Survival strategies in a ‘crazybusy’ world

By Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.

Too many of us these days live in a constant state of rushing around, running late and pushing ourselves to accomplish more than is reasonable or possible. We don’t like feeling frantic so often, but we’re starting to accept it. Being “crazybusy,” we tell ourselves, is just an inevitable part of life in a modern world.

But if we’re not careful, we’ll get so busy that we’ll miss taking the time to think and to feel. We’ll lessen our own opportunities to complete a thought, develop a conversation or reflect upon a complex set of emotions.

How did this happen?

The crazybusy trend is not merely a by-product of today’s high-speed, globalized society. It’s a defining feature: we live in a world of 24-7 connectivity, escalating demands, higher expectations and economic uncertainty. The fallout for many of us personally is the sinking feeling that we’re not in control of our own lives, and this raises everyone’s stress level. It makes people sick, causes accidents and errors, makes otherwise pleasant individuals rude, and reduces our general level of happiness.

Hope, optimism, confidence and enthusiasm—positive emotional energy—make for success and happiness these days, just as they always have. But one difference now is that the harried pace of modern life makes it more difficult to maintain these positive attitudes. Our lives today can seem like riding a bike no-handed while reading a book and juggling six eggs, but it doesn’t have to be that way. Here are some strategies to help you cope:

- **Do what matters the most to you.** Because technology has allowed us to do so much more than we used to be able to do, it’s tempting to try to do everything. But at the core of living a meaningful life is the ability to treasure and protect our most important connections: people, places, activities, pets, spiritual matters, music, even objects. Focus on what you enjoy the most and on what you do best. Choose and prioritize. In order to do well and be happy, you need to say “no, thank you” to many people and activities.

- **Create a positive emotional environment wherever you are.** Surround yourself with people who bring...
out the best in you. This is more important than you may imagine. When you feel safe and secure in your surroundings, when you feel welcomed and appreciated, you think better, behave better, work better and are better able to help others. In less positive atmospheres, you lose flexibility, enthusiasm, patience and humor. You become less able to cooperate, plan, delegate and perform all the functions essential to surviving and thriving in a busy environment.

Do less screensucking. We have all fallen under the spell of the small screen and its seductive appeal. We feel compelled to log on, boot up, download. It’s a modern addiction and, like addicts, we itch and scratch until we get our fix. But we need to log off and to be there in person, without distractions—whenever our emotions matter, whenever subtlety counts, whenever the issues are complex and in need of explanation or the content is joyful and in need of celebration.

Identify and control the sources of “gemmelsmerch.” This is the force that distracts us from what we want or ought to be doing. For example:

Watching TV can be fun, as long as it doesn’t consume your attention at the expense of doing what you need to be doing. Set a time limit for yourself. Use one of the many available devices that allow you to watch programs on your schedule. Radio can be addictive as well. Save the talk shows for when you’re doing dishes, sorting laundry, or driving the car.

Smart phones and other mobile apps are great too. They just need to be controlled. Develop a system that works for you: when you take and return calls, how you prioritize your email, and so on. We have to learn how to use the technology that we have invented, rather than letting it use us. It should improve, not replace, our human connections.

Technology has extended the number of items we have to keep track of. And with the torrent of information coming at us, we’re likely to miss a lot, which makes us feel guilty. This guilt, or “nano-guilt” in its modern manifestation, is what you feel when you miss something or disappoint someone, even though you know that keeping track of everything is impossible and you will never have enough time to please everyone. Accept that you have made some difficult but necessary choices, and while this may make you feel a little sad or frustrated, it’s the best you can do.

Organize—but just enough. Clutter has become a major force in our lives. We have to manage it, or it will win out. But you don’t have to be a neat freak. Just take it seriously enough to keep organization from becoming a problem. Be sufficiently well organized so you do not constantly waste time trying to find things.

One of the best strategies is the acronym OHIO: Only Handle It Once (whatever It is). File it, shelve it, hand it up, use it, respond to it, or throw it away.

Play. Engage imaginatively in whatever you are doing. By my definition, play is any activity that lights up your brain—any activity in which you become so engaged that you lose self-consciousness and become one with what you are doing. It’s those times when you say, “Yes, I’ve got it now. I’m on a roll.”

Play will naturally bring to bear the best part of your mind. You will not be wasting time. You will improve whatever it is that you are doing or discover new ways of doing it. You will not get distracted as easily. You will be more efficient and more effective—whether you’re carrying on a conversation with a family member or coworker or baking an apple pie.

Connect and communicate. One of the most important reasons many people fail at work or in their relationships is poor communication. Bring problems up sooner rather than later. Don’t let fear hold you back—the problem will only get worse. Particularly these days, when life goes so fast, it’s essential to communicate often and clearly.

Say what you mean. Mean what you say. Don’t assume a person knows what’s on your mind. Ask for clarification when you don’t understand. Pay attention to the subtleties of communication—tone of voice, body language, choice of words, pauses. Good communication requires your full attention.

—Adapted from the author’s book “CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap!” See We Recommend on page 8.

The myth and reality of multitasking

For many people, multitasking is exciting and often necessary, but it’s rarely as efficient or effective as devoting your attention to one activity. Actually, what most of us do is “frazz.” We multitask hurriedly, believing we are listening, writing and reading, all at the same time. We are actually switching our attention from one to the other so quickly that all activities seem to be simultaneous. But they are not. You will not be doing any of these tasks as effectively as if you were doing them one at a time.

The adrenalin rush you get from the excitement of multitasking may help in the short run, but it cannot be sustained. Each time you introduce a new object of attention into what you are doing, you dilute your attention on any one object.

If you give one task your full attention, you may get so good at it that your conscious mind can attend to other tasks. For example, you can ride a bicycle and ponder quantum mechanics, because the bike-riding is done on automatic pilot.

Sometimes people can do better work with extraneous sensory input such as music—and some kids actually do better homework while watching TV. But, if you look closely, you will see they are not watching television so much as enjoying the company of the TV.

While there is a place for what is commonly called multitasking, the notion that it is as effective as single tasking is wrong. When what you are doing is important, multitasking is a practice to be avoided. Just think of it as trying to play tennis with two balls.
How to explain the news to our children

Q My kids are picking up sensational, often scary, news from all over the place: TV, the Internet, other kids, school. I’m concerned about the impact of what they’re hearing. I try to answer their questions, but much of what they hear is hard to explain.

—P.M., Cedar Rapids, IA

A The 24-hour news cycle has blurred the distinction between news and entertainment. Kids get information from everywhere: television, Twitter, FaceBook and even feeds to their cell phones.

There are no easy answers to this dilemma. Depending on kids’ ages and temperaments, we can talk to them about the images and content they are seeing and hearing. Here are some guidelines from Common Sense Media:

FOR ALL KIDS: Reassure them that you will do everything possible to keep them safe. Make sure they know that they don’t have to keep scared feelings to themselves.

FOR KIDS UNDER 7: Keep frightening news, especially repeated TV images, away from young kids. They don’t need to be exposed to things that will only scare them.

FOR KIDS 8–12: Many kids this age can handle a discussion about world events, but they are upset by images—of starving children, for example. This is hard to handle. Explain the basics of bias, prejudice, and civil and religious strife. Just be careful about making generalizations. And find out what kids already know about the subject. Don’t hesitate to do some research together.

FOR TEENS: Check in. They may well have absorbed the news independently of you. Talking with them can offer insights into their developing politics and sense of justice and morality. It will also give you a chance to throw your own insights into the mix. Just don’t dismiss their ideas—since that’s a sure way to shut down the conversation immediately.

RESEARCH REVIEW

‘I’ll make a cup of coffee for you, dear’

In their 2011 State of Our Unions report, researchers from the University of Virginia’s National Marriage Project suggest that generosity matters more in our personal relationships than previously imagined. Men and women who scored high on the generosity scale were far more likely to report that they were “very happy” in their marriages. The benefits of a giving spirit were especially pronounced among couples with children.

Earlier studies have confirmed the importance of sexual intimacy, commitment and communication in a strong, happy marriage. This new finding—that generosity may be even more important than sex—adds a new dimension to our understanding of marital success.

“In marriage we are expected to do our fair share when it comes to housework and child care, but generosity is going above and beyond the ordinary expectations with small acts of service and making an extra effort to be affectionate,” says W. Bradford Wilcox, Ph.D., who led the research.

“Living that spirit of generosity in a marriage does foster a virtuous cycle that leads to both spouses on average being happier,” he adds.

In the Marriage Project study, generosity was defined as “the virtue of giving good things to one’s spouse freely and abundantly.” Those “good things” could even be small acts like making coffee in the morning or offering to run an errand.

The basic idea—that giving is good—seems fairly obvious, but it’s not always easy to be consistently generous to the people we live with. Marriage researcher John Gottman encourages married couples to say or do at least five positive things for each negative interaction with their partner—not an easy feat to accomplish.

It’s worth the effort, however, because the virtue of generosity seems to have a positive impact on the entire family, say researchers at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

“We see meaningful differences in parents’ behaviors,” says Ariel Knafo, Ph.D., principal investigator.

“In the long run we’d like to be able to see whether it’s children’s generosity that also makes parents more kind or the other way around. Probably it’s both.”

Boomers continue to feel younger than springtime

Some 76 million Baby Boomers are headed toward their retirement years, and the oldest of this large American demographic turned 65 in 2011. Boomers (now ages 47–66) have always had a youthful mindset, and they continue to feel younger than their actual years.

In a 1998 survey, boomers whose actual mean age was 42 said they felt 35. In 2003, boomers whose mean age was 47 said they felt 40.

And in a 2011 survey by AARP and GFK Custom Research, boomers whose mean age was 55 said they feel 47.

Here are their responses to the two questions: What is your age? Regardless of how old you are, how old do you feel?

Feel younger than my real age ………………………63%
Feel same as my real age ………………...………….17%
Feel older than my real age ………………...………….17%
Refused/No answer ………………...………….1%
When your parent has a new partner

By Susan Newman, Ph.D.

Chances are that one or both of your parents will be with another person at some point in your life. One might expect adult children to be thrilled when their parents find happiness in remarriage or someone special in their lives after a divorce or the death of a spouse. But it’s seldom that simple.

If you have not warmed up to your parent’s new arrangement or if it’s creating friction, your first step should be to figure out why you feel the way you do.

It could be that you’ve been protective of your parent and are uncomfortable with someone else taking over your role. Or the new person may be taking the place of a much-loved deceased parent. You might see him or her as competition for your parent’s time or you may have difficulty understanding the attraction or thinking about your parent as a sexually active person.

Choices can be puzzling

When the parent-child bond is intensely strong, a parent’s new love interest may cause a shift in the relationship that can feel unnerving to an adult child. The appeal of a younger woman to an older man or vice versa can also be disturbing. “Seeing my dad with someone my age feels so wrong,” says Molly of her father’s new girl friend. “Not to mention, I suspect his motives.”

Vicky held on to her dislike of her mother’s husband for many years—until she realized that her behavior was detrimental to her own children. “My stepfather is ‘Grandpa’ to my kids,” she says, “and I could see that my negative attitude was jeopardizing their relationship.”

If you are unhappy about your parent’s new partner, your parent will probably be torn between wanting to please you and wanting to move on with his or her life. Parents hope for their adult children’s acceptance and understanding just as they seek their approval for your choice of a mate.

Questions to ask

When you negate a parent’s choice of a partner, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What’s the point of my behavior? What do I hope to gain?
- How does my attitude affect my relationship with my parent?
- With the new partner? My parent’s relationship with her or his new partner?
- Will my behavior change my mother’s or father’s decision?

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New families, new roles

Coping with a parent’s mate choice requires acknowledging that traditions, boundaries and plans have changed. New partners with all of their relatives, children and different personalities can make the blending of families a challenge. Often there are financial or inheritance issues, and they can be sticky.

“Mom meant that painting was going to be for my dad’s new wife’s daughter,” says Jamie. Anticipate and discuss potential conflicts like this with your parent.

The choice of our parents’ mates belongs solely to them, but they will be influenced by your attitudes, feelings and actions. The more accepting you are, the easier it will be to deal with the irritants and problems inherent in blending and reblending families.

Keeping the peace

As you start to accept the fact of your parent having a new partner, you can begin to reduce any friction the new situation may have caused. Try to look at the relationship from your parent’s perspective. Remember, you can’t change a new partner’s personality, but you can change the way you respond. Think of your new family constellation as an extended support system—with more people to love you and your children.

If your parent is happy, try to let go of your uneasiness and dislikes. Look past the new person’s shortcomings and focus on his or her good points. If cordiality is the best you can manage, accept that.

Tell yourself, “I’m an adult. I can make alterations that will reflect my maturity and desire to maintain a supportive connection.” Being gracious takes less time and psychic energy, and you may grow to like, even love, your parent’s new partner or spouse.

Be an adult and give the new person a chance

If your older relative has met someone and you’re trying to get used to the idea, here are a few suggestions:

- The new person need not be viewed as replacing your other parent.
- Look for interests that you and the new person share, and do something together that you both enjoy.
- Try not to endanger your children’s relationship with a grandparent.
- Express any serious objections or concerns delicately and calmly.
- If you’re still having difficulty, avoid one-on-one situations with your parent’s partner. Staying in groups will help dissipate uncomfortable interactions.
- If the partner is still completely unacceptable to you, try to continue a separate relationship with your parent rather than sever the bond.
- Make a plan to talk and be with your parent, and stick to it.
- Don’t put your parent in the position of having to choose between you and a new partner.
- Make concessions and compromises if they will keep the bond to your parent strong.

-Adapted from the author’s books “Nobody’s Baby Now” (Walker and Co.) and “Under One Roof Again” (Lyons Press), www.susannewmanphd.com

It’s great when someone who’s been alone finds a new love interest.
What choices can young kids make themselves?

It’s important for kids to feel like they have some control over their own lives. And while most parents understand this, it’s not that easy to practice. Either we don’t give kids enough say or we give them too much. We assume that, if a few choices are good, more must be better.

Some parents ask a child to decide things that should not be open for discussion, like whether or not to eat breakfast and when to get dressed. But often parents turn what should be direct statements such as “it’s time to get dressed” or “we’re eating breakfast now” into questions.

“Their voices go up at the end of the sentence, and it sounds like they’re asking their kids if they want to do something rather than telling them it’s time to do it,” says early childhood educator Sally Tannen.

For toddlers and preschoolers

Being asked to make too many choices can make kids anxious and insecure. The trick is to give a child opportunities to exercise control within age-appropriate boundaries, says Michael K. Meyeroff, Ed.D., director of The Epicenter, Inc., a parent information center in Lindenhurst, Illinois. He suggests letting toddlers and preschoolers make decisions in the following areas:

▶ **DRESSING.** Lay out two or three outfits and allow your child to pick the one he or she prefers. Or ask, “The blue shirt or the red shirt?” The key is to limit the options. If you ask for a choice between a red or yellow shirt, and your child says “green,” stick to your guns, says psychologist Dana Chidekel, author of *Parents in Charge.* “If your toddler sees you mean business, he’ll stop testing.”

▶ **EATING.** Don’t ask young kids, “What do you want to eat?” Offering a toddler more than two options is confusing. Dr. Meyeroff suggests letting young children weigh in on the menu: “We’re having chicken and string beans tonight. Do you want mashed potatoes or rice?” Be patient. A three year old may take forever to pick a cereal. If your child has trouble deciding, ask: “Do you want me to help you make up your mind?”

▶ **PLAY ACTIVITIES.** Offer equipment and area choices: “You can play in your room or here in the kitchen with me.” Again, don’t ask, “What do you want to do?”

▶ **BEDTIME Routines.** Give young children a say in the order of their routines: putting on PJs, using the toilet, brushing their teeth. Allow kids to choose the book they want you to read to them, even if it’s the same one night after night.

**When not to offer choices**

When kids are tired and cranky, parents should not be offering choices. And don’t ask a young child to make inappropriate decisions, such as what to eat or what to watch on television. Make those choices based on factors a child is probably unaware of, such as how close the table is to a noisy wait-staff station or another distraction.

By the same token, don’t act as if kids have a choice when they don’t. For example, if it’s time to go home, don’t ask “Do you want to go now?” Instead, try the 5-3-1 system. Hold up five fingers and say, “You’ve got five minutes left to play.” Then “three minutes left to play,” then “one minute.”

**Expanding children’s choices**

Give kids between three and five limited say over their play activities and entertainment (such as whether to play a video on television or a computer game) or how to spend family time (a trip to the park or a board game at home).

They may also be allowed to expand some of their choices—over whether to brush their hair before or after they dress, for example. Parents just need to make it clear that there’s a difference between household rules and personal preferences. That is, four year olds may be allowed to choose what flavor of toothpaste they prefer, but not whether to brush their teeth.

Expanding school-age children’s decisions and building in some consequences for choices made

Give school-age children a say over all the decisions preschoolers make and add others as well.

Emphasize flexibility and the sharing of choices: “You picked the DVR last Saturday. Your sister gets to choose today.” Teach that fair is not always equal.

Encourage kids who have made a decision to reflect back on what factors influenced them and how they think it turned out.

In terms of clothing, offer as much leeway as your personal sense of aesthetics and the weather will allow.

If you ask children for their input on what to make for dinner, you might also ask them to help you cook. It’s a good way to learn what’s involved in meal preparation.

As children get into their tween years, give them more say. For example, let them be part of the discussion (though not necessarily the final decision maker) when your family is making a decision such as where to go on vacation, what instrument to play or an activity to participate in.

Tweens also need to learn from the consequences of their choices: for example, the eight year old who was dying to take ballet classes and changed her mind a month later. Encourage kids to stick by their decisions for at least a trial period, unless there is a problem. This helps them develop the skills to make better choices and decisions in the future.
The 5 qualities we’re all looking for in a good boss

By Jim Finkelstein
& Matt Finkelstein

We’ve all had bosses we liked (or didn’t), and many of us have also discovered that when it comes to being a really good boss, there’s more to it than meets the eye.

At different times in our lives, we all have opportunities to be “the boss.” It can be at work, at home or in our communities. And, clearly, our society needs leadership. But not all leaders are created equal, of course. Here are five characteristics of good bosses—and happily for us, they are not mutually exclusive. If you’re lucky, you may get (or be) the whole package.

The Listener. This boss appreciates hearing different points of view. Listeners respect other people’s ideas, considerations and suggestions. They may not act on every idea, but they value the input.

Listeners also understand that people were hired for a reason. They trust employees and depend on them. What makes Listeners such good bosses is that they often have insights beyond their own experience and vision—insights that are influenced by many angles and perspectives. Listeners are aware that when employees are encouraged to voice their opinions and ideas, they are more likely to feel inspired and engaged.

The Empowerer. This boss allows workers to run their own show and lets them learn by making some mistakes. Empowerers build an atmosphere of trust and support, and they cultivate leadership in their work teams. After a team identifies tasks and creates a plan, the Empowerer lets members decide the nuts and bolts of how the work will actually get done.

Empowerers don’t delegate aimlessly, however, or create a sense of subdivision in their teams. Rather, they engage employees in a focused manner, from the ground up. Employees are inspired to take on leadership roles and collaborate, both with their boss and with others. As a boss, the Empowerer can simultaneously ignite productivity, personal development and satisfaction among her or his employees.

The Mentor. A teacher, a coach or a guide—this boss can be all three. The Mentor does not necessarily have to be an older person, but it helps if he or she is a tad wiser in a specific area or simply willing to share information. Mentors tend to understand and relate to employees’ experiences, and they’re good at identifying individuals who need or want mentoring.

The Mentor’s relationship with an employee is constructive: in other words, both criticism and praise are offered for the purpose of seeing growth in the employee’s set of skills. Mentorship, as an experience, can be offered or subtly developed over time. With either approach, the goal has both present and future applications. It builds on the worker’s current skills, with an eye to further development over the course of a career. Mentors inspire employees to be productive and engaged. They help to ensure a future both for the mentored person and for the employer.

The Cool Dude/Dudette. It’s great to have a boss who can laugh and have fun, and who likes employees to have a good time too. Cool bosses are able to maintain a certain aura of authority while creating a likeable and lively work atmosphere. They want employees to like what they’re doing, and they create occasions for small diversions within the confines of getting the job done well.

Cool bosses reward employees with time off or special events within the realm of an acceptable workplace culture. Basically the Cool Dude/Dudette understands that employees are people, that people like to enjoy themselves, and that happy employees are more likely to be healthy, productive and engaged.

The Creator. Apple innovator Steve Jobs comes to mind as a Creator boss who inspired invention. Creators sometimes push the limits of their employees in an effort to ignite innovation. They challenge people’s intellect and often question the status quo in order to encourage the development of new products and ideas from within.

Creators can embody the spirit of imagination without being overly demanding. And because creativity comes from a particular mindset, the Creator boss is usually able to identify those on his or her team who think this way. Creator bosses tend to be both motivational and collaborative.

Traits in common

These five bosses, or rather their respective characteristics, exemplify what makes for healthy leadership within organizations. Some bosses embody many or all of these characteristics, and the best bosses are able to reflect on their own natural inclinations and experiences—leveraging their assets and strengthening areas of weakness.

Traits in common among good bosses make for a great boss as well: someone collaborative, communicative, engaging and inspirational.

As we look for a new generation of leaders of all ages and backgrounds, many of us will realize that great leadership can happen wherever you are and whatever the circumstances.

—The authors, father and son, are partners in Future Sense Inc. Jim is author of the book “Fuse: Making Sense of the New Cogenerational Workplace” (see fusethebook.com).
A HEALTHY YOU

Don’t just sit at your desk, get moving

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e keep reading about the importance of daily exercise at every age. But what if you sit at a desk most of the day? You may think you can protect yourself by exercising after working hours, but even regular exercise does not make up for being sedentary most of the time.

Studies have shown that sitting for long periods causes back strain and weakens muscles. It slows metabolism and increases the risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease, among other health problems. Experts say the solution is to make a point to get up and move throughout the workday.

Here are some suggestions for incorporating light-exercise breaks and movement into the workday:

Look for opportunities to move around. Take the stairs rather than the elevator. Walk to a coworker’s desk instead of sending an instant message. Learn to sit on a stability or balance ball part of the day.

“You’re always moving a little bit when you’re on the phone or typing email,” one balance ball user comments. Or stand while you’re working. You can also try doing stretches and using resistance bands.

Take short exercise breaks. This works best when you do it with others. Some call the practice “a 10-minute recess” or a “structured group activity break.” Some companies also encourage “walking meetings,” using treadmills in a conference room.

Fending off those sneaky snack attacks

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nacking has become so common it now constitutes “a full eating event,” or a fourth meal, averaging about 580 calories a day in the American diet, according to Purdue University researcher Richard Mattes, Ph.D.

Snacking discourages healthy eating at mealtime and is a major cause of weight gain. Two of the leading culprits are sugar-sweetened beverages and potato chips.

Many snacks are crafted to be “hyperpalatable” by the layering of sugar, salt and fat, says David A. Kessler, M.D., author of The End of Overeating. The brain can even “light up” with dopamine at the thought of potato chips, Oreos or Twinkies.

Here’s what you can do to take charge:

DON’T KEEP UNHEALTHY SNACKS IN THE HOUSE. Shop the perimeter of the grocery store where fresh produce and from-scratch foods are more likely to be found. Avoid the packaged goods aisle.

READ AND HEED NUTRITION LABELS. Avoid snack products containing high fructose corn syrup and other syrups, sugars of all kinds, sweeteners, molasses, dextrose, sodium and saturated fat.

PLAN TWO SNACKS A DAY. The foods most linked to weight loss can also be served as snacks: yogurt, nuts, fruits, whole grains and vegetables. Plain popcorn is another healthy snack. Use carrot or celery sticks instead of crackers for dipping.

SERVE RAW VEGETABLES with a low-fat yogurt dip before dinner. And after dinner, instead of pie, choose a small bowl of berries with a touch of lemon and sugar.

—Adapted from the Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter

Physical activity is good for the brain as well as the body

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ew studies add to the already strong body of evidence that staying active physically is important for the brain as well as the body.

In one study, researchers in Paris and Boston examined data from the Women’s Antioxidant Cardiovascular Study. They found that the equivalent of a daily, brisk 30-minute walk was associated with lower risk of cognitive impairment. As activity levels increased among nearly 3,000 study participants, the rate of cognitive decline also decreased.

“Exercise has an effect on improving blood flow to the brain, just as exercise improves the blood flow to your organs and muscles,” says Irwin H. Rosenberg, M.D., of Tufts University.

For a healthier restaurant breakfast

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n this page last month, we talked about eating in restaurants with a focus on lunch and dinner options. These days, more and more people are eating their first meal of the day en route to work or school, and this poses a challenge. Many items on the typical breakfast menu are high in calories, fat, sodium and carbs. Here are some tips for a healthier breakfast out:

Look for small meal specials. Better yet, share your breakfast with a companion for half the calories, fat and sodium. Don’t be afraid to “special order.” Ask for one egg instead of two or three.

Skip the cheese. This can knock off hundreds of calories. Ask for condiments such as butter, syrup and sauces on the side.

Choose fruit instead of potatoes whenever that option is available. Or ask for a slice of unbuttered whole-wheat toast as a side dish.

Resist the omelets. They only sound healthy. A typical spinach and mushroom omelet can run up to 900 calories with 26 grams of saturated fat. Look for “light,” “fit” or “heart-healthy” choices on the menu.

Watch out for the baked goods. Cinnamon rolls, giant muffins and coffee cakes can add up to 600 calories or more of refined flour, sugar and fat.

Check the restaurant’s website. Look for healthy choices before you visit. And reserve eating breakfast out for special occasions.
Living simpler, saner and with a lot less stress

Is the tail wagging the dog in your life? In other words, are you taildogging? Are you moving faster and pushing harder on yourself, your kids, your work, your spouse—out of a fear that, if you don’t, you (and they) will be left behind?

If so, you may also be pizzled as well. That’s the feeling of being puzzled and ticked off—when you can’t seem to make it through dinner, a meeting or even a walk in the park without someone having to take a cell phone call?

What about doomdarts? Those are the obligations you forgot that pop suddenly into your consciousness like so many poisoned darts.

These are a few choice words invented by the noted author and psychiatrist Edward B. Hallowell to describe the frenzied reality of our lives these days. In his book, CrazyBusy, Dr. Hallowell spells out why we keep so busy and how this extreme “busy-ness” can sap us of our creativity, our humanity and our mental well-being.

The impulse to be busy can be turned to our advantage, he says, and his book provides helpful solutions to the problems so many of us face from being overstretched.

The author suggests ways to take back our sanity and to reconnect with what truly matters to us individually. Indeed, that’s one of the keys to a less frantic existence: to spend more time doing what we care about the most (see front page feature).

Dr. Hallowell is a wonderful writer who speaks clearly and directly, with compassion, humor and understanding. He tells us how to leave the “F” state (Frantic, Frenzied, Forgetful, Frustrated) and how to arrive at the “C” state (Clear, Calm, Collected, Consistent, Courteous). He offers sound, sane advice for all of us who suffer from the harried pace of modern life.

CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! (Ballantine, paperback) is available in bookstores, online and also as a Kindle eBook.

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