



# STAND UP FOR HIS HEALTH

WOMEN CONTINUE TO BE A DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE MEN IN THEIR LIVES STAYING ALIVE AND WELL. TO HELP THE FELLAS IN YOURS, CHECK OUT THESE STORIES AND TIPS **BY GINA ROBERTS-GREY**

**L**adies, we're juggling a lot: running households, developing careers, managing finances, nurturing relationships and finding time for ourselves. Fifty-nine percent of us are also behind the wheel of our family's health care, according to data by Kantar Health. We are navigating everything from selecting doctors to scheduling appointments with them to overseeing daily medicine intake to deciding what's for dinner.

Our husbands, boyfriends, sons, fathers, friends and so on often depend on us in these matters. "Six or seven out of every ten men I see in my general practice are there because of a woman's influence," says Berry Pierre, D.O., M.P.H., an internal medicine physician in Boyton Beach, Florida, and assistant professor at Florida State University. "Very rarely are men gung ho about monitoring their health or seeking out health care themselves."

Women also spearhead family campaigns for routine screenings and preventive procedures. "I see cancer in all stages," says Cedrek McFadden, M.D., a clinical assistant professor at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine and a colorectal surgeon at the Greenville Health

System in Greenville, South Carolina. "Quite often I'll find a man's colon polyp, or cancer in a very early stage [when it's operable], because a woman insisted that he see me. Just this week I had a 55-year-old man come in who told me his wife put her foot down and insisted that he have a colonoscopy. That intervention is important, because one of the best ways to prevent colon cancer is finding polyps early via that procedure."

Sadly not all men heed the advice of the women in their lives. "I've seen men diagnosed with colon cancer that could probably have been prevented, but it wasn't caught in [time]. And so often that person's wife tells me she had urged her husband to have a colonoscopy sooner, but he didn't listen to her."

Wives aren't the only ones leading the charge, either. McFadden says on average moms accompany their college-age or adult children to his office for exams and tests "a lot more frequently than dads." While all that prodding and keeping tabs can sometimes be time-consuming, the efforts pay off. See how women across the country are helping their men stay on track when it comes to their well-being. »

***“If it weren't for my wife, I wouldn't be here.”*** —Ronnie Gee



## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY—AND SPOUSE



**Sophia & Bradley**

In 2009 Bradley Antoine was working three jobs as he and his wife, Sophia, saved for a house. "If I had any time off, I'd pick up odd jobs to earn a few extra bucks," says the 39-year-old. Often putting in 13 hours or more a day, Bradley attributed his searing headaches to his limited sleep schedule. "Friends agreed the pain was probably because I was working crazy hours and not getting a lot of sleep, so I didn't look into it further," he adds.

Buying into his self-diagnosis, Bradley kept the severity and frequency of his headaches from his wife. "I'd tell her I had one because I didn't sleep, but I didn't give details," he confesses. One morning the pain was so severe, Bradley couldn't open his eyes. "I couldn't think," he says. "I just wanted to lock myself in a closet—the headaches were so intense."

After Sophia implored him to get his blood pressure checked at the ER, Bradley agreed to use a self-service



**Nehemiah & Jennifer**

## USE FOOD AS FUEL

Raised as a vegetarian, Nehemiah J. Mabry, Ph.D., 31, an engineer in Raleigh, North Carolina, knew he had mastered the art of consuming the right foods: "I always thought I'd be the one in a relationship encouraging a partner to get her act together." But after he and Jennifer met in 2009, his diet regimen was flipped upside down.

"When Jennifer and I got together, I saw what eating healthy really consists of," he says about his wife of a year. A vegan, Jennifer wanted to up the couple's game and began looking for recipes that didn't include processed foods, artificial dyes or GMOs and other chemicals. "She got caught up in this movement, and I started saying, 'Hold on; you're passing me in the healthy eating department,'" says Nehemiah.

To help them both enjoy optimum health and weight, soon after they became engaged in 2014 Jennifer suggested the couple begin the New Year with a 40-day cleanse. "That was a trial of us eating vegan [together]," he says. "It started with juicing and then we slowly added in food."

Nehemiah was shocked by the results. "Not eating

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—DR. BERRY PIERRE

machine at a local CVS instead. That reading indicated his systolic blood pressure was greater than 200. "I called the pharmacist over and he said I needed to go to the hospital immediately," Bradley recalls. "Sophia pleaded with me to take that advice, and feeling the sincerity in her voice, I agreed to go to the hospital." There he was diagnosed with double kidney failure and told he needed lifesaving dialysis. "I panicked," he says. "I've seen family pass away on dialysis, so I was stubborn. I refused."

The next few days were filled with Bradley's unwavering determination to remain working despite his continuing headaches and throwing up and passing out. "My wife was begging me to stop and have the dialysis," Bradley says. "She was in tears, and when she cries it hurts me." He finally gave in.

After nearly five years on dialysis, Bradley received a kidney transplant in 2015. "I credit my wife and God for me being here. She's my warrior and advocate, who tirelessly took care of me," Bradley says had it not been for Sophia's persistence, he might not have survived those headaches. "Not only did she push me to finally take care of myself, but she also researched my condition and found the right doctor for me."

processed foods led to having better mental clarity," he says. That was important because he was in grad school at the time. He also slept better and saw a significant reduction in his chronic migraine headaches. "I've battled migraines my entire life," he adds. "Along with cutting out processed foods like microwavable dinners and snacks, I started drinking a lot more water. The proper hydration reduces my dry skin and migraine frequency."



**Give the gift of support.**

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF SUBJECTS (2); ARIEL SKELLEY/GETTY IMAGES.



Jennifer remains a vegan, and Nehemiah falls in between being a vegetarian and a vegan. But without his wife's influence, he says he wouldn't eat nearly as well as he does now. "She became the health advocate," he says.



**Carol & Ronnie**

## PARTNER IN STAYING HEALTHY

"I have a wonderful husband who is pitiful when it comes to his health," says Carol Gee, 67, a retiree in Stone Mountain, Georgia, of her hubby, Ronnie, also 67. Technology helps her look after him. "I schedule his appointments and keep track of them in my

smartphone," she says. That gives her peace of mind that her husband will be by her side for many years to come.

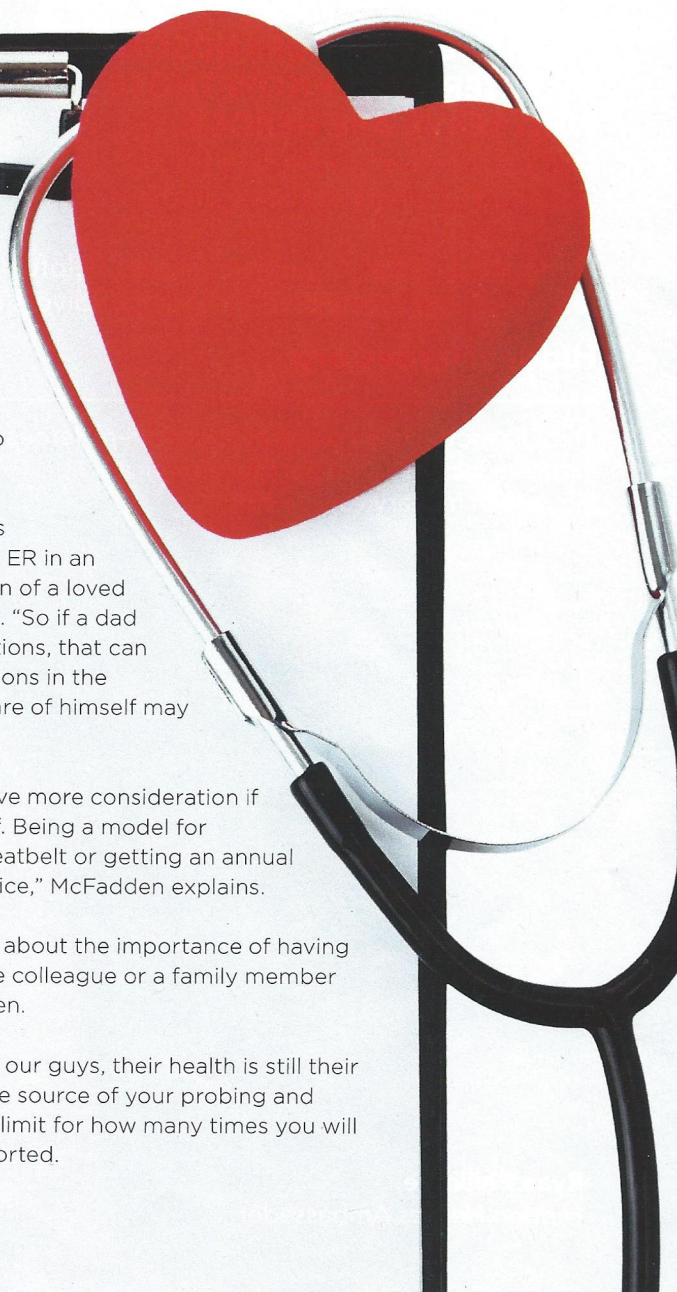
"Helping him is just one way I can demonstrate my love for him," adds Carol. "I go with him to all his doctors' appointments, as he does not always tell me the truth of what the doctor says about his various illnesses." By attending, Carol sees her husband's prescriptions and treatment plans and how she can help.

Neither husband nor wife resents the intervention. "If it weren't for my wife, I probably wouldn't be here," confesses Ronnie. "Guys always procrastinate, and I never would do what I'm supposed to be doing." But his wife of 43 years stays on top of his chronic health issues, including diabetes and heart disease. "She keeps me in check. I absolutely breathe a sigh of relief having her there," he adds.

## Medicine for Men

**Tired of receiving heavy pushback from him when you're only trying to help? Try these suggestions**

- ▶ **KEEP IT CALM.** Pierre says a nonchalant approach works best. Recommend having XYZ checked out instead of saying, "Oh, my! I think this is serious!" Says Pierre, "Men are less likely to see a doctor if they expect an ominous outcome."
- ▶ **DIG FOR THE ROOT OF RESISTANCE.** McFadden says a man's reluctance to have a procedure, schedule a checkup or go to the ER in an emergency could stem from fear of pain, bad news or the opinion of a loved one. "Men are generally influenced by past experiences," he says. "So if a dad or friend had a procedure that resulted in bad news or complications, that can be playing out in the background and impacting his health decisions in the present." Talking out what's really stopping a man from taking care of himself may remove that obstacle.
- ▶ **SET THE EXAMPLE.** Your words of wisdom will probably receive more consideration if you also get your flu shot or schedule a colonoscopy for yourself. Being a model for healthy living will influence his actions. "If you're not wearing a seatbelt or getting an annual mammogram, it will be hard for your husband to follow your advice," McFadden explains.
- ▶ **CALL FOR BACKUP.** Ask a male buddy to support a loved one about the importance of having a checkup or screening. "Enlisting the help of kids, a trusted male colleague or a family member can reinforce your message and prove your point," says McFadden.
- ▶ **KNOW YOUR BOUNDARIES.** As much as we want the best for our guys, their health is still their choice and responsibility. Be hopeful that they can see love as the source of your probing and pushing, but ultimately you have to know their boundaries. Set a limit for how many times you will ask while leaving an open space when they are ready to be supported.





A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a white blazer over a patterned top, is smiling broadly and looking towards the right. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office setting.

# *Fall Back in* **Love With Your Job**

ELIMINATE WORK UNHAPPINESS  
WITH THESE STEPS

BY GINA ROBERTS-GREY

# **MONEY & POWER**



**D**reading the sound of your morning alarm? You're not alone! Women of color are among the least contented at the workplace, with about one in three reporting overall job satisfaction, according to data crunched by Vanderbilt University. No longer loving your job (or never really having been enamored of it in the first place) can lead to tedious days. The unhappiness can also take a bite out of your health, causing headaches, a churning stomach, sleep trouble and more, says Jerry D. Smith, Jr., Psy.D., a psychologist in Nederland, Texas. Your love life can suffer, too. "Personal relationships often bear the brunt of discontent at work," says Smith. But that doesn't mean you're destined for drudgery day in and day out. Recognizing that you've lost the passion for your current position—and knowing how to rekindle that spark—can lead to less clock-watching and more fulfillment. Here are some tips to help you achieve just that.

## IDENTIFYING A WORK RUT

A constant knot in the pit of your stomach, or angst over having to spend one more second with an oh, so annoying coworker, is a sign the romance is over with your job. But there are a few other indicators that you're unhappy there. Recognize yourself in any of these instances? If so, it could be time for a professional intervention.

### YOU'RE OUT OF PAID TIME OFF

Have you used up all your vacation and personal or sick days? Unless they were spent on actual vacays or you had a legitimate reason (your child woke up with the stomach flu, for example), burning through those days just to avoid going in to the office could mean you're growing restless and dispirited. "When you feel stuck at work, you care less about your performance. You're no longer the perky, productive person you once were," says Tandee Salter, a business coach, consultant and founder of Tandee Salter Unlimited, LLC, in Columbus, Georgia. That goes for trading away work shifts, too.

### THE CLOCK IS SLOW

Let's face it: Few of us have a position that's continually filled with excitement, so you're going to have to muddle through a long, monotonous workday on occasion. But time at your desk shouldn't consistently be marked by regularly checking the clock—whose minute hand never seems to turn. Sometimes your typical eight hours can feel more like 18, says

Benton McTaggart, a career strategist and coach at SoFi, an online lending company in Dallas. "Those feelings of apathy can lead to mental checkouts," he says, "and you wishing you were somewhere else, doing something else."

### YOU DUCK OUT OF THE BREAK ROOM

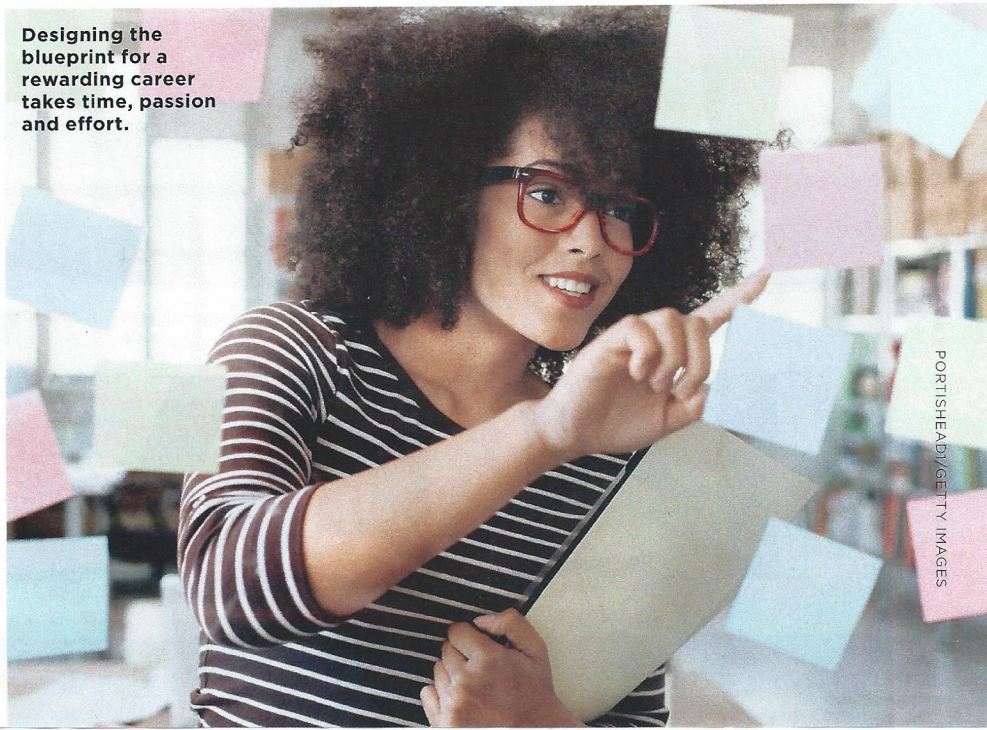
You once enjoyed bumping into a coworker near the coffee, but lately you're trying to time your mug refills for moments when you can avoid chitchat. Or maybe your latest go-to fashion accessory is a set of earbuds that reduce the odds that a colleague passing by will stop to strike up a conversation—even a friendly one. McTaggart says those actions show

you're someplace you don't want to be: "Even eating lunch alone every day by choice or [being irked by] small requests like 'can you pass me a pen,' may indicate workplace dissatisfaction."

### IT'S JUST A PAYCHECK

If you can't picture yourself growing old at your current place of employment, or only see your 9-to-5 as a necessary evil to pay for the roof over your head or to have health insurance, you've lost connection to your job. "You may even start using distancing language such as 'their project' instead of 'our project,'" says McTaggart. The same is true for spacing out during conference calls or meetings. »

**Designing the blueprint for a rewarding career takes time, passion and effort.**



PORTISHEAD/GETTY IMAGES



"Walking away from those situations having no idea what was discussed, even though there was much discussion and a clear agenda, signals your passion for your work has fizzled," says McTaggart.

### REIGNITING THE SPARK

Try these tricks to get back in the swing of things:

#### TAKE ON AN UNFAMILIAR ROLE

Mixing up your work routine can create opportunities to discover fresh interests and expand your professional skills. Patricia Thompson, Ph.D., a corporate psychologist and president of Silver Lining Psychology in Atlanta, says looking for new challenges can be reinvigorating even with an old job: "Find out if there are any 'stretch' assignments you can tackle." Flexing your creative muscles and going outside your comfort zone can stimulate excitement to show up to work every day.

#### HANG OUT WITH PEOPLE WHO LOVE WHAT THEY DO

As with any successful relationship, building a career takes time, passion and lots of hard work. And sometimes those things can be learned by keeping company with coworkers, others in your industry or even close friends in unrelated

### YOUR 3-STEP PLAN TO WORK HAPPINESS

Tips from executive business coach Dele Lowman Smith

**STEP 1. Reflect on what inspires you.** "What would you get out of bed for even without a paycheck?" asks Smith.

**STEP 2. Take inventory of your skills and experience.** "What training and education do you possess that is relevant to your career and/or company?" asks Smith.

**STEP 3. Hone in on unmet needs of your current employer.** "When you can apply yourself to a project that interests you, and is important to your boss, you'll not only be much happier, but you'll also become a much more valuable employee," Smith says.



Happy employees are productive employees.

fields who are enthusiastic about their career. "Seek out mentors, friends or family who have been able to keep the fire alive in their jobs to help you rediscover your passion for yours," says McTaggart. "That may remind you of why you fell in love with your job."

### *Just one in three women of color report overall job satisfaction.*

#### DON'T SQUANDER BREAKS

Forgoing a ten-minute walk around another floor of your building can make you resent your job. "Avoid eating lunch at your desk. You need to tune out for a little bit to give yourself a breather," explains Thompson. "We often think keeping a nose to the grindstone and working more makes us more effective." She adds that taking mindful downtime can boost energy, which can then impact productivity.

#### WRITE A DIFFERENT STORY

Every work interaction is the chance to change the narrative. "Before letting any type of communication or experience dull your passion for your job, ask yourself if there's another, less emotional, explanation for what's happening," suggests Thompson. "By activating the logical, versus the emotional, parts of your brain, you can adjust the tone of your day and create a happier environment."

### WHAT WENT WELL?

**"You can prime yourself to start your workday in a good mood,"** says Patricia Thompson, Ph.D., a corporate psychologist in Atlanta. Here's how:

**End each day by creating a list of two to three aspects of your workday that you appreciated or enjoyed.** Thompson says forming some sort of physical list, rather than a mental one, helps you better reflect on the positives.

**"It's easy to get so caught up in focusing on the bad that we lose sight of the things we enjoy,"** says Thompson. For instance, do you have a good friend at work or like interacting with customers? **"Getting in touch with those aspects of a job can help to change your feelings about it,"** she says.

"Consciously reflect and look for good in your day to avoid getting swept away in a sea of negatives," says Thompson. Then every morning, **take a look back at your list from the night before.** "That helps you to proactively be prepared for a good mood rather than trying to turn around a bad one," she adds.