

# TP TOP PERFORMANCE<sup>®</sup>

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## Do Sleep Apps Work?

Many smartphone apps claim to help people fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer and get better quality sleep overall. But, do they work?

**Sleep app functions vary.** Some guide you through relaxation and deep breathing exercises or feature soothing sounds to help you fall asleep quickly. Others use the device's internal sensors to monitor your movement as you sleep; this may reveal the time you spend in restorative sleep and recognize troublesome patterns caused by stress, caffeine and other factors. Some apps even awaken you during a lighter point in your sleep cycle, when you're least likely to feel groggy.

**Most of the research concerning sleep apps is anecdotal.** Some users report that they wake up more refreshed and feel their sleep quality has improved since they started using a sleep app. Sleep researchers speculate this may be due to a placebo effect, meaning that if a sleep app user thinks the app is working, that idea alone may be enough to help them sleep better.

Sleep apps are probably harmless. **One point to keep in mind:** There's evidence suggesting having a mobile device turned on in the bedroom can disrupt sleep. So your best bet for restful sleep may be to clear your sleeping area of electronic devices and other distractions.



**Here's a first-class tip for traveling well:** Avoid crossing your legs on lengthy plane rides. Get up and move around hourly. You'll reduce your risk of blood clots in the legs resulting from prolonged sitting (pull off for breaks during long car trips, too).

## Preparing for Maternity Leave

**Baby on board! As you plan for your new arrival, take these steps to make sure everything is set for your maternity leave:**

**Tell your supervisor,** who will appreciate having adequate time to prepare for your absence. Be clear about your future plans and discuss a transition that works for everyone.

**Learn your company's maternity leave policy.** Talk to your supervisor or someone in human resources about your employer's family leave provision. It may include a combination of accrued vacation or personal time, paid leave and unpaid leave. Get the details so you can prepare for your financial needs.

**Help create a work transition plan.** Have project notes, contact information, schedules and lists of duties ready for those assuming your responsibilities while you're away. Ideally, resolve as many issues as you can before your leave begins.

**Remember,** babies don't always arrive on schedule and work priorities may be subject to change. Be flexible and focus on open communication as you prepare for this next stage of life and work.



**Eating on the Mind** — You've heard of distracted driving. But what about distracted eating? Researchers have found that people who ate while doing another task, such as watching television, consumed more calories during that meal and also tended to overeat later. Over time, this leads to weight gain. Distracted eating can interfere with your brain's ability to recognize when you are full. Slow down, stop what you're doing and eat with your mind on your food. You will likely feel full sooner and eat less overall as a result.

# How to **Stop** Worrying

**Everyone worries occasionally**, but if it's excessive, it can potentially harm your health. Take these three steps to keep worry from taking over your life:

① **Breathe deeply.** Take long, slow, deep breaths through your nose and let your diaphragm and belly expand with each breath. This helps you feel calmer and less anxious.

② **Take life one moment at a time.** Return to the now if you find yourself asking, *What if?* Focus all five senses on your environment — what do you feel, see, hear, smell and taste right now?

③ **Write down what worries you.** Then, do something about the concerns or problems that you can solve. Recognize that it's unproductive to agonize over the ones you can't control.

If worry regularly interferes with your sleep or everyday life or leads to physical symptoms, such as digestive problems, disrupted sleep, irritability or panic attacks, talk to your health care provider.

**Remember:** Few people escape the uncertainty and stress of today's fast-paced, changing world. While you may not be able to remove some sources of worry from your life, you can control your reactions to them.



## The Myth of Multitasking

**We can't do two things well at once.** When we multitask, we switch our attention between two tasks, often performing less effectively at both. The idea of multitasking has been around for decades and first referred to using a single computer to simultaneously carry out two or more jobs.



**Everyday examples:** We text or answer email while in meetings, play video games when chatting with family, take notes during a lecture, drive while talking on our phones or cook dinner while helping our kids with homework. Being a multitasker may be a point of pride for some, implying mental dexterity and effective productivity.

**Multitasking can help us save time in some cases**, but research suggests that trying to do more than one **challenging** task at a time may decrease our overall productivity instead. Most people tend to work slower and less efficiently when multitasking because of the increased mental demand of jumping from one thing to another.

**Staying focused on one task at a time can increase work productivity.** If you are dedicated to multitasking, but you start more tasks than you can finish, start prioritizing your tasks in order of importance. Begin with your most demanding assignments and finish your day with lighter and less time-consuming tasks whenever you can.

## Learn to Appreciate Yourself

**Give yourself a pat on the back.** A little self-appreciation can go a long way toward helping you feel more positive and confident to achieve more. Three tips to try:

① **Review what you've accomplished.** List your best successes at work and in life, such as passing a test, completing a key project, landing a big client, coming up with a great idea or helping someone else. Remembering what you did well in the past can reconnect you with your self-worth.

② **Recognize your strengths.** Make a list of the things you do well. If you have trouble thinking of your strengths, ask a friend or coworker to help you list some.

③ **Tune up your self-talk.** Recognize the negative messages running through your mind: *I can't do this. I am not capable and will never get it right.* Work hard to think more positively and send encouraging, appreciative thoughts to yourself: *I know I can do this. This is hard, but I'll figure it out. I never quit.* Sometimes that's all it takes to turn your attitude around and spur you toward your goals.

**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,  **Summer Fitness, Family Style**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/22V7tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/22V7tools).

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