

## Editor's notes:

If you're out of shape and at risk for a serious health problem because of it, a new study has found that how you think about your health is key to a healthy lifestyle.

The study looked at people who said they either didn't exercise, or exercised inconsistently. The researchers asked some of the participants to list "reasons" they should increase their levels of exercise and cardiovascular fitness. Other participants were asked to list "actions" they could take to improve their fitness, like joining a gym or working out with someone they knew.

The researchers found that after eight weeks, the participants who were asked to think of actions increased their exercise, while those who were asked to merely list reasons to exercise made no improvement. Motivating yourself to better health may be easier, say the researchers, if you think of what you could be doing rather than why you should be doing it. The results were originally published in the Journal of Applied Behavioral Research.

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Here are a few important dates in October:

**World Vegetarian Day, October 1** -- Founded by the North American Vegetarian Society in 1977, and the kick-off to Vegetarian Awareness Month.

**Great Books Week, October 2-8** -- Many people think of the "great books" as only literary classics, such as the novels of Charles Dickens or Jane Austen, but a great book can be any work that's shaped your mind and influenced your thinking. Great Books Week is devoted to celebrating and sharing books that have made a difference in everyone's lives.

**Yom Kippur, October 8** -- The Day of Atonement, one of the holiest days of the year for the Jewish people, traditionally observed with a 25-hour period of fasting and prayer.

**Leif Erickson Day, October 9** -- Celebrating the date when Norse explorer Leif Erickson first landed in North America, sometime in the early 11th century.

Beginning late in October, as our customers run out of Helix waybills, we will be distributing new, somewhat simpler replacements. We hope you will like them!

We are also trying to do a better job of letting Helix customers know about *all* the services we provide. Check out our website at [www.helixcourier.com](http://www.helixcourier.com), or have a chat with Sharon Coll at 519-453-0501. You may be surprised at all that we can do for you.

## Trick or treat! Halloween's mystical origins

The day we call Halloween has its origins in Samhain, a Celtic festival some 2,000 years old.

The Celts of Ireland, Britain, and northern France celebrated their new year on November 1 and believed that the line between life and death blurred the night before.

The Celtic priests, called Druids, built large sacred bonfires and sacrificed animals to their deities and tried to gain mystical information from the dead for their prophecies concerning the coming year.

The Celts would place a skeleton in their window on Hallows' Eve -- the night before Samhain -- to represent their dead. The jack-o'-lantern comes from an Irish legend about a farmer named Jack who tricked the devil and trapped him in a tree. The devil got revenge with a curse that forced Jack to wander the earth forever, by the light of a candle inside a hollowed-out turnip. ~~

## Facebook users: Friendly and trusting

Are you an average social networker? If so, you have about 229 Facebook friends, according to a recent Pew study, Social Networking Sites and Our Lives.

Just who are the "friends?"

The average list includes:

- High school friends: 22 percent
- Extended family: 12 percent
- Co-workers: 10 percent
- College friends: 9 percent
- Immediate family : 8 percent
- Voluntary groups: 7 percent
- Neighbours: 2 percent

And chances are you trust these people, and people in general. The study found that a Facebook user who uses the site multiple times per day is 43 percent more likely than other Internet users and more than three times as likely as non-Internet users to feel that most people can be trusted. ~



Happy Halloween from your friends at Helix!

## Want to get fired? Just make these mistakes

Some people seem incapable of holding down a job. And they'll probably tell you it's not their fault. Many people sabotage their careers with bad habits and a poor attitude. If you don't want to become one of them, steer clear of these mistakes that can land you on your employer's short list of people to let go:

**Chronic lateness** -- Showing up on time demonstrates reliability and commitment. If the boss doesn't know when to expect you, he or she may decide not to wait around for you to appear.

**Online antics** -- Resist the temptation to complain about your job online, or to post photos of yourself goofing off at work. They're hard to keep hidden, and they indicate that you're not serious about wanting to do the best job possible.

**Sloppy personal habits** -- Even in a "casual" workplace, appropriate dress and hygiene are important. Torn T-shirts, beach sandals, and uncombed hair look unprofessional in any setting.

**Egotism** -- You may sincerely believe that you're smarter and more capable than most of your co-workers, but if you refuse to compromise, ignore the chain of command, or otherwise behave arrogantly, you will alienate people whose support you need. Your skills may save you for a while, but in the long run, managers look for people they can enjoy working with.

**"It's not my job"** -- A good work ethic tells supervisors and co-workers they can depend on you for results. If you're constantly trying to evade extra duties or responsibility, you'll be seen as someone who doesn't care about the organization or its people.

**Dishonesty** -- A lie on your résumé can get you fired, but even causal lies in the workplace can gain you a reputation as someone who can't be trusted. Make an effort to tell the truth in every situation, especially when it means admitting a mistake.

## How a simple question can expand your perception of the world

One of the world's most famous paintings is Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*. Innovation expert Tom Wujec says that when curators hung it in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum after being restored, they tried an experiment: They asked museum visitors to write down questions they had about the painting. The questions collected were varied: How much did the painting cost? Had it ever been forged? Why did Rembrandt choose this subject to paint? Who were the people in the painting?

The curators then posted the questions, along with the answers, in a room next to the gallery where the painting hung. Visitors had to walk through that room before viewing the painting. Surprisingly, the average length of time visitors spent looking at the painting



jumped from about six minutes to half an hour. Art lovers walked back and forth between reading the questions and then reexamining the painting. They told museum officials that reading the questions encouraged them to look closer

and longer the the masterpiece and helped them to remember more details.

What does this story have to do with managers? It's an example of the importance of questions -- of the richness the answer to a question can add to our understanding of topics and situations, people and animals, and machines and operations. Whether you're having an informal exchange with a colleague or listening to a direct report explain a glitch in a procedure, ask a question. Or two. See where it leads.

## To achieve, don't seek 'vicarious' success

Success breeds more success, or so they say. But a study reported in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* seems to suggest that watching other people succeed lowers the motivation to strive for success on your own.

In an experiment, a group of test subjects watched videos of people completing a series of puzzles. Another group was shown videos where the puzzles were not solved, and a third group watched no videos at all. Then the groups were asked to complete similar puzzles themselves.

Subjects who had watched the puzzles get completed actually had the lowest rate of completion, compared with the other groups. Scientists call this "vicarious goal satiation," explaining that watching others achieve goals can provide a sense of achievement that drains the motivation to accomplish goals on one's own.

The lesson: To prime yourself for success, focus on what you need to do, and don't get distracted by others' efforts.