preparation has paid off handsomely for Woods, who’s won more than his share of PGA tournaments.

Golfers trying to emulate Woods tend to swing too vigorously, spraining or straining the muscles in their backs and arms. They’re also prone to injuries from lifting and lugging over-loaded golf bags.

Gripping the racquet too tightly is to blame for many tennis injuries to the elbow and arm. Rotator cuff damage can result from aggressive swinging, while the hamstrings, knees and feet also take a beating on the court.

Be a Good Sport
To prevent sports-related injuries, follow Woods’ lead and prepare for the demands of your sport. “If you can’t walk a mile or two without anything hurting, you shouldn’t think about any activity until you can,” says Benjamin, who keeps in shape by lifting weights.

Instead of driving to your next tennis match, pick a court within walking distance. Play a round of golf without your golf cart—but first make sure your bag weighs less than 10 pounds and has backpack-like straps or wheels, Benjamin cautions.

Also, take it easy. You’re playing mixed doubles with friends, not squaring off against Venus and Serena Williams.

If you’re plagued by recurring pain or injury, consult a doctor and a golf or tennis pro. A professional instructor can pinpoint seemingly minor errors in your grip or swing that can cause major damage to your muscles and tendons.

And remember, no matter how much you love playing a sport, it is only recreation. “I try to explain to people that golf is to be enjoyed,” Benjamin says. “For most people, it’s not our day job.” —June Bell

On the Mend with Massage
Even if you concentrate on conditioning, sometimes injuries do happen. When they do, spine surgeon Johnny C. Benjamin recommends applying ice to any strain or sprain during the first 72 hours, then switch to a moist heating pad.

Nonprescription medicine can help control pain. And a massage will promote healing.

“Massage is great in helping to bring blood and nutrients to the affected area to repair the soft tissue,” he says. “Ideally, you should get a massage as soon as you can tolerate it. Massage also can help break up scar tissue and keep the muscles supple so less scar tissue develops in the first place.”

Even when there’s no injury, massage also helps athletes of all levels improve their flexibility and muscle suppleness. The kneading action of a massage disperses the accumulation of lactic acid, which causes fatigued, sore muscles.

When you book your massage, request a therapist experienced in sports massage, and ask that special attention be paid to any injured areas, says Maureen Moon, former president of the American Massage Therapy Association.

A Massage Therapist can also stretch the muscles in trouble areas, promoting increased flexibility when the body is warm and more elastic.
Feeling Fruity?

Super-simple tips for getting your five to nine servings of produce a day

IF YOU EAT YOUR FRUITS and veggies, the latest health studies probably confirm how you already feel—great! A trio of new studies shows that fruits and vegetables lower cancer risk. A growing body of medical evidence also links fruits and vegetables to lower heart disease risk, better digestive function, and even asthma and allergy prevention.

If you’d like to get more disease-fighting produce into your diet, don’t be daunted by the recommendation for five to nine servings a day. It’s not too rough to get enough roughage. In fact, it’s easier than you might think. Here are a few tips.

Add them to everyday favorites. Think veggies in the morning with diced tomato, onion and peppers with your eggs. Mix berries in with yogurt or sprinkle them on cereal. Almost any vegetable you can imagine goes well with pasta. “Just sneak in an extra fruit or vegetable where you can. You can even add shredded carrots or zucchini to meatloaf,” says Marisa Moore, R.D., a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.
Add them in unexpected places. Once you succeed in adding fruits and vegetables to everyday dinners, put a twist on the more unexpected entrées. Add grapes or cranberries to chicken salad. Mix pureed mangoes with barbecue sauces for extra taste and nutrition. Serve colorful, nutritious fruit kabobs for dessert instead of fattening ice creams, cakes and pies.

Remember, a little goes a long way. A “serving” of fruits or vegetables is probably much smaller than you think. “A lot of people don’t realize a serving of broccoli is only half a cup. A large salad is two to three servings of vegetables,” Moore says. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned and juiced fruits and vegetables all count toward the “five to nine” goal.

Plant a garden. This may sound too easy. However, a study of rural Missouri families shows that families who had homegrown or locally grown produce available also had better overall nutrition patterns. Their children were also more likely to prefer a variety of fruits and vegetables as “favorites.”

Drink it all in. While it’s not optimal to fall back on juices for numerous servings, a half cup of fruit or vegetable juice still counts. “You do miss a little bit because you don’t get the fiber you would get from eating a whole fruit,” Moore says. “But you can use juice for maybe one serving.” —Laurie Davies

9 Easy Ways to Get 9 Servings

+ Grab an apple, orange, banana, pear or other piece of portable fruit to eat on the go.
+ Snack on raw veggies such as baby carrots, pepper strips, broccoli and celery.
+ Pick up ready-made salads from the grocery store salad bar for a quick meal anytime.
+ Pile spinach leaves, tomatoes, peppers and onions on your pizza.
+ Add strawberries, blueberries, bananas and other brightly colored fruits—fresh, frozen or canned—to your waffles, pancakes or toast.
+ Stash bags of dried fruit in your car and at your desk for convenient snacks.
+ Stir fresh or frozen vegetables into your pasta, rice or omelet.
+ Whip up smoothies made from fresh or frozen berries, fruit juice, ice and yogurt.
+ Jazz up soups or sauces with a can of kidney beans, peas, corn or green beans.

Go Bananas!

Fruit may be healthy, but it can also be fun! Beat the heat this summer with this refreshing homemade Banana Ice Cream.

Ingredients

| 1 quart 2 percent low-fat milk | 6 large ripe bananas, peeled and mashed |
| 1 ½ cups fat-free egg substitute | 2 Tbsp. lemon juice |
| ¾ cup sugar | 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract |
| 1 (12-oz.) can evaporated skim milk | |

Combine first 4 ingredients in a large bowl. Add mashed banana, lemon juice and vanilla, stirring well.

Pour mixture into freezer container of a 6-quart hand-turned or electric ice cream maker. Freeze according to manufacturer’s instructions. Pack container with additional ice and rock salt, and let stand 1 hour before serving.

Yield: 16 (1-cup) servings

Nutritional information per serving: 142 calories, 1 g fat, 6 g protein, 27 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 5 mg cholesterol, 90 mg sodium

Recipe is courtesy of EatRight Weight Management Services at University of Alabama at Birmingham.
In search of back pain relief? Skip the chiropractor’s office and head to a massage clinic

BY SHELLEY FLANNERY
PHOTO BY JESSE RIESER

If you sprain your left knee, you can still get around by shifting your weight to your right knee. If you break your right arm, you can steer a car with your left. And if you cut your thumb, you can still dial your cell phone (however awkwardly) with your index finger. While these situations may be frustrating, none is severe enough to keep you from going about your daily life.

Back pain, however, is another story. You can’t rely on any other body part to “limp” on when your back is throbbing, which is probably why back pain is the second most common reason for missed work behind the common cold. The good news is that back pain can be alleviated, meaning you can go back to using your sick days for what they were intended—playing hooky.

Back in Action
**Soothing Relief**
While many people today think that back pain relief can only come in the form of painful injections from a physician or awkward manipulation by a chiropractor, that’s simply not the case. In fact, one of the best treatments for easing back pain— massage—has been around for thousands of years.

“Massage is quite effective for treating lower back pain,” says Kristen Sykora, LMT, a spokeswoman for the American Massage Therapy Association. “It’s the MVP in the healthcare arena because it’s more of a hands-on treatment.”

A 2003 study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that massage therapy reduced the need for painkillers by 36 percent and was found to be more effective than other therapies, including acupuncture and spinal modification, according to the American Massage Therapy Association. In fact, massage therapy is one of the most commonly used treatments for back pain today.

**How Does It Work?**
If you’ve ever had a massage, you know it makes you feel good. But how can it relieve back pain and help prevent it from recurring? Its strategy is multifaceted and includes:

- **Muscle relaxation.** Massage relaxes the muscle, making it less tense and stiff. It also addresses specific problem areas and works out muscle “knots.”
- **Increased blood flow.** Massage promotes blood flow to the area, providing nourishment to the muscles.
- **Endorphin release.** Massage calms the nerves that send pain signals to the brain and causes endorphins, the body’s feel-good hormone, to be released.
- **Tension relief.** Massage restores flexibility to muscles that are tense due to stress and inactivity.

**Working it Out**
Massage therapy may make your back quit aching, but don’t expect one session to cure all of your pain. “Your back pain didn’t start overnight,” Sykora says, “so don’t expect it to be cured overnight either.”

How long it takes to achieve long-term relief is dependent upon such factors as the nature of your back pain, your lifestyle, your activity level and your posture. “It’s best for chronic back pain sufferers to be on a maintenance plan for massage—one every three to four weeks,” Sykora says. And do the homework your therapist gives you, she adds. Correct your posture and adjust your work space and work habits. And don’t rule out combining massage with other therapies, such as exercise.

Physical activity in combination with massage is highly successful. Stronger back muscles will provide more support to the spine. If you’re overweight, losing those extra pounds can ease the load on your back. Yoga, Pilates, tai chi or even simple stretches you do at home will help strengthen your muscles and improve flexibility. Just be sure to talk to your doctor before beginning any new exercise program.

And what would feel better after a moderate workout than to get a massage? More than $25 billion was spent in 2003 by people in search of back pain relief. Why not spend your money on something that works and is enjoyable? As Sykora says, massage therapy is really important for people to consider because it’s an effective but conservative approach.

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**Scale Back**
If you’re carrying extra weight around your midsection, it could be putting strain on your back muscles.

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**Working Their Back Magic**
If you’ve decided to try using massage to treat your back pain, you’ll need to find a Massage Therapist who can help. Not every Massage Therapist is an expert in treating back pain, so be sure to mention your needs and concerns when you call Massage Envy to schedule your massage. The front desk will match you up with a therapist who will help you achieve your goal of being pain-free. You also might want to consider scheduling your massage with the same therapist every time, so he or she can track your progress and adjust your massage as your pain improves.
There’s nothing like a vacation to wipe away stress, boredom and exhaustion. But a vacation done wrong can be every bit as draining as the day-to-day routine you were so eager to escape in the first place. We’ve packed these two pages with tips to help guarantee that you return refreshed.

**Off on the Right Foot**

**First things first:** Decide what kind of vacation you want. Will you be backpacking? Exploring Manhattan? Hitting Disneyland? If you detest Mickey, speak up now or be prepared to grit your teeth through “It’s a Small World.” Let the entire family weigh in on the decision so everyone gets a chance to do something they enjoy.

“I really believe that the majority of trips that go wrong do so because people fail to talk about what they want on a trip,” says Rosemarie Murphy, a Florida-based travel consultant with 26 years of experience.

**Work around:** While you don’t want to ditch your responsibilities at the office, that’s the whole point of a vacation. Before you leave, ask a colleague to handle your calls and e-mails. Provide that person’s contact information on your outgoing messages and let them handle emergencies. Then forget about the office.

**Set a realistic schedule:** You can’t possibly study every painting or eat at every restaurant. So why try? You’ll feel less pressured if you allot some down time each day. Hang out in a park or schedule a massage. As a Massage Envy member, you have access to more than 230 clinics around the United States.

**On the Go**

**Rest easy:** Get a good night’s sleep before your trip. That means you last-minute packers—you know who you are—need to plan ahead. Once you’re en route, avoid alcohol, which has a dehydrating effect that can amplify jet lag, Murphy says. Resist the urge to nap when you arrive at your destination. Instead, go to bed early so you’ll wake up in sync with the locals.

**Stay healthy:** Avoid colds and other bugs by being diligent about hand-washing or using an antibacterial hand gel when you’re in public places. And when sampling local cuisine, think before you eat and drink.

**Make it quick:** If you’re flying, try to avoid checking luggage and print out your boarding pass the day before. Anytime you can avoid a long line, your stress level will go down. If you’re traveling by car, pack up as much as you can the night before and be sure the gas tank is filled. Then, when you’re ready to hit the road, you can just jump in and go.

**Back to Reality**

**Come home early:** You might be tempted to fill every last minute of vacation time with travel, but you need some time for re-entry. Give yourself at least a day to unpack, go through your mail and prepare to plunge back into reality.

**Extend the effects:** To prolong that cherished feeling of relaxation, schedule a massage for the day of your return. It’s a mini-vacation that doesn’t require a passport, luggage or sunglasses.

**Take it easy:** If possible, plan a light schedule—both at work and at home—for the week you get back. Too many commitments right away can erase that new feeling of calm you just worked so hard to acquire.

Whether you’re traveling for pleasure or business, you can enjoy a massage almost anywhere. With more than 230 locations around the country—and another 390 plus coming in the next few years—you’ll have no trouble locating a Massage Envy clinic wherever you are.

Visit MassageEnvy.com and click the “find a clinic” link. The site will identify your location and provide information about the closest Massage Envy clinics. You can also enter the city and state or ZIP code to find clinic information. You can then call and book your appointment.
Hometown Vacation

Your friends are packing for their long-awaited cruise to Alaska. Your neighbors have asked you to keep an eye on their house while they bike through Tuscany. Your vacation plans? You’ll be summering chez vous, a lovely way to say you’re stuck in Dodge.

Just because you’re staying home this summer, doesn’t mean you’re condemned to a lousy time. Enjoy your own region by exploring it like a tourist:

- At a local hotel, pick up some brochures for area attractions, says veteran travel consultant Rosemarie Murphy. Schedule visits to the things that interest you throughout the summer.
- Feast on a picnic at a state park, the beach or even your favorite neighborhood park.
- Expand your local knowledge with a walking tour, hike or lecture. You can find a list of activities and exhibits in your newspaper’s weekend section or on your county’s website.
- Spend a night at a local hotel. Take advantage of the special discounted rates or packages for residents. Don’t forget to order room service the next morning.
- Design your own spa day. Get a manicure and pedicure, energize at a yoga class or in the pool and then wrap up your pampering with a massage at Massage Envy.
An Hour of Power

Find 60 extra minutes in your day to do something for yourself.

**Tune Out** The average American watches 18 hours of TV a week. Don’t let the television control your life! Reduce the time you spend in front of the TV and use that time to read, take a walk or catch up with friends.

**GOOD NEWS! WE’VE FOUND AN** extra hour for you today. Now, you tell us: How do you want to spend it? Catching up on laundry? At work? Grocery shopping? Sorry, we won’t even allow those. We’ll only give you the hour if you agree to spend the time on yourself.

Some might think the idea is frivolous, but doing something for yourself, experts say, is critical to good health.

“Me time is time you dedicate to focusing on yourself,” says Allison Schwartz, M.A., a life coach to clients all over the country. “It is an occasion to renew and recharge your physical and mental energy. All too often people tend to forget that their energy is not infinite; it does run out, and for that reason it is important to take care of your body and well-being.”

Many of us—women especially—put others first, often neglecting our own needs entirely. But that doesn’t necessarily make life any better for us or those around us.
“Putting the needs of others ahead of your own interferes with your ability to take time for yourself,” Schwartz says. “By doing so, you forget that if you do not take care of yourself, you will not be able to take care of others.”

Finding the Time
But even if you agree to spend the hour on yourself, how do you find the time in the first place? Here are seven simple ways.

1. Schedule it. “When you fill up your calendar, take time for you,” says Eve Wood, M.D., clinical associate professor of Medicine at the University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine and author of 10 Steps to Take Charge of Your Emotional Life (2007, Hay House Inc.). Before you schedule meetings and your kids’ dental appointments for the month, schedule a massage or coffee date for yourself—and keep it.

2. Make little things count. Everyone needs different kinds and amounts of me time. When you can’t take long stretches of time, consider maximizing moments. Take 10 minutes every lunch hour to meditate, for example. “Even in those moments when you’re in traffic or folding laundry, you can do cleansing breaths and think about what you’re grateful for,” Wood says. “Or between meetings, do a couple of stretches.”

3. Leave your space. Whether it’s a coffee shop or another city, explore different surroundings. Take a solo lunch hour with a good book or your iPod somewhere your co-workers don’t frequent. Ask your spouse to watch the kids for a few hours while you retreat to the local park for some quiet time—and maybe a nap.

4. Turn off the phone. Sometimes the feeling that your life isn’t your own stems from constant availability via cell phones, laptop computers and BlackBerrys. So, agree to a daily moratorium on cellular gadgets. Even a couple of hours when you aren’t accessible—even if you have tasks to accomplish—can give you the illusion of me time.

5. Take a mental health day. Kids are at school, your spouse is at work. Call in sick—for a mental health day. Get a massage, take an art class, do anything—but don’t clean the house. The next day, you’ll be refreshed and ready to dive back into your work and home life.

6. Just say no. If you keep saying yes—to run the school bake sale or to participate in every charity walk—you’ll very quickly run out of time in your day. Turn down some requests and—voilà!—you’ve discovered time.

7. Take the easy way out sometimes. If you don’t enjoy cooking, don’t make everything from scratch for Saturday’s dinner party. Buy platters from a restaurant, or make it potluck. Don’t force yourself to write individual notes in every single holiday card this year. ( Heck, don’t even send holiday cards at all this year!) Order your groceries online and have them delivered every now and then.

Know When to Stop
There are ways to get the time you need—but first you need to make sure you make yourself a priority. And remember, me time is not about constant self-indulgence.

“Health is about balance,” Wood says. “Can you eat too many desserts? Yes. Can you exercise too much? Sure. Can we overdo just about anything? The answer is yes. If we become too self-preoccupied, then we can get out of balance. A big piece of wellness is balance—giving and taking. If it’s all about taking, that makes for an empty life.”

You know better than anyone that your life is far from empty. It’s quite full. Just make sure one of the things filling it up is you. —Stephanie Conner

Pencil It In
At Massage Envy, we want to make sure you have time to take care of yourself—at least once a month. Make a commitment to your well-being by scheduling your next massage now. Visit us at MassageEnvy.com to find contact information for your favorite Massage Envy clinic.
As a member, you’ll enjoy the benefits of massage therapy when it’s convenient for you. Mornings or evenings, weekdays or weekends, on your lunch break or after the kids are asleep. And the best part is that you can have as many massages as you need, at a discounted member rate. One massage a month is great, but don’t you deserve a little more “me” time? Heaven awaits, at Massage Envy.