

# Make the Best of your Commute

Many of you spend much more time commuting to work each day than you would prefer. The national average commute time is around 25 minutes each way, but for some of you it far exceeds this average. This adds up to a lot of time simply sitting in your vehicle. Although having a long commute has a bad rap, it doesn't have to be a stressful experience. There are plenty of ways to maximize your morning and end of day trips and boost your wellbeing and productivity.

Here are a few tips for making the best of your commute.

- **Take a break from the hectic morning.** Don't feel like you must be productive every minute of the day; spend some time enjoying yourself and relaxing. Many of you will agree that mornings are probably the craziest time of the day. The whole routine of waking up, making breakfast, packing lunches, feeding the kids, pets, or spouse, getting ready and dropping the kids off at school. This routine can suck the energy right out of you. Driving to work may be the perfect (or only) opportunity you have to relax from the morning confusion, collect your thoughts and mentally prepare for the day ahead.
- **Time to collect your thoughts.** Driving supports productive thinking, so utilize this uninterrupted time to do your best problem solving. Psychologists have researched that while driving is a complex task, it also frees up parts of the brain to think productively that may not be otherwise accessible. So, if you have a problem to solve, use your commuting time to think about the solution.
- **Enjoy the quiet.** Listening to the news or jamming to some tunes as you drive is a common way to make the commute. However, consider turning off the radio and listening to the quiet. Peace and quiet oftentimes leads to a calmer feeling, less stress, and more energy.
- **Take the scenic route.** Periodically changing your driving route can help keep your mind focused on actually driving and break the monotony of repetitive behavior. It is common for every workday to feel like Groundhog Day... the boring same thing over and over. Use your commute to switch it up! Drive through the countryside and pay attention to your surroundings. Enjoy the natural wonders of the great outdoors through your windshield.
- **A time for Transition.** Commuting can provide a healthy transition between work and home life. This can give you a safe space to set clear work-life balance boundaries that may not have otherwise existed without a commute.
- **Be productive.** Catch up on phone calls (hands free of course), listen to a podcast, or take some voice-to-text notes for your to do list. But remember, as stated earlier, don't feel like you must be productive every minute of the day.

To sum up, make sure your commute is time well spent! It is one of the first things you do each workday and can impact your mood, behavior, thinking, and relationships.

Questions? Contact us at 363ISR.W.ART.363ISR.W@us.af.mil or at 757-764-9316