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RELIVE THE BEST YEARS OF YOUR LIFE

Remember the good ol' days? You were healthy, happy and fit. *Oxygen* shows you how to stay that way.

BY JENNIFER ACOSTA SCOTT | PHOTOGRAPHY STEWART VOLLAND

You may be far removed from the hallowed halls of higher learning, but that doesn't mean you have to give up all your college ways. In fact, some behaviors you adopted as a student can be carried over to your "grown-up" years for a healthier and more fulfilling lifestyle.

a few habits to keep

Read on for our list of best campus customs and reasons you shouldn't kiss them goodbye at graduation.

GROUP SPORTS

If you loved those intramural soccer matches, take heart – playing on a team is a great way to enhance your exercise routine. Sports such as basketball, volleyball and flag football get your blood pumping and contribute to an overall feeling of wellness, says Eric



Co-ed soccer:

fresh air, exercise...

cute guys in shorts.

Lichter, cofounder of Speed Strength, an athlete training center in Cleveland, Ohio. Being part of a larger group may also make you more likely to challenge yourself – it's harder to give up when your teammates are counting on you for the game-winning home run. Plus, these activities can be a lot more fun than traditional workouts, which makes them easier to stick with than tedious treadmill sessions. "They're a lot more fun when you're with other people," Lichter says. "It's a good thing to enjoy exercise." For a list of local sports teams, call the parks and recreation department, or visit www.eteamz.com.

PIZZA MUNCHING

Those weekend pizzeria runs don't have to be a thing of the past. While pizza can be high in calories and saturated fat, a few smart choices can turn it into a healthy and filling meal.

Flavorful vegetables such as tomatoes and bell peppers are low in fat and high in nutrition, making them the perfect pizza toppers, says Katherine Tallmadge, a dietician and author of *Diet Simple: 192 Mental Tricks, Substitutions, Habits and Inspirations* (LifeLine, 2004). If you must have meat, pass on the pepperoni and choose grilled chicken or turkey instead.

Don't forget to do a crust check – deep-dish doughs wreak havoc on your diet. “Any kind of thick crust is going to be fattening,” Tallmadge says. Good thin-crust choices include Domino's Veggie Feast, (168 calories and 9.5 grams of fat per slice), and Pizza Hut's Veggie Lover's Pizza (180 calories and seven grams of fat per slice).

PHILANTHROPY

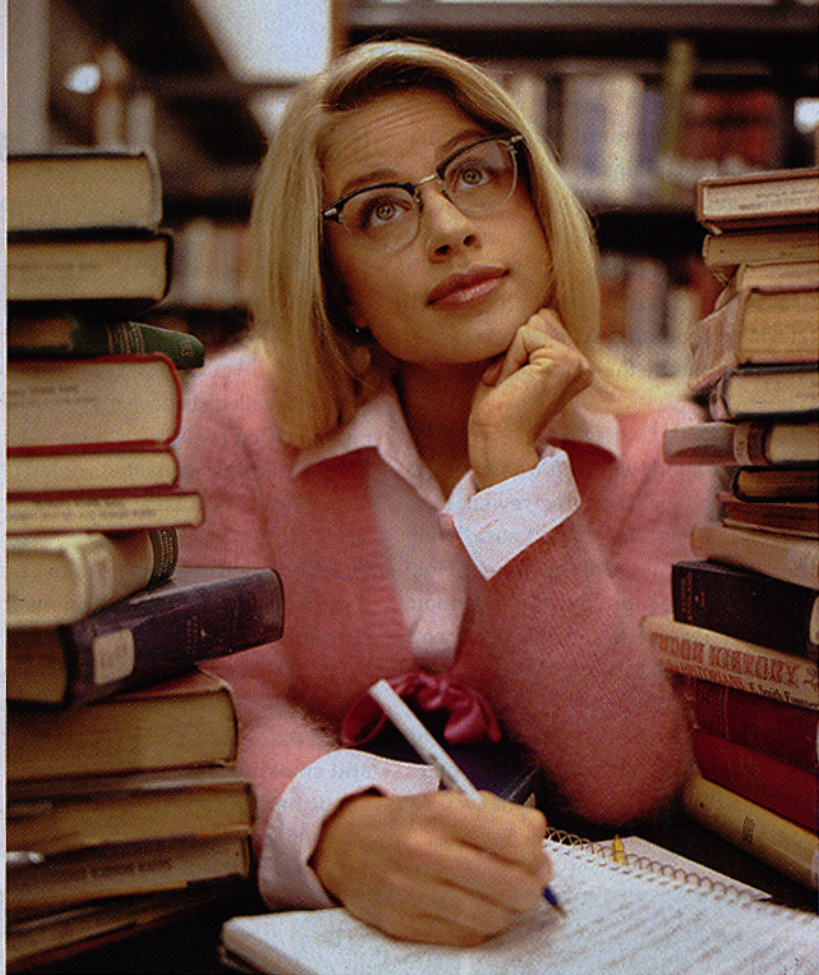
Remember how good you felt after a day of volunteering with your club or sorority? It wasn't all in your head. Doing good deeds, whether it's serving in the local soup kitchen or donating some cash to your favorite charity, can have a profound psychological impact, according to Dr. Daniel Pearson III, chair of the psychiatry department at Methodist Health Center in Dallas.

“There is often a sense of accomplishment and a sense of giving oneself to a higher end,” Pearson says. Virtuous acts also tend to make you feel empowered and in control of your life, since your work is making a positive impact on someone else.

Not sure where to begin? Check out www.volunteermatch.org, where you can search for volunteer opportunities in your community.

LEARNING

You may not be taking classes anymore, but it's crucial to keep flexing those mental muscles. Many experts believe that keeping your mind active actually decreases your risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. “Intellectual stimulation is thought to increase the number of connections or synapses in the brain,” says Dr. William Pendlebury, a professor of pathology and neurology at the University of Vermont in Burlington. “One can actually increase density of interconnection among the neurons of the brain, and in that way create a more robust



Between classes: the best time at school. ←



network for information processing," Pendlebury explains.

To get your brain boost, make a point to visit your local library or bookstore on a regular basis. Not a reader? Crossword puzzles and intellectual television programs such as documentaries may serve the same function.

INDULGING YOURSELF

If you've been working really hard lately, don't be afraid to revisit that semester when you "took it easy" with few classes and lots of free time. Doing something nice for yourself is a good way to relieve stresses brought on by demanding work schedules and long lists of commitments, which can leave you more prone to illness. "You have to try to keep yourself as healthy as possible in order to keep doing what you're doing," Pearson says.



Kick those bad habits you picked up in college such as smoking and drinking. Those nicotine and alcohol fixes can be hard to give up, but you will save yourself from a plethora of health problems in the future.

Other rewards, such as a new outfit after finishing a difficult project, are psychologically healthy because they recognize the importance of your achievements. "It's important for people to acknowledge their accomplishments and to acknowledge what they have done," Pearson says. "A lot of people have trouble doing that."

So treat yourself to the occasional dessert or lazy night in front of the tele-

If you've been working really hard lately, don't be afraid to revisit that semester when you took it easy and relaxed.

vision. Remember, not everything has to be boring to be good for you.

a few habits to toss

Not every college behavior is worth hanging on to. Don't wait: kick these habits to the curb like last semester's notes.

SMOKING

The nicotine fix can be hard to give up if you nurtured it during all-night study sessions and pub crawls. According to a 2004 study by the University of Wisconsin, 90 percent of college students who were daily smokers were still smoking four years later, as were about half of those who occasionally smoked in college. But cigarettes are

to find out how much you've spent on cigarettes to date.

EXCESSIVE DRINKING

Besides making you less aware of your surroundings and a danger behind the wheel, getting blitzed at the bar can create health problems in the long run, including liver problems and some cancers. It may even contribute to weight problems. A recent study at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found that people who infrequently consumed larger quantities of alcohol tended to have a higher body-mass index than those who frequently drank small amounts. The moral of the story? Feel free to have that glass of wine, but think twice before the next round.

ERRATIC SLEEPING

Sure, it may feel good to sleep late on Saturday after getting only a few hours of shut-eye during the week, but your body will pay the price. Screwy sleep patterns make you more prone to illnesses such as colds, flu and even depression, says Dr. Dana Simpler, a physician at MD Mercy Hospital in Baltimore. Any chronic condition you have, such as migraines, can also worsen when you're on an off-the-wall sleeping schedule.

The solution? Plan a solid block of sleep time into your schedule every night, and be consistent. If you have trouble falling asleep at an earlier hour, keep the lights low in your house during the evenings and use room-darkening shades in the bedroom to create an environment more conducive to sleep, says Dr. David Schulman, who practices sleep medicine at Emory University in Atlanta. "The body has biological drives that make it easier to sleep when it's dark," Schulman says. Other sleep tricks: Take warm baths before bed and cut out caffeine after 12:00 p.m. ☒

an insidious habit: Smoking accounts for at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths, according to the American Cancer Society. And it puts you at higher risk for heart disease, strokes and a plethora of other health problems. For women, smoking can also increase the risk of infertility.

Not convinced yet? Visit the Cost of Smoking Calculator (www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/cigarette.asp)