

How to Find Energy for Your Dream When You Work Full-Time

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A recent Canadian study of 1,100 employees, polled across North America, found that one-third loathe their jobs. That's loathe, as in detest, hate and otherwise despise. So here's the good news: it's entirely possible for these folks to overcome the usual obstacles, and actually find a more suitable line of work. The key is in managing energy – one of the key things people say keeps them from actively pursuing their dreams in life.

Here are some energy-saving tricks to help that process.

Dedicate your peak time of day to your dream. Are you a lark or an owl? Do you tend to spring out of bed or hug your pillow when the alarm goes off. Get clear on this key fact, then add an extra hour in this time zone for work on your dream. In other words, get up an hour earlier if you're a morning person – or stay up an hour later if you thrive at night. Write it into your schedule and stick with it.

Indulge in a Four o'clock protein bar or shake. Replace the guilty candy bar in your desk drawer with a snack that's actually got enough protein to tide you well into the evening hours. Protein bars, such as Balance, Clif, Luna and Power Bars have only slightly less sugar than conventional candy bars, but they're loaded with soy protein that metabolizes more slowly for an even energy burn. (Ideally, the bars shouldn't have more than 13 grams of sugar, say experts.) Shakes made with soy-protein powders available at health food stores work even better, and last longer.

Keep a lean office/work space. Nothing drains energy faster than clutter, especially that which accumulates on desktops. Jeffrey Mayer, author of the e-book, *How to Win the Fight Between You and Your Desk*, says that our energy is literally bogged down every time we see a pile of papers we have to deal with. So he advises parking everything out of sight in appropriate files. Then he suggests keeping a running to-do list on a pad, with items to check off each day as accomplished. This sense of order and accomplishment can breath new life into dreams that feel long in the tooth.

Stop working at least an hour before bed. Even if you're a night owl who loves to create deep into the night, give yourself some true down time at least an hour before bed. Experts say this is critical unwinding time that will help you sleep better, and hence renew your energy for the next day's tasks. Use the time to reconnect with your family or spouse, peruse some fun, non-work related reading, or sit in a room with low light simply listening to relaxing music. This is critical energy recharging time.

Avoid junk food; drink water instead. It's an old saw, but it bears repeating. Nothing depletes your system quite like junk food. The excess sugars speed up your system so it eventually crashes; the excess salts just drive your thirst. They're fun, but have not substance. Your body craves the good stuff: carrots, salads, light proteins, whole grains, because digestion of such is so much easier on the system. Add large amounts of water, and you'll be running at peak.

Take your iron. Grains and vegetables provide us with only about seven per cent of their iron, while meat gives us close to 30 per cent. Added to that is the fact that drinking tea and coffee interferes with iron absorption. So, all in all, you're best off with a supplement, preferably about 18 milligrams per day. Author and nutritionist Elizabeth Somers says you'll see improvements in energy and mental clarity within three weeks.

Refresh your mind On a regular basis, try to offer it something stimulating, fun and not work or dream-related. Consider playing an instrument, or going to a weekly dance or yoga class. Or taking a walk in an entirely new place. Museum exhibitions, browses through bookstores, hang outs in cafes and uninhibited strolls through the Web are all good for this purpose.

Take brainstorming walks. This is a daily exercise walk in which you clear your mind, and use the time for either a little reflection on what you're creating, or for possible spiritual connection. As the exercise causes your brain to release feel-good endorphins, you can relax enough to really let your mind wander as your stroll. So this becomes a great time to work out little problems that crop up in your dream work. Be sure to bring along a small notepad, or electronic 'instant messenger' for recording your ideas. If time's tight, use this time to walk to or from the office, even if you have to park the car a few miles away.

Eat your lunch at your desk. It's a simple solution, and remarkably effective. The simple act of bringing a sandwich to work, pulling it out, closing the door, and doing a little work on your dream mid-day can deeply increase your commitment to your dream. And that in turn can really fuel your dream, so making time for it becomes easier, not harder. If it's hard to work at your desk, take your sandwich and dream work to a nearby café, your parked car, a public library carrel, or any public space where you can work.

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