

LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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Ways to Beat the Afternoon Slump

By Dr. Jo®

You've been so productive all morning long, knocking out emails and finishing projects, but shortly after the noon hour your productivity plummets to zero as dense brain fog rolls in. *Bam!* All of a sudden, you're feeling fuzzy-headed and groggy.



Does this sound familiar?

While a sugary treat or large cup of coffee may offer a brief reprieve from the brain fog, these tips to beat the afternoon slump may prove more helpful:

TAKE A BREAK

Recovery breaks increase productivity, recharge alertness, and improve mood and decision-making. Just like your muscles need to rest between workouts, your brain needs a rest period to continue at the same level of productivity.

MOVE IT, MOVE IT

People who exercise on a regular basis report more energy, even with the same amount of sleep. When you feel that slump coming on, stand up and move — walk up and down a few flights of stairs, walk over to a colleague's desk instead of sending them an email, or take a walk outside.

Realize that stress results not from what happens to us, but how we react to what happens to us.

CATCH SOME RAYS

Natural daylight improves mood, energy and performance. If you can't get outside, talk to your doctor about using a therapeutic bright light at your desk.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Take a break to catch up with your colleagues, or switch to a group activity by gathering the team for an energizing brainstorming session.

WALK AND TALK

Invite a colleague for a walking meeting with a specific agenda in mind. You'll get the benefits of movement and accomplish some work, too.

SWITCH TASKS

Our body naturally goes through a low point every 90 minutes, so rotate between high-focus tasks (writing an article or working on a project) and low-focus tasks (cleaning off your desk or inbox).

STAND UP

Sitting at a desk and staring at the computer screen for hours on end is likely to lull anyone to sleep. Find a way to move or at stand up for at least part of the workday.

REHYDRATE

Even slight dehydration can hurt mood and productivity. It's easy to stay hydrated when you're sipping on water all day, so keep water at your desk at all times. Don't like water? Try adding fresh fruit or squirts of flavor, or buy no-calorie flavored carbonated waters.

SIP — DON'T GULP — YOUR CAFFEINE

It takes 30 to 45 minutes for caffeine to peak in your bloodstream from that first sip, so if you gulp it, you're likely to overdo it.

MAKE BREAKFAST NON-NEGOTIABLE

Skipping breakfast leads to overeating at lunch, making the afternoon slump worse. Not hungry for breakfast? Realize that we tend to lose our appetite when we're overly hungry!

MAKE CARBS COUNT

Carbs are essential as brain fuel. But let's face it — most of us are overindulging in this category. For lasting energy, select just a couple of carbs at lunch. If you want the bun, skip the chips. Go bunless if you want the chips.

POWER UP WITH PROTEIN

For satiety and lasting energy, it's critical to include protein at all three meals. Options include eggs, a cup of Greek yogurt, a scoop of protein powder in your shake or a portion of meat about the size of a deck of cards.

DON'T OVEREAT AT LUNCH

Big meals make the midafternoon slump even worse. Since most restaurants offer enough proteins, carbs and calories for two meals, share with a colleague or take half of it home.

MANAGE STRESS

Every stress response begins with a sharp state of alertness that leaves you exhausted afterwards. Realize that stress results not from what happens to us, but how we react to what happens to us. We can't control people and situations, but we are in full control of our thoughts, actions and reactions.

CRANK UP THE MUSIC

Music has been shown to influence mood as well as the perception of effort involved in an activity. There's some research to indicate that soft music can alleviate stress. The key is to slip on your headphones and find the music that doesn't distract you.

While energy slumps are natural during the day, they don't have to be so severe that productivity suffers. Hopefully, these tips give you plenty of options to keep your productivity up all day long.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jo Lichten, PhD, RDN, speaks to professionals who have achieved great success in their career at the expense of their health and personal life. She is the author of five books, including *Reboot: How to Power Up Your Energy, Focus, and Productivity*.

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