

New you

Why wait to create a new you? Live your best life now. This advice comes from researchers at Washington University:

- **Learn something new.** Take a class in a subject you enjoy or are curious about. Check your community colleges for noncredit continuing education classes. Rekindle your love of learning.
- **Volunteer.** It's good for your physical and mental health whether you're building a house for someone, ladling out soup for the homeless, or collecting canned goods. You'll make valuable community connections.
- **Get your social media house in order.** The Internet and social media have opened up exciting new avenues to connect with others and new vistas to share preferences in films, books, and music. Have fun. But be cautious. Check your default privacy settings. Log out and see what your profile looks like to the outside world. Make sure passwords are complex – Use upper and lowercase letters and a special character, such as \$. Don't use the same password for all social media accounts.
- **Rediscover the library.** The digital revolution has changed your local library. You can often download books online. Consider how much your library offers: novels and nonfiction works for all ages, how-to books, music CDs, movies on DVD or videotape, maps and reference works. Read the latest magazines or journals.
- **Step away from your desk.** Physical activity improves health, lowers stress, and increases productivity. And if those weren't reasons enough, research shows that exercise reduces the risk of diseases such as breast cancer, colon cancer, and Alzheimer's.
- **Pay down your credit card debt.** Put extra money toward the loans with the highest interest rates. Consolidate several small debts.
- **Use your smartphone to quit smoking.** You can tap into apps for messages of support and access websites that give step-by-step encouragement.
- **Kick the car habit.** Leave the SUV in the garage and try alternate means of transportation such as the bus or train, bicycling, walking, or park-and-ride commuting.
- **Parents:** Make every day count. Happy, well-adjusted children need happy, well-adjusted parents.
- **Get more sleep.**
- **Consume more culture.** The arts not only educate and entertain, they help us to better understand ourselves and others. Visit your local museums, galleries, theaters, dance companies, and music halls.

