

Studying For Promotion

Wellness Tips and Resources

Firefighters report that studying for promotion can lead to poor sleep habits, neglecting exercise, and unhealthy dietary choices. These individuals gain weight and see their fitness levels significantly decrease during this time. Many firefighters have difficulty losing the excess weight and regaining their pre-exam fitness level. These changes are often permanent and affect physical performance for the rest of their career.

A popular misconception among those studying for promotion is that it is not possible to maximize performance on the exam AND maintain health and wellness. It is actually quite the opposite. Proper nutrition, sleep, and exercise habits can improve mental ability to recall facts and engage in critical thinking. Here are five steps to maintain wellness and optimize performance on promotion exams.

Plan

- Create a daily schedule ahead of time making sure to include time for exercise, healthy food preparation, family activities, and studying

Sleep

- Adequate rest is the foundation for optimal performance in test-taking. Sleep also decreases cravings for junk food and improves motivation for fitness activities.
- Aim to get at least 7.5 hours of sleep per night
- If this isn't possible a 20-minute nap can be sufficient to fight fatigue.

Family

- Sustain healthy relationships with family and/or friends and make time for them throughout the studying process
- Relationship stress can decrease the ability to focus on study materials

Fitness

- Regular exercise can help improve memory and other cognitive functions.
- Even short bouts of exercise can provide physical and mental benefits. Consider doing a short 15-minute workout each day, a push-up challenge, or 10 reps of an exercise (kettlebell swings, squats, lunges, plank holds) at the top of every study hour.
- Google the "Scientific 7-minute workout" – a workout that has been scientifically proven to enhance strength, endurance, and maintain cardiovascular fitness.
- Don't hesitate to contact the wellness staff to devise a tailored exercise plan

Nutrition

- Nutrition plays a key role in healthy sleep and exercise habits. Strive to make whole, unprocessed foods the foundation of your diet and replace sugary drinks with water
- For optimal alertness it is recommended to consume a small 6oz cup of coffee or black tea, or a 12oz diet soda every two hours as needed. To ensure proper sleep caffeine should not be ingested within six hours of bedtime.

One of the greatest resources you have is your firefighting family. They are the only people who can really understand what you are going through so make sure to stay connected to your crew. Join them for part of their workout, participate in the wagon, and spend time with them during study breaks. Overall, do not isolate yourself from your family (work and home) or ignore your fitness and nutrition habits. Even a short amount of time dedicated to each of these areas will maintain your physical and mental health and allow for peak performance on the exam.