

TGIF: How to make it a happy, healthy weekend

By Teddi Nicolaus

Ah, the weekend. Get ready to rewind, relax and rejuvenate. After all, you worked hard this week. You exercised, ate healthy and went to bed at a reasonable hour.

But for many of us, when the workday ends on Friday, our healthy weekday habits fly out the window. When the weekend comes, it can be hard to fight the urge to sleep until noon, overindulge and skip the healthy routines we've tried so hard to embrace during the week. In fact, studies show that we tend to weigh a bit more on Mondays than on Fridays. So how do we stay on track on the weekend, especially during a weekend packed with social gatherings, events and parties?

"I always recommend setting an intention on Friday before you leave the office," says health and wellness expert Megan Lyons, MBA. "How do you want to feel Monday



morning? You don't actually want to feel bad, physically and mentally, on Monday, so setting an intention on Friday afternoon helps us feel empowered and in control."

The weekend helps us feel mentally and physically optimal, but a healthy weekend will look different for each person, she says.

"For me, a healthy weekend means having experienced rest — not just sleep, but emotional rest as well. And fun, which might mean a new experience or time with family or friends," Lyons says. "It also means taking care of my body. I prioritize longer workouts on the weekend."

Whatever your weekend looks like, focus on including healthy habits instead of changing unhealthy ones. See how many veggies you can get in a day, or how many steps you can get, she says.

"Find what is truly restorative for you and build that in," Lyons says. "When you focus on adding in positive habits, the less healthy ones naturally crowd out."

It's the weekend!

It's almost Friday — the delicious day when you end your emails with "TGIF" or "Have a good weekend." Thankfully, having a good weekend is within easy reach, and Lyons offers a few tips to give you a boost.

- **Prep for success:** An hour or two spent each Sunday on meal planning and food preparation can go far toward making your work week healthier and easier. And here's another tip: It's OK to spend some quiet time catching up on work and preparing for the coming week.

"This is somewhat controversial to say, but I think that if a bit of work actually makes you feel better going into the week, it's worth it," Lyons says.

- **Find your happy place.** We're not robots that are designed to be in overdrive all the time, says Lyons. But what that means looks different for everyone. For you, it could mean listening to music, spending time with family or



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reading a book, while for someone else it could be gardening, playing sports or hiking in a new park.

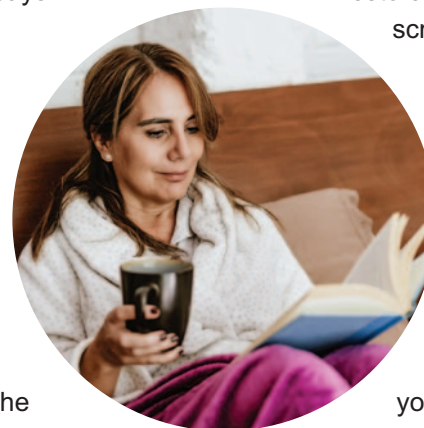
"I recommend thinking about what is truly restorative to you — hint: it's almost never scrolling through your phone — and scheduling in time for that every weekend."

- **Catch a few extra zzzs.** It's optimal for our circadian rhythms to have the same wake-up and sleep time daily. But most people are sleep deprived, so if you sleep in a little on the weekends, that's OK, Lyons says.

"But try to keep it to an hour or two of your normal wake up time so you don't get out of whack come Monday."

- **A little slip is fine.** Keep in mind that the "all or nothing" mentality can lead us astray. If you want to have a cupcake at your friend's birthday party on Friday night, go ahead, Lyons says. It doesn't mean the whole weekend is a wash.

"Instead, prioritize what is most important to you, enjoy that and stick to the rest of your healthy habits," Lyons says.



happy
WEEKEND!

Healthy, fun weekends with kids

For many parents, the Saturday and Sunday squares on the kitchen calendar are completely filled well in advance. But how much is too much?

"A healthy weekend for school-age kids should include a good mixture of family-centered activity and exercise," says Bethany Brown, DO, FAAP, a pediatrician in Owings Mills, Maryland.

When planning weekend activities, aim for balance. Set aside time for rest and relaxation at home, such as cooking a meal together or unstructured play.

A healthy weekend for kids should always factor in nutrition, sleep, emotional wellness and fitness. In addition to not overdoing the activities, make sure your children dial back the screen time.



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