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THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP®

EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: MAINTAINING YOUR EFFECTIVENESS ON THE ROAD

According to the U.S. Travel Association, U.S. residents logged 452 million person-trips (one person away overnight or 50+ miles away from home) for business purposes in 2014, with 36.7% for meetings and events.

If part of your job is to travel, you know that being on the road can significantly affect your self-care. Last month, we provided an overview of some things you can do to take better care of yourself when traveling. This month we address PLANNING ahead with our seven simple and important tips.

1) **Set yourself up for a successful trip.**

   Many people go screeching out the door for business trips feeling exhausted, stressed, and unprepared. Don't do that!

   Starting your trip with the right frame of mind is essential. If you can set the tone with a workout, a healthy breakfast, good sleep, and time with the family, chances are that you will be in a better "head space" for success when you leave. Set your intention for your trip – example, "I will win this business," or, "I will give quality feedback and coaching to Joe who worked on the XYZ project."

2) **Check in with your family before you check in at the airport.**

   It can be challenging for families when one or both partners travel. National Center for Biotechnology Information research indicates that children's behavior and emotions are negatively affected (e.g., insecurity, missing parents' presence at an event, fear) when a parent travels, and that spouses, whether or not there are children at home, experience increased levels of stress (e.g., loneliness, lack of support in a crisis, increased burden at home).

   Many of these concerns are alleviated by open communication, learning what your partner needs and developing trust that you can be counted on to provide support. Use your dialogue skills and communicate with your family both before and during the trip. Set up times for online video calls.

3) **Find out what is available during your travel to your destination**.

   Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine research has verified what we already suspected – excessive business travel leads to obesity and poor health. Find out in advance what kind of food is available on the flights. Often the food on the flights is pre-packaged and terrible for you. Bring your own healthy provisions.

   The night before I go on a business trip, I pack food for the flight. I typically take a few hard-boiled eggs, string cheese, low carb tortillas, apples, carrots, and healthy salad dressing. I also carry a few packages of almonds, oatmeal, and tuna so that I have access to healthier, "smarter" food for breakfast, lunch, or dinner when I am on the road.

4) **Know where you are going.**

   Review your itinerary and know what is expected of you – avoid surprises.

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Once, when I hadn't reviewed my itinerary carefully, I discovered I had to make a change at O'Hare from United Airlines to American Airlines in half an hour. Surprise!

5) **Visualize asking for what you need – and do it when you are there.**

   Find out what is available when you get to your destination.

   Many people think that asking for exceptions will "cause a scene." That is not a good excuse for putting your health at risk. Besides, if you were on the other end of the request, wouldn't you want to ensure your customers' satisfaction? For example, once I asked for olive oil – but it didn't taste like olive oil. I said, "Please check" and the waitress came back most apologetically saying, "All these years I thought it was olive oil. Thanks for asking me to double check."

6) **Choose hotels, airlines, and restaurants that share your values**.

   For many of us, that means using travel partners that value health and fitness, peace and quiet, personal service and flexibility, and our needs.

   Identify the resources you require when you arrive at your destination and make sure they are available. Do a little research. Ask around.

7) **Keep a "well-being" journal on your trip.**

   Keep track of results. How did you feel about your decisions? How do you feel physically? What is the impact on your life? What do these patterns teach you about the benefits, challenges, and opportunities of positive self-care?

How can you ease the stress of travel when you take your next business trip – both on yourself and also on those left behind? How can you maintain your health, well-being, and effectiveness when you travel?