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Become A High Energy Mom

by Heidi Smith Luedtke

You hurry all day, tackling your too-long to-do list. By mid-afternoon, you want to collapse on the couch or get a quick fix of caffeine and carbs. Don't. We have expert advice on how to get – and sustain – the physical and emotional energy you need.

Eat

You'll be tired and cranky if you're low on fuel, says Rebecca Scritchfield, MA, RD, a health fitness specialist and registered dietician. Decide when to eat by attending to your body's hunger signals, not based on the clock or your moods, she says. Eating when you're not hungry causes weight gain, and extra weight weighs you down. Manage energy levels by eating a balanced plate of high-quality foods at each meal. Make it simple: Aim for one third fruits and vegetables, one third starchy carbohydrates (like beans, brown rice, or pasta) and one third lean protein.

Don't cut out fats and sugars, Scritchfield says, they're important. Sugars give you energy and fats keep you fuller, longer. When you combine them, the fats slow the release of sugar into your bloodstream, so you don't get a sugar rush and a subsequent drop in energy. The key is to choose the right sugars and fats, says Scritchfield. Fruit, whole grains, and dairy products are smart sugar sources for your diet. Eat omega-3 fats, too. Found in salmon and walnuts, omega-3 fats help repair damaged cells and protect against inflammation. Unsaturated fats in olive oil and avocados also protect your heart. Bottom line: If you want energy, focus on nutrition not restriction.

Move

When you're tired, exercise may feel like drudgery. "It's counterintuitive," says Kara Thom, an endurance athlete and co-author of *Hot (Sweaty) Mamas: Five Secrets to Life as a Fit Mom*. "Exercise helps frazzled moms save their sanity. It is both calming and energizing." If you're tired, get moving. You don't have to run a 5K; commit to a 10-minute walk. When you put on your workout clothes and start walking, you'll get some quiet time and a change of scenery. Bonus: You'll feel so good that you'll likely walk further than you planned. Take the kids along for a ride or a run. "Me time" gets lost when you're a mom, Thom says. If you feel like you have to hire a sitter

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to get a good workout, you're wrong. "Once I opened myself up to exercising with my kids, being a mom didn't restrict my workouts," says Thom, "it gave me new options." She rides her stationary bike in the driveway while her kids cycle around the cul-de-sac. In the winter, she pulls them on a sled while she snowshoes. The opportunities are endless if you think creatively. Commit to fitness. Soon the kids won't be able to keep up with you.

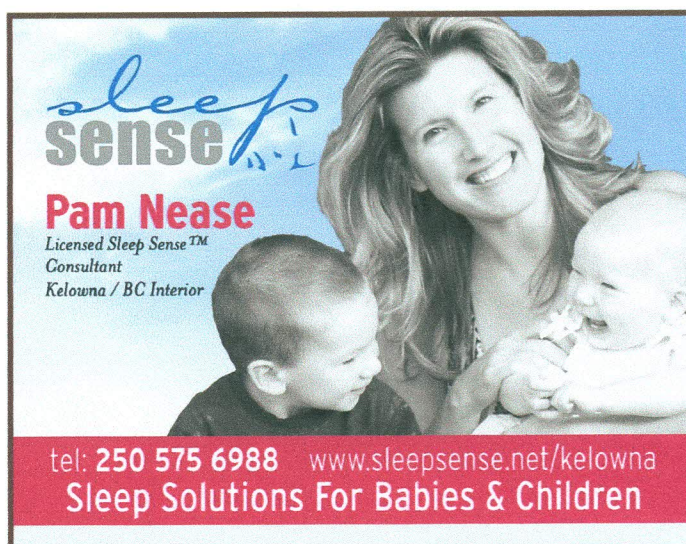
Work

As moms, we don't just want energy, we want to feel focused. When you jump from task to task, productivity plummets, according to Dave Crenshaw, author of *The Myth of Multitasking: How "Doing It All" Gets Nothing Done*. What we call multitasking is really switching back and forth between two (or more) tasks that require our attention, notes Crenshaw. The costs of switchtasking are high. Constant stops and starts drain your mental and emotional energy and decrease your efficiency. When you're unproductive, you feel frustrated. To preserve your positive outlook, do one thing at a time. Schedule time for each task and use a timer to stay focused. Turn off your cell phone or close your email to avoid distraction.

It is a myth that women are better at multitasking, Crenshaw says, juggling work and family is especially challenging. When you don't give people your full attention, they notice. Be present, Crenshaw advises. Make sure you meet kids' needs before moving on to other tasks. Giving minimal attention to people you love leaves everyone – including you – dissatisfied.

Sleep

If you want to bounce out of bed in the morning, get 7 to 9 hours of sleep. Keep a consistent bedtime. Don't work or clean house until you crash, says Janet Kinosian, author of *The Well-Rested Woman*, your body and your brain need time to unwind. Take advantage of your body's natural circadian rhythm. A drop in body temperature signals it's time to sleep. Mimic this natural occurrence by taking a warm bath or shower 90 minutes before bed, Kinosian suggests. Bedtime routines are good for grownups, too. Enjoy a cup of herbal



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tea or warm milk. Snuggle with your partner or read a good book. These rituals help you switch gears before sleep. Even if you're exhausted, you may have difficulty falling or staying asleep. Clock watching reminds you how little time you have left for sleep and how tired you'll feel tomorrow, says Kinosian. Turn your clock away to keep from obsessing over the time.

If your energy fizzles, be kind to yourself. Even high-energy moms have low-energy moments. Rest and regroup so you're ready for the next life-challenge. ■

Heidi Smith Luedtke is a personality psychologist and writer uses her energy to chase kids and dreams. Get more psychology lessons for life at www.heidiluedtke.com

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