

THE FORT LIFE

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The
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WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

“ Why Is Your Professional Career Stalling?”



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The summer of 1952 was one of the most frightening periods in American history. A plague, which by legend can be traced to 1400 BC Egypt, ran rampant throughout the streets of the American heartland. It affected close to 58,000 people, crippled a bit more than a third of them (21,000), and killed just north of 3,000 individuals of all ages, shapes, and sizes. Public swimming pools had plenty of still waters, streets were quiet as parents protected their children, and the government was in a true panic. The danger was real and palpable and did not limit itself to the Western Hemisphere. Polio was creating havoc across the world and making “iron lungs” (an enclosed cylindrical machine to help lungs expand and contract) a necessity across a multitude of hospitals.

Leading to this hectic period were smaller outbreaks that rocked different cities of the U.S. Many bright minds were puzzled; the improvements of aqueducts and sanitation facilities were supposed to provide the opposite effect. But what many didn't account for was the fact that with cleaner and more hygienic environments came less exposure to common diseases, diseases which, in years prior, did not affect infants who still had maternal antibodies. Early exposure, while under residual maternal protection, lessened the potency of the symptoms of polio, and the majority of cases were able to subdue the ailment without grave consequences.

On the opposite hand, the beginning of the 20th century provided polio with a perfect breeding ground. The lack of exposure to the disease at an early age meant people were exposed at a later stage in life, and without any antibody protections, the results were catastrophic, often resulting in paralysis or death.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt faced this enemy in 1921, aged 39, surviving, but being bound to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, his disability did not define him, and he won the presidency 12 years later in 1933. After being reelected for a second term, and seeing the rise in cases of the very disease that altered his daily life, he founded the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP) in 1938 to support research and provide care for polio-stricken patients. That same year, famous radio broadcaster Eddie Cantor coined the foundation "The March of Dimes" after encouraging every American to mail a dime to the White House.

The first year, the White House received ~2.6 million dimes (\$268,000), and as the movement grew, millions were received each year. The NFIP officially changed its name to the common moniker in 1976.

FDR died in April of 1945, soon after being elected to a 4th term (only President in history), never seeing the vaccine that would later be developed by a man nicknamed "Little Jesus" in his younger days and later the "People's Scientist," Dr. Jonas Salk.

After receiving his M.D. in 1939 from NYU School of Medicine, Dr. Salk landed at a research institute in Pittsburgh, where the proceeds from the March of Dimes funded the majority of the research into polio and possible cures. Almost to the date, and 10 years after FDR's death, in April 1955, Dr. Salk's vaccine was approved as safe and began rolling out to the masses. Cases decreased rapidly worldwide, and by 1957, five years after the release of the vaccine, cases had dropped in the U.S. by nearly 90% to just around 5,600 cases and roughly 550 deaths (WHO & CDC historical data).

According to financial historians and economists, the patent for this vaccine was worth around \$7 billion in 1955, equivalent to \$70 billion in today's currency. However Dr. Salk decided to share his vaccine with the world free of charge, so anyone and everyone could have a fighting chance if they ever encountered the illness, rightfully living up to his childhood nickname of "Little Jesus." Dr. Salk died having lived a comfortable life, but certainly not the wealthy one he could have easily had, had he chosen to sell or hold on to the patent.



Photograph: Iron lung. Children in iron lungs during a polio outbreak at the Rancho Los Amigos Center in Los Angeles, California in the 1950s. Photograph: Science History Images

I share this story with you because it covers the paths of two men: one who planted seeds for trees which yielded fruits he never got to savor, and one who understood that the true purpose of life is to help others become the best version of themselves with the gifts and talents God gave him.

Could you imagine what our world would look like today if the question “What’s in it for me?” was the foundation of either of these protagonists.

In professional settings, this mentality has become the norm and, in turn, has blinded our society with greed and self-interest. Few help their fellow journeyman unless there is something given in return, not realizing that greed, ambition, and shortcuts are truly the weights that drag their professional progression.

Even the rich do not appreciate the greedy; less shall the poor.

Kindness begets kindness, as much as anger begets hate. Remove the “what’s in it for me” from your mindset and use your gifts and skills to lend a hand when you can instead of asking for one in return. Let the Lord reward you! It will fulfill you, as you will stop chasing that which you will never be able to take with you when your time comes. How cruel it is to spend a life chasing something that one day will have no value.

Not everything is or should be a transaction, and as FDR and Dr. Salk proved, happiness is not about what we see or have, but rather the purpose that propels us to share our wins and triumphs with the world. Sometimes, less is truly more.

Avoiding Burnout as We Enter Q4

The fourth quarter brings a unique pressure. Deadlines tighten, targets loom, and the holiday season adds its own emotional weight. For many, Q4 is a test of endurance, a sprint at the end of an already long marathon. But pushing through without care can lead to burnout, and burnout doesn't just drain energy, it can dismantle creativity, health, and joy.

The World Health Organization officially recognizes burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy. In Q4, these symptoms often spike. Employees juggle year-end reviews, financial closes, and personal holiday commitments. Leaders may feel a responsibility to carry the weight of the team while struggling silently themselves.



Photo by Vitaly Gariev / Unsplash

Avoiding burnout requires intentionality. Rest becomes a strategy, not a luxury. Taking short, scheduled breaks has been proven to increase productivity by as much as 30 percent, according to research by the Draugiem Group. Prioritizing sleep is equally critical, since chronic sleep deprivation not only weakens focus but also impairs immune function, leaving you vulnerable during cold and flu season.

There is also an emotional layer. Acknowledging the strain and setting realistic boundaries creates resilience. Saying no to overcommitment and yes to recharge moments, even something as simple as a 10-minute walk or connecting with a colleague outside of work tasks, can transform how you experience the final quarter.

Burnout is not a sign of weakness, it is a signal that your body and mind have been carrying more than their share for too long. By treating your well-being as a priority in Q4, you give yourself the ability to finish the year with clarity instead of collapse. Protecting your energy now ensures you can begin the new year with purpose, rather than exhaustion.

The Power of Purchasing



Back-to-school season always feels like a fresh start. Families pack backpacks with new pencils, notebooks, and hopes for the months ahead. But in the midst of the excitement, there are invisible details that quietly shape the quality of the school year. Trash liners, simple and often overlooked, help keep classrooms, cafeterias, and hallways clean, safe, and ready for learning.

At FORT International, we believe even the smallest tools can carry enormous impact. Every case of liners sold translates into one dollar invested directly into the King Solomon Award Scholarship Fund. These scholarships do not just offset tuition, they open doors.

In the past 13 months alone, **\$100,000** dollars has been awarded to 42 students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. That is not just a statistic, that is 42 lives redirected, 42 dreams funded, and countless communities influenced by the ripple effect of education.

This is where the power of purchasing comes alive. Schools purchasing liners are not just buying supplies, they are making an investment in the next generation of leaders. Parents and teachers rally around students inside the classroom, while FORT International extends that support outside of it, creating a bridge between practicality and purpose.

The beauty of this model lies in its simplicity. A purchase made for cleanliness today contributes to education tomorrow. And multiplied across schools, businesses, and communities, the impact becomes transformative. Each liner, each case, each dollar tells a story, that something as ordinary as a trash bag can help build extraordinary futures.

Every time a school or business chooses to partner with FORT, it becomes part of a much larger story. These decisions reflect a belief that education changes everything, and that ordinary purchases can carry extraordinary consequences. In many ways, the scholarship fund is not built by a single large donation but by thousands of everyday choices made with intention.

How to Order:

To place an order or inquire about our products, please contact us at:
sales@fortinternational.com



*FORT*ifying Minds One Student At a Time



Excellence in Action

Excellence is often mistaken for perfection, an unreachable and exhausting standard. But true excellence is not about never making mistakes. It is about how you show up, how you carry yourself, and the consistency you bring even in challenging moments. Excellence is not about outcomes, it is about presence.

Consider the research. A Harvard Business Review study found that employees who are highly engaged, meaning present, attentive, and committed, deliver 21 percent greater profitability. Excellence, then, is not just good practice, it is good business.

Excellence shows up in the small, often unnoticed moments. It is in double-checking a presentation slide before a meeting. It is in returning a phone call you could have ignored. It is in listening, really listening, when someone

is speaking. These actions do not just complete tasks, they build trust. And trust, once established, becomes the foundation for long-term success.

There is also a human element. When one person decides to show up fully, alert, prepared, intentional, others rise to meet them. Excellence inspires excellence. Teams thrive when the standard is not perfection, but presence.

Excellence also has a transformative effect on self-worth. Each time you show up with full effort, regardless of the outcome, you prove to yourself that you are capable of growth and resilience. Over time, this builds confidence that no external validation can provide. Excellence becomes a compass that guides not just what you do, but who you become.



Fall Weekend Getaways in the U.S

Autumn in the U.S. is more than a season, it is an experience. The air shifts, the leaves catch fire with color, and a collective nostalgia seems to settle over towns and cities alike. A fall getaway is not just about seeing new places, it is about feeling grounded again before the whirlwind of the holidays.

In the Northeast, you will find the epicenter of fall foliage. The White Mountains in New Hampshire and the Green Mountains in Vermont explode with vibrant reds and golds each October. Scientists explain this spectacle as the process of chlorophyll breaking down, revealing pigments that were always there but hidden. Nature, in a sense, peels back its layers, a reminder of renewal and change.



In the Midwest, Michigan's Upper Peninsula offers untouched wilderness, waterfalls framed by glowing forests, and starry skies free from city lights. A study from the University of Michigan found that spending just 20 minutes in nature reduces stress hormones, making destinations like these not just scenic but restorative.

In the South, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a drive that feels almost spiritual. Stretching 469 miles through Virginia and North Carolina, it is known as "America's Favorite Drive," a title earned by its sweeping mountain views and charming small towns. Meanwhile, Texas Hill Country surprises travelers with rolling vineyards and German-inspired towns hosting Oktoberfest celebrations.

And if wine calls your name, Napa Valley and Sonoma County become a patchwork of harvest festivals, vineyard tours, and cool evenings perfect for fire pits and outdoor dining.

What makes fall getaways so powerful is not just the scenery but the pause they provide. These weekends are a reminder that slowing down is not wasted time but necessary restoration. The simple act of walking under golden leaves or sipping cider on a porch can reset your perspective and remind you that joy often lives in the quietest moments.



Photo by Maria / Unsplash



Photo by West Hicks / Unsplash

Stretching and Physical Performance

Stress does not just live in the mind, it lodges itself in the body. Hours hunched over a desk tighten shoulders, clench jaws, and stiffen lower backs. Over time, this physical tension compounds into fatigue, poor posture, and even chronic pain. Stretching, then, becomes more than exercise, it becomes an act of release.

Science backs this up. Stretching increases blood flow to the muscles, which helps flush out lactic acid and reduce soreness. A 2018 study published in the *Journal of Physical Therapy Science* showed that regular stretching improves flexibility, decreases fatigue, and boosts overall work efficiency. Just 5 to 10 minutes daily can make a measurable difference in both performance and mood.

But beyond the science, stretching offers emotional relief.

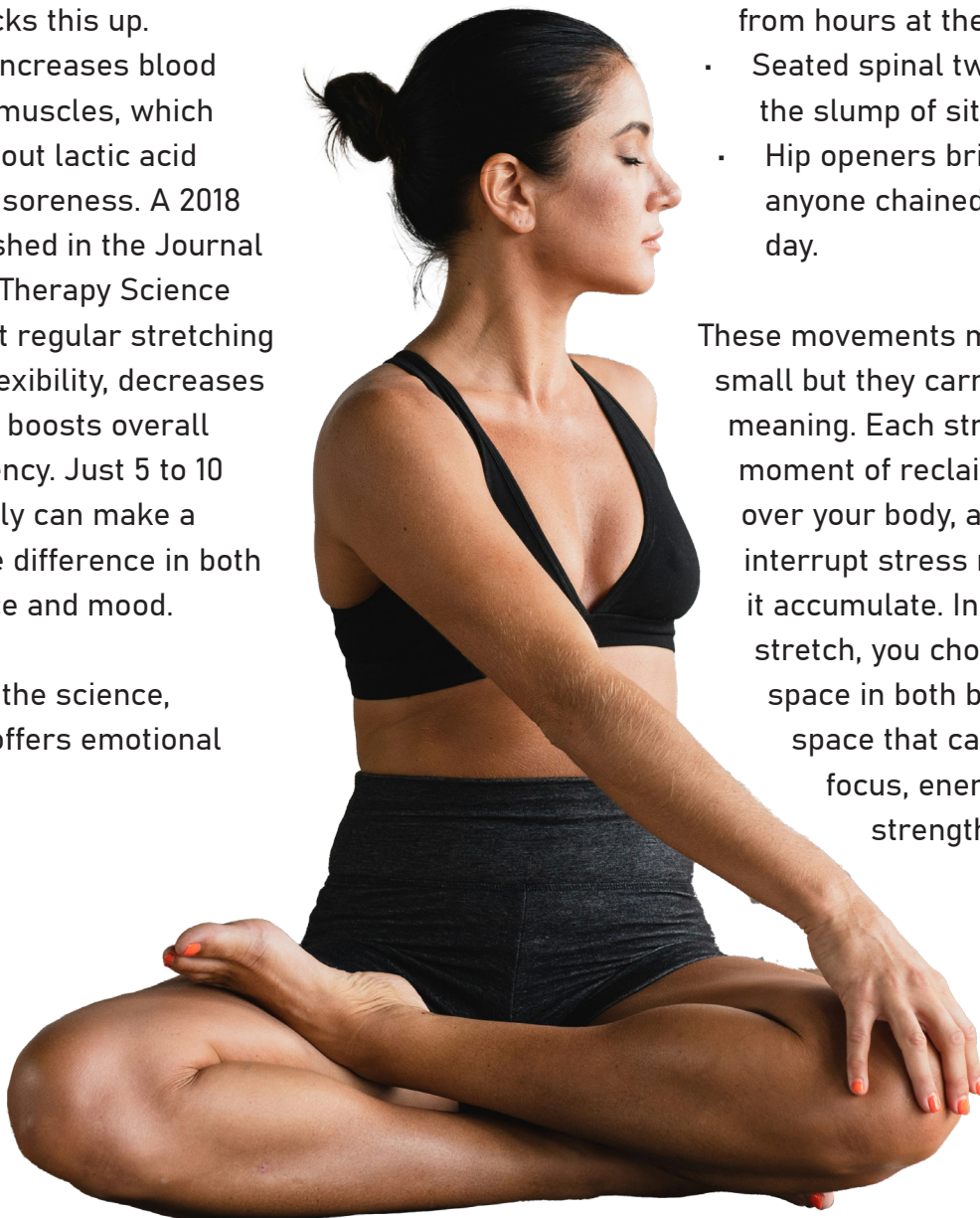
Pairing a simple forward fold with deep breathing signals the parasympathetic nervous system to calm, lowering cortisol levels, the very hormone linked to stress. The body unwinds, and the mind follows.

Start small!

- Shoulder rolls can unstick tension from hours at the keyboard.
- Seated spinal twists counteract the slump of sitting.
- Hip openers bring relief for anyone chained to a chair all day.

These movements may seem small but they carry profound meaning. Each stretch is a moment of reclaiming control over your body, a decision to interrupt stress rather than let it accumulate. In choosing to stretch, you choose to create space in both body and mind, space that can be filled with focus, energy, and renewed strength.

Photo by Dane Wetton / Unsplash



Word Search

Entertain yourself for a while and solve this word search as quickly as possible. If you prefer you can click on the link below and solve the challenge from your cell phone or computer.

Autumn

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ORCHARD
PUMPKIN
PEAR
BROWN
HAY
LEAVES
RAKE
OCTOBER
APPLE
ORANGE

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