

TP TOP PERFORMANCE[®]

Helping You Be Your Best.

7.2021



In today's world, much of our communication is electronic and the art of conversation isn't practiced as much as in the past. Yet, when you are at a networking event or conference, socializing with colleagues or interviewing, in-person interaction can be crucial.

Brush up on your conversational skills:

- ⇒ **Give** the other people in the conversation a chance to speak. Listen actively, rather than thinking about what you will say next, while others are speaking. Ask questions and make positive comments to show you are engaged.
- ⇒ **Look** the person speaking to you in the face, rather than letting your eyes wander or looking at your mobile device.
- ⇒ **Keep** conversation topics general and non-controversial, particularly in a professional setting or with people you don't know well. Opening with a compliment, a question about someone's profession or a positive comment about the event or setting is usually a safe way to start.
- ⇒ **Speak** well. When you talk, vary your sentence structure, use vocabulary suited to your audience (e.g., industry-specific terms) and practice good grammar.

Relaxation Tips

Every job comes with some stress, but you can learn to manage it successfully. For the best stress relief, incorporate these techniques into your routine:



Progressive muscle relaxation: While lying down or sitting in a comfortable chair, tighten each muscle group in your body one at a time; hold for ten seconds and then slowly release. Start with your feet and ankles, move up to your lower legs and thighs, and then reach your abdominals, arms, shoulders and face.

Visualization: Sit or lie down quietly, and picture a peaceful place in your mind. It might be a favorite vacation spot, a beautiful outdoor scene or your childhood home you imagine. What do you see, feel, smell, hear and taste? Look at a photograph of your special place if it helps you focus.

Hobbies: Choose an activity you enjoy, and make time for it in your daily life. If your hobby is a physically active one, it can help you meet your exercise goal; try gardening, tennis, kayaking or yoga.

Community building: Gathering with others at church, a book or supper club, a fraternal or volunteer organization, or a community group provides an outlet for creative energy and connecting with people who share your passions and beliefs. Giving back to the community is also a proven way to increase your own happiness — a surefire antidote for stress.

Value of Time Off

The year is more than half gone. Have you taken any vacation days yet? Using time off to relax and play:



- ✦ **Improves energy and focus.** Time away from work helps you reverse the effects of chronic stress, rest your brain and body, and return with renewed concentration.
- ✦ **Reduces worry and sadness.** Research shows that women who skip vacations are up to three times more likely to be depressed and anxious — while time off can increase levels of chemicals in the body, such as **endorphins**, that make you feel good emotionally.

✦ **Helps your heart.** According to the long-term Framingham Heart Study, men who vacationed regularly were 32% less likely to die from a heart attack.

✦ **Provides social time and interaction.** Taking a vacation, even close to home, with family and friends strengthens relationships and social connections.

✦ **Boosts productivity.** Taking time away to have fun might translate to fewer sick days and more productive days at work.

Despite all these reasons, many people do not use their full allotment of paid time off. Why not plan a vacation today?



The disappearing — and — changing vacation:

Between 1978 and 2000, U.S. workers took more than 20 vacation days on average per year. Since 2000, however, the number of paid days off workers have taken has steadily declined. In 2018, Americans took an average of 17.4 days. Annually, more than half of us don't use all of their vacation time, according to the U.S. Travel Association. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected how, where and when we can travel. Will you take all of your vacation time this year?



Efficient Email Refresher Course

The average person receives about 121 business email messages per day, according to a study by the Radicati Group, a research firm. Make email more efficient and effective with this refresher.

Keep your email messages short. Limit them to 150 words, and put the most important information in the first line.

Know when *not* to use email.

Don't use email to convey complex, sensitive or emotionally charged information. Refrain from using email to avoid having a difficult conversation that is best conducted privately and face-to-face.



Use good etiquette. Include a short, informative subject line. Keep your tone professional, and stick to your topic. Use the bcc function with discretion — don't use it to hide a recipient in the email thread.

Reduce clutter and improve security. Don't copy people who have no need for the information you are sending. Avoid marking every message as urgent or asking for constant return receipts. Avoid using reply all or including large attachments unless it's absolutely necessary.

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Sunscreen: The Real Cover-Up**, is at personalbest.com/extras/21V7tools.



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Conquering Perfectionism

While being perfect is often held up as an ideal in the media and society, constantly striving for perfection can hinder you from reaching your goals.

According to the American Psychological Association, perfectionism is also related to many mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

Perfectionism involves certain behaviors, such as excessively checking work to make sure it's right, constantly redoing tasks and being unable to let them go, agonizing over tiny details, and avoiding new challenges for fear of making mistakes.

Take these steps to reduce perfectionism:

Be realistic. Replace self-criticism with statements such as: *Nobody is perfect, I'll do my best, or It's OK to make mistakes.*

Broaden your view. If fear of making mistakes paralyzes you, ask: What's the worst that could happen? Could I survive that? Will this still matter in a year?

Ask for help. A friend or coworker can help you set realistic goals and develop new, reasonable standards.

There's nothing wrong with having high standards. But when you can't move forward because nothing is ever right, it may be time to change your perspective.

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
- Maya Angelou*