



# live well, work well

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## LOLCats and 4 More Concentration-Boosters

At home and at work, we'd all get more done with better concentration. These five research-based tips can help you to focus and achieve (and yes, cute cat pictures are one of them!).

### 1. Start Moving More.

Adults who start to exercise regularly also show significant improvements in concentration (as well as memory, planning, multi-tasking ability, and more). In one published study, they made those gains with just 30 minutes of walking, jogging, or cycling, three times a week. Strength training works too, research finds. A 2012 review of 10 previous studies noted that when adults lift weights just twice a week, their attention level gets stronger (as do memory, problem-solving skills, and other mental abilities). Why does exercise help the brain? It isn't a muscle, of course. But, the theory goes, physical activity gets the heart to pump more blood to the brain, which helps it to stay healthy and develop further, even as we age.

### 2. Twist and Stretch.

Just 20 minutes of daily yoga can help you concentrate. That's according to new research from this May's *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*. After a yoga session, the practitioners had quicker reaction times and increased accuracy on mental tests. Earlier research also found that regular yoga session lead to improved concentration, as well as reduced anxiety and increased motivation.

### 3. Sit Quietly.

Buddhist meditation is intended to quiet the mind and achieve inner peace. Research shows that, by helping practitioners to tune out mental chatter and other distractions, meditation goes a long way toward improving concentration.

It's a demanding discipline, but with various studies finding that it helps reduce stress, chronic pain, insomnia, and anxiety, you may find meditation to be worth exploring.

### 4. Take a Whiff.

The scents of rosemary and peppermint can help you focus. Studies have shown that aromatherapy - using the scent of essential oils - really does improve mental performance, including concentration.

Whether you're choosing candles, sachets, or diffusers (which heat the oils to turn them into a breathable vapor), stick with aromatherapy options that use essential oils, which are distilled directly from the plants.



### 5. Embrace Cuteness.

There's at least one in every office (maybe it's you) - the person obsessed with cute kitten pictures, zany cat videos, and other celebrity feline media. A 2012 peer-reviewed study concluded that these people have more focus to get things done.

"Results show that participants performed tasks requiring focused attention more carefully after viewing cute images," the researchers wrote. Why? The theory is that we get absorbed by the cat pictures and feel good about it, and that happy attention carries over into other tasks.

Of course, that's not license to spend half your workday on YouTube. Just a little cuteness at the start of your day may help you accomplish more ... and do it with a smile on your face!

## Distracted Walking

Cellphone usage has long been considered hazardous while driving, with 47 states having at least some restrictions limiting cell phone operation while behind the wheel. Now new research shows that mobile devices can also lead to injuries for distracted pedestrians as well.

The report is titled "Pedestrian injuries due to mobile phone use in public places." After mining data from the National Electronic Surveillance System, researchers estimated that the number of pedestrians who are treated in an emergency room every year for injuries suffered while using cellphones has more than doubled since 2004.

In 2010, the most recent year surveyed, over 1,506 people were admitted for injuries suffered from inattentive walking.

The study's lead author called for more awareness when traveling by foot. Additionally, the CDC recommends crossing streets only in designated crosswalks, observing drivers who appear to be turning, and increasing visibility with reflective clothing and a flashlight when walking at night.

### DID YOU KNOW

According to a 2012 study, nearly one in three pedestrians is distracted by a mobile device while crossing busy intersections.



## Summer Dieting Tips

While we often think of winter as the season most likely to wreak havoc on our waists, all that barbeque, potato salad, beer and ice cream can pack quite the caloric punch when the sun is hot and the days are long. To keep your diet in check and avoid overdoing it this summer, follow these simple tips:

1. **Substitute, substitute, substitute.** Swap grilled fish and veggie kabobs in place of steak and pork. Substitute frozen yogurt or popsicles for ice cream.
2. **Drink lots of water.** Not only is it important to stay hydrated during the hottest time of the year, water also fills you up between meals, resulting in fewer calories consumed.
3. **Turn down the air conditioning.** Studies show that when your body is exposed to heat and humidity, your appetite decreases and you eat less.

## Surviving a Heat Wave

An area is said to be experiencing a heat wave when temperatures are above normal for the region for at least four days in a row. With much of the country approaching near-record high temperatures this summer, it's important to know what steps to take when heat becomes deadly.

1. Remain in air-conditioned buildings. Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device.
2. Limit outdoor activity, especially during midday when it is hottest, and avoid direct sunlight. When outside, wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
3. Take cool showers or baths to lower your body temperature.
4. Drink more water than usual and don't wait until you are thirsty. Drink two to four cups of water every hour while working or exercising outside.
5. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and liquids containing a high amount of sugar, which can dehydrate you.
6. Monitor local weather reports for extreme heat warnings.
7. Never leave people or pets in a closed, parked vehicle.
8. Learn the symptoms of heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and how to respond.

4. **Exercise.** Take advantage of the warm weather by going for a jog or swim, or playing an outdoor sport. Just be careful to exercise during the cooler part of the day and drink plenty of water.



## 20-Minute Chicken Creole

This Southern dish is quick to make, and contains no added fat and very little added salt in its spicy tomato sauce.

- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 chicken breasts (whole, skinless, boneless)
- 1 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 cup low sodium chili sauce
- 1 large green pepper (chopped)
- 2 celery stalks (chopped)
- 1 small onion (chopped)
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. dried parsley
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp. salt

Heat pan over medium-high heat. Add vegetable oil and chicken and cook three to five minutes until no longer pink when cut. Reduce heat to medium. Add tomatoes with juice, chili sauce, green pepper, celery, onion, garlic, basil, parsley, cayenne pepper and salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cover the pan. Let simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve over cooked rice or whole grain pasta.

Yield: 8 servings. Each serving provides 130 calories, 3g of fat, 20mg of cholesterol, 230mg of sodium and 2g of fiber.

Source: Oregon State University Cooperative Extension Service