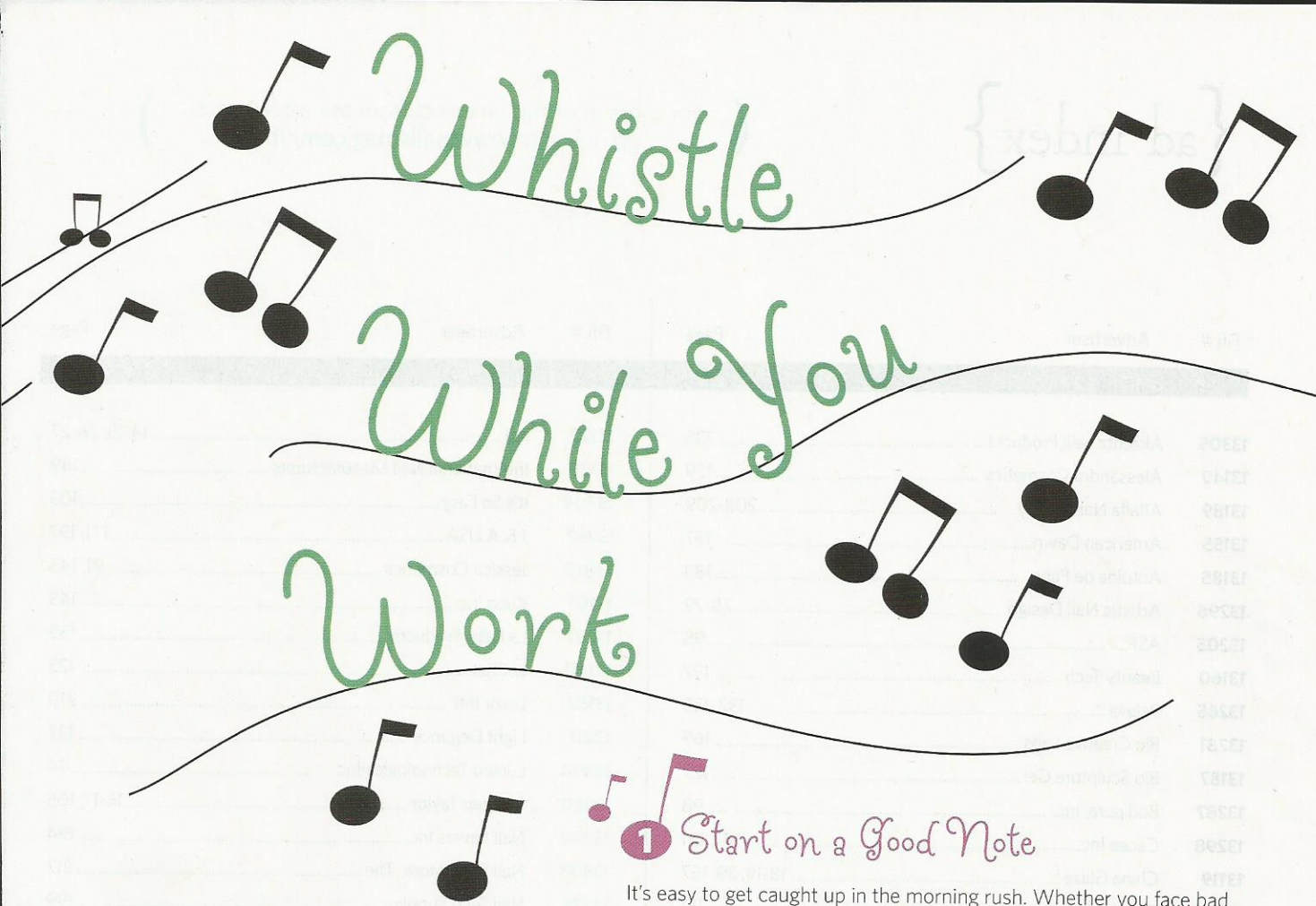




ILLUSTRATION BY LUISA MONTALTO





# Whistle While You Work

Long hours? Rumors of downsizing? Annoying clients? These are just a few factors that might negatively affect your attitude toward work in and out of the salon. NAILS spoke to nail techs facing the same types of problems to find out how to make the work day serve you better. Here's a compilation of physical and mental activities — everything from stretching to rewiring — that can change your outlook and help you see that morning or midday cup of coffee as half full. BY BRITTNI RUBIN

## 1 Start on a Good Note

It's easy to get caught up in the morning rush. Whether you face bad traffic or have a tendency to hit the snooze button, there always seems to be more important things to do than exercise. And why budget time to exercise in those precious morning hours when you have double, if not triple, the amount of downtime after work? Well, because what we do before coming into the salon has an effect on our entire day.

Toyia Brown, a tech at Sizzlin' Style in District Heights, Md., was an army medic for nine and a half years before getting her nail license. "But my body was still not prepared for the type of physical brutality that comes with being hunched over working on fingers and toes for eight or more hours a day," Brown says.

To combat this, Brown suggests integrating as little as five to 10 minutes of low-impact exercise (like yoga, pilates, or tai chi) as well as stretching into your morning routine. This type of workout can be done in the comfort of your own home. To learn movements to eventually do on your own, attend a class, buy a DVD, or simply use YouTube. Brown still does stretches she learned while in the Army.

"You can change the course of the whole day and make it more positive," says Brown. "If you work out in the morning, your stress level is lower throughout the duration of the day. Low impact movements help you relax, strengthen your body, and get you in a better mindset."

A commute to work is also a time to work on your body. "If you have a 20-minute commute with bad posture, then that's going to mess you up for the rest of the day. Your shoulders and back will be fried with knots," she says. Make your commute count by sitting up straight, engaging your core, and staying mindful of posture to set the tone for your workday. >>>



To learn nail tech-specific stretching, visit:  
[www.nailsmag.com/personaltrainers](http://www.nailsmag.com/personaltrainers)



## 2 Sit Up Straight

The physical demands of being a nail technician are great. And the wear and tear a tech's body can experience over the course of her career is enough to alter anyone's mood both inside and outside the salon. Robin Stopper Renner, a nail tech of 29 years based in Eustis, Fla., reached a corporal road block 13 years into her career. She was experiencing muscle aches and pains and considered giving up her career until she discovered a solution: proper ergonomics.

"As nail techs, we're all givers and we like to make people beautiful and comfortable," she says. "But the fact is we're actually sitting at a table for eight to 12 hours per day in the same position. Our clients are only there for an hour and a half max. We want to make them comfortable, but we can't allow them to sit in a way that makes the job harder for us."

Stopper Renner realized that she couldn't improve her posture until her clients were positioned properly too. She invented the Wrist Assist, a roller device that sits underneath the client's wrist. Techs can roll the client's hand as close or far as necessary to perform services without straining.

"We create better posture by bringing our clients to us," she says. "We tend to lean forward and reach toward them to accommodate. We're chasing them around the station and it puts us in bad positions. Sometimes clients try and move to anticipate your actions too, but that actually makes your job harder. They need to relax and let you bring their limbs to you."

Brown learned the importance of practicing good ergonomics in order to go through the day with a smile when she was a nail instructor. "I'd see new students hunched over and that's my biggest pet peeve. I'd tell them and say 'you'll thank me later,'" she says. "They'd write to me a year later and say 'you're right!'"

She says you must develop and master correct posture first and then train the client to come to you instead of reaching over to them. One way to do this is to invest in good body support. "A good support bra will help force you into proper posture with the upper half of your body and you'll put less strain on your shoulders," Brown says. "A back brace won't let you bend over at the waist and will force you to squat when you're picking things up or adjusting the pedicure bowl."

If you have the luxury of building your own workstation, take measurements and fit it to your body. Otherwise invest in adjustable tables and chairs. Brown also suggests investing in the right tools. Lightweight hand pieces for e-filing are ideal. "Carpal tunnel syndrome is real," Brown says. "Don't wear out your wrist before you even get a chance to use it well. You don't want to take fewer clients than you could be taking because you're in pain either."

Additionally, check out the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's (OSHA) guide to proper ergonomic positioning online. Not only can practicing good ergonomics make your days happier in the salon, but it can also extend your entire career potential and leave you fewer physical consequences later on.



For more information on ergonomics, visit:

- > [www.nailsmag.com/sittingpretty](http://www.nailsmag.com/sittingpretty)
- > [www.nailsmag.com/ergonomicbasics](http://www.nailsmag.com/ergonomicbasics)
- > [www.nailsmag.com/postureprimer](http://www.nailsmag.com/postureprimer)
- > [www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics)



## 3 Take Instrumental Breaks

Don't be afraid to take breaks! Most U.S. states regulate an employee's rights to breaks throughout the workday. Stay on top of state law to know what you or your nail techs deserve because a little break can go a long way.

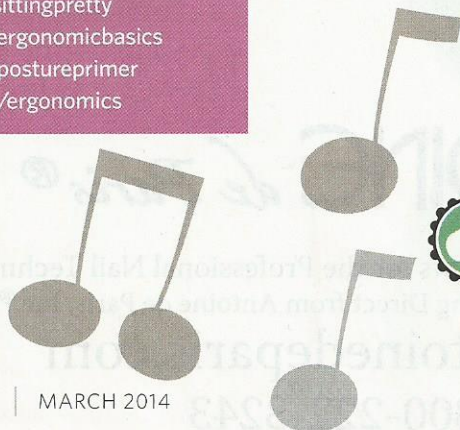
Cammy Nguyen of Blossom Beauty Lounge in Redondo Beach, Calif., says she notices a big attitude shift in herself and her employees when they're regular about their breaks. Just having a second to yourself can help you recharge. "If I finish early, I drink water and walk around," she says. "My coworkers are required to take breaks and a lunch. They walk around and stretch after every client for about five minutes."

Brown says she stretches in the break room and takes walks during her lunch. "Your body will realign itself without you having to do a whole lot," she says. "Another trick is to go into the waiting room and actually meet and greet your client before the service. This gets you up on your feet."

Don't forget to rest your eyes as well. Focus on an object in the distance as far as possible for a few minutes every half hour or so. This helps strengthen weak eye muscles.



Check out this article on the importance of breaks: [www.nailsmag.com/timetounwind](http://www.nailsmag.com/timetounwind)





## 4 Sustaining Good Vibrations

Sometimes our mood is inevitably affected by those around us, so an unpleasant or negative client can be taxing. But the most important (and most difficult) part is learning how to deal with it so the situation doesn't put a damper on your day.

"We all have our off days," says Danalynn Stockwood, a nail tech in Fitchburg, Mass., who works under the moniker FunFancyNails. "Don't let your clients get you down, though. I usually let them talk about issues they're going through. Sometimes they just need someone who will listen to them. But while pleasing my clients is of the utmost importance to me, setting guidelines is important as well. When things are set in black and white, there isn't any confusion."

Stopper Renner says dealing with clients on this level is just an expected part of the job. "It's all about the client — they're paying you for your time so you have to listen."

Try altering the atmosphere of your salon to help relax clients. Play calming music, have a no-cell-phones policy, incorporate massages into the service, or put up dividers between each pedicure station. A relaxed client relieves stress for the nail tech.

When NAILS asked nail techs how to stay positive during a long day on the job, the overwhelming majority of responders said that positivity has to come from within. Having the right attitude is a personal choice that truly motivates people to have a good day.

"My mentor always used to tell me that when you walk into your salon, whatever is going on in your personal life needs to stay outside the door of the salon," says Stopper Renner.

When you walk into work, create an atmosphere that's inviting for clients. If you're carrying negative energy, leave it outside. It's the same for when you leave the salon. Whatever problems you experienced that day, don't bring them home with you.



Here's a bit more on attitude transformation:

[www.nailsmag.com/attitudetransformation](http://www.nailsmag.com/attitudetransformation)


<http://blogs.nailsmag.com/student/archive/2012/06/19/attitude-matters>.

## 5 Practice Makes Perfect

If you feel yourself getting stagnant at work, challenge yourself to do better. All nail techs started off as novices and have worked their way up to being a seasoned nail artist by practice.

"Without practice, perfection doesn't exist," says Stockwood. "Be proactive with your technique, and your skill will be enhanced."

Acquire a mentor, network with other nail techs, pick up a magazine, and watch videos. There are many platforms where you can acquire new information.

"My new favorite phrase of inspiration is 'you got this, as long as you REALLY want it,'" Stockwood says. 



To improve your technique:

> [www.nailsmag.com/technique](http://www.nailsmag.com/technique)

> [www.nailsmag.com/troubleshooter](http://www.nailsmag.com/troubleshooter)

> [www.nailsmag.com/practiceperfect](http://www.nailsmag.com/practiceperfect)