



The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

May 2022

May is Women's Health Month

During the month of May, we want to remind women to take a stand for their health. Establishing a screening routine makes it easier for your Primary Care Physician (PCP) to make decisions about the next phase of your care.

The suggestions below are recommendations, but always consult with your PCP about your health risks and family history to determine your best screening schedule.

Under 20 Years

Vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV) is the best way to prevent cervical cancer and some forms of cancer later in life. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that women as young as eleven years old, are candidates to receive the HPV vaccine.

20-29 Years

Women should get a Pap test every three (3) years to screen for precancer and cell changes. Perform monthly self-examinations on your breasts for any lumps, hardness, or tender areas, but in your mid-twenties, discuss the frequency of clinical breast examinations with your PCP, especially if you have a family history of breast cancer. Continue to update your PCP with any cancer-related surgeries or cause of deaths in your family so they can make informed decisions about your screening frequency and health.

30-39 Years

Establishing a regular routine in your twenties can help keep routine health screenings at a minimum in your thirties. In addition to regular Pap tests, an HPV test administered every five (5) years can help detect forms of cervical cancer.

40-49 Years

If your PCP has not already recommended clinical breast cancer screenings, start annual mammograms at 40 years old. If you are at average-risk for colorectal cancer, start screenings via colonoscopy or at-home stool-based tests in your mid-forties.

Over 50 Years

Women who smoke or used to smoke should ask your PCP about getting a low-dose spiral computed tomography (CT) scan for lung cancer. Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver cancer, so Hepatitis C testing is recommended for those women in their late fifties or born between 1945-1965.

Mental Health Month

According to a 2021 poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation, 53% of American adults' mental health has been negatively impacted due to stress linked to the pandemic. The pandemic has impacted our lives in every aspect, including our workday. The shift from in-person employment to remote work has exacerbated workplace anxiety and depression.

Here are three ways working from home can damage our mental health and strategies to combat those issues.

STRESSOR

- We feel more alone without the necessary in-person support we need. A lack of physical connection can leave us feeling like we have nowhere to turn when we feel stressed or anxious.
- The lines between work and personal life blur when we are working from home. We tend to work longer hours, log on during our off-days, and answer emails while on break.
- In our virtual world, we tend to run from meeting to meeting one after another. This happens less in a physical setting, and we have more time to take a break and decompress than we do virtually. When we do not have this time, it can lead to burnout and fatigue.

STRATEGY

- Reach out to your coworkers! Be open and upfront about how you are feeling with your work team. Set aside time to chat about things unrelated to work. This will help bridge the virtual disconnect working from home can create.
- Set healthy boundaries! Take your designated breaks and off-days and make a promise to yourself to be present without checking your devices.
- Plan breaks from your screen! Communicate meeting times that work for you and leave time in your workday to grab a snack, go for a short walk, or relax for a couple of minutes.

Sources: [How Working From Home Is Impacting Our Mental Health \(businessbecause.com\)](https://businessbecause.com)



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Less Screen Time, More Interaction

According to a study by RescueTime, the average person checks their phone 58 times a day.

Those check-ins total up to over 3 hours of screen time per day. The top 20% of mobile phone users' device usage adds up to more than 4.5 hours! Another study from the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research found that just being in the presence of a turned-off smartphone can lower our cognitive performance. We are constantly tempted to pick up the phone and subconsciously expect an interruption from our devices.

It is important to remember to disconnect from the virtual world that our society has built and reconnect with real, in-person relationships. In doing so, your interpersonal relationships will benefit, you will be more productive, and be able to add more time back to your day!

Check out the tips and tricks below to lower your screen time:

Delete or log out of social apps

Studies show we spend the most time on our devices utilizing social apps like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Removing these apps from your device will significantly lower your tech time.

Make a “distraction-free” home screen

Try moving all your unnecessary or distracting apps off your home screen. Keep vital things like messages, maps, cameras, etc.

Turn off notifications

Go on Do Not Disturb mode while engaging with others. Don't let your smartphone cut into your relationships.

Push as much as possible to your desktop

You can't bring your desktop computer with you while driving, eating with other people, or engaging in everyday activities. So, try to transfer unnecessary information and distracting apps to your desktop.

Sources:

[Screen time stats: How your phone impacts your workday – RescueTime](#); [Average Screen Time: Statistics 2021 \(elitecontentmarketer.com\)](#)

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach.

Here for you as life happens



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RECIPE : Pot Roast with Asian Black Bean Sauce

10 Servings

Ingredients

- 1 boneless beef chuck roast (3 to 4 pounds)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3/4 cup Asian black bean sauce
- 1/4 cup reduced-sodium beef broth
- 1/2 pound sliced fresh mushrooms
- 8 ounces fresh snow peas, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon cold water
- Hot cooked rice
- 4 green onions, sliced

Directions

1. Sprinkle roast with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Brown roast 3-4 minutes on each side. Transfer to a 6-qt. slow cooker. Add onion. Whisk together black bean sauce and broth; pour over roast. Cook, covered, on low 5-6 hours.
2. Add mushrooms and snow peas; continue cooking on low until meat is tender, about 30 minutes.
3. Remove roast and vegetables to a serving platter; keep warm. Transfer cooking juices to a small saucepan; skim fat. Bring cooking juices to a boil. In a small bowl, mix cornstarch and cold water until smooth; stir into cooking juices. Return to a boil; cook and stir 1-2 minutes or until thickened. Serve roast with hot cooked rice and sauce. Sprinkle with green onions.

Nutrition

Per serving: Each serving: 281 calories, 14g fat (5g saturated fat), 89mg cholesterol, 602mg sodium, 8g carbohydrate (4g sugars, 1g fiber), 29g protein

Source: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/pot-roast-with-asian-black-bean-sauce/>



Your Employee Assistance Program Navigating AWPnow.com

Your EAP offers many resources to help you become more resilient, cope with unfortunate events and uncover a better you. AWP now.com is computer, phone and tablet friendly and your gateway for online tools, helpful resources, training content, motivating webinars and legal/financial information.



- **Logging into your EAP website –**

AWPnow.com/main/benefits/

- ◆ AWPnow.com/main.benefits/
- ◆ Log in with email address and password
- ◆ Create an account: 1st time logging in? Use your Registration Code available on your EAP Benefit Flyer or email us at AM@alliancewp.com

- **View your EAP Orientation Video**

- ◆ On the main page, your EAP Orientation is a brief introduction to your EAP services

- **Visit the Blog**

- ◆ When you need motivation, AWP provides a blog of timely information, articles and tips to make the most of your day

- **Creating a Will**

Creating a will is an important step in planning the distribution of your estate (assets including real and personal property) following your death. A will allows for any children, your spouse, other family members, and pets to be provided for after your death. Although making a will is a sobering experience, your loved ones and friends will thank you for being so organized and thoughtful ahead of time. **Your EAP website provides a resource for you to create a will along with other important estate planning documents at no cost to you.**

To get started:

- ◆ Go to **AWPnow.com**
- ◆ Select **Benefits > Law Access**
- ◆ Click **Connect to Law Access**
- ◆ Click **LEGAL FORMS** (left hand side, middle picture).
- ◆ Click **Personal Documents** (left hand side, top).
- ◆ Choose **State** from drop-down menu.
- ◆ Scroll to bottom of page and select Wills template.
- ◆ Click **START NOW**.
- ◆ Each user will be asked to create a private, customized account to assure privacy for their document(s).
- ◆ Complete the questionnaire, save the document, print and execute. *You can access at a later date by logging in to your account.*

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Balanced Living

May 2022



It's crisis time. Your company changes the product line, downsizes or merges with another company, or you get a new boss. What can you do to weather the change?

"When it freezes over, ice skate," says Patt Schwab, Ph.D., a professional speaker in Seattle who specializes in workplace change and humor.

During a difficult transition, you may not be able to concentrate on your work, feel immobilized by stress and be frightened about the future.

But don't despair. Dr. Schwab offers the following suggestions to help you float through difficult transitions instead of thrashing around in a sea of confusion.

Analyze

Take time to "analyze what you can or can't do," says Dr. Schwab. "If you can't stop a merger, then figure out what the next step is and live with it. Don't waste time fighting a done deal."

If you're being laid off, analyze your skills, assess your contacts and determine how much time you have between now and your last paycheck.

If your company is involved in a merger, do some research to learn as much as you can about the other company.

Look for opportunities that may arise out of the change. If you get laid off, you get to spend more time with your family, or you could possibly go back to school.

Say farewell

"There's a whole progression of natural feelings you go through during a transition," explains Dr. Schwab. "First you deny something is going to happen, then you resist it, then you explore different scenarios, and finally you accept it and commit to the new change."

Saying good-bye to the past is important to moving forward. You must let go of one side of the pool before you can swim to the other side.

Use humor

"Humor doesn't belittle a serious situation; it lifts you above it and allows you to look at it from a different perspective," says Dr. Schwab. "Humor empowers you. If you can laugh at something, it doesn't feel so overwhelming, and if you can laugh together, it builds stronger relationships."

Here are two ways to use humor during a transition:

- This Day in History. Research the historical events that coincide with your difficult transition. Make a list of several terrible things that happened on this date, and end your list with the troublesome change at your company. Print copies to give your coworkers.
- A Wine and Cheese Party. Get together with coworkers and bellyache together instead of separately. Exaggerate the problem until you start to laugh about it.

Be prepared

A crisis usually doesn't give you time to prepare. But you'll fare best if you live your life like the Boy Scout motto: Be Prepared.

"This means you've kept your training up to date, you haven't extended yourself financially and your relationships are good both in and out of the workplace," say Dr. Schwab.

Even if your company isn't in a crisis mode, preparing yourself for any possibility will help you ease through difficult transitions when they do happen. And in today's workplace, they're more likely to happen than not.

In other words, says Dr. Schwab, "Don't wait till it freezes over to polish your ice skates."

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Resilience is a powerful word that might seem reserved for only the strongest people. Luckily, resilience is not something you are either born with or not—it is a quality you can continually strive toward to aid in your personal growth and overall wellbeing. So what exactly is resilience and how can we obtain it? Resilience is a process that involves the willingness to face, adapt to, and overcome challenges and setbacks in life to become a more stable, stronger person. Here are some of the core components you can work on incorporating into your life.

Core Components of Resilience

Connection with yourself and others

When faced with challenges or setbacks, it might be your first instinct to isolate yourself and wallow in self-pity or feelings of defeat. Instead, nurture your relationship with yourself and learn how to self-soothe during stressful times. This is also a time to nurture your connections with friends and family by reaching out for support. This will only strengthen your connection with others. Plus, by willing to be vulnerable, it shows others they can also reach out to you when they are in need of support.

Overall health and balance

Eating healthy foods, incorporating exercise into your routine most days, getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated, and limiting alcohol consumption all contribute to your overall health and will help you in your resilience journey. By taking care of your body, this only benefits your mind and strengthens your ability to adapt and manage your emotions when life gets challenging.

Healthy thoughts and mindfulness

How do you typically talk to yourself? Are you encouraging and positive, as though talking to a friend? Start noticing your thoughts, which can greatly impact your mood and self-confidence. Try to be kind to yourself and validate your feelings. When you do have a thought—whether positive or negative—notice that you've had the thought without letting it define you or a situation. Think of yourself as an objective observer of your own thoughts. Practice directing your attention back to the facts rather than putting a positive or negative spin on it. This will help you navigate stressful life situations, stay balanced, and minimize stress.

Finding meaning and purpose

Practicing mindfulness can also help you find meaning and purpose in your life, even during difficult times. Notice the good things that come up throughout your day, but also acknowledge the things you don't like or that cause you stress. Try to find meaning in it—how will this situation help you to grow? What is something positive you can take away from a stressful experience? By defining your purpose and working toward both small and big goals, you will be on the path to developing perseverance and ultimately, resilience.

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A loved one leaves on a military assignment, divorce papers are signed, a parent or a favorite pet passes away...

"Any loss – and even an impending loss – can bring on feelings of grief," according to Karl Goodkin, M.D., Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and professor of neurology at the University of Miami School of Medicine in Miami, Fla., and professor of psychology at the University of Miami Graduate School.

The grief process often brings with it shock or emotional numbness, followed by feelings of depression, anger, guilt or helplessness. Grieving always hurts, but it's not a bad thing, Dr. Goodkin says. It's a very normal and necessary process for adjusting to difficult life changes.

Healthy grieving

"Most people seem to be able to process loss on their own, not just within their own thinking and coping, but also by getting support from their family, friends and personal social networks," says Dr. Goodkin. "Tapping into social support at this time is perhaps the best predictor for adjusting to loss in a healthy way."

Grief usually moves through five stages:

- Denial or disbelief
- Anger or guilt
- Bargaining
- Depression or sadness
- Acceptance

Some of these stages can occur at the same time. Not all people who grieve experience all of these stages.

Other symptoms of grief include sleep problems, appetite changes and difficulty getting back to work.

With healthful grieving, one can:

- Resolve loss-related stress.
- Give meaning to the loss and to the place the relationship held for oneself.
- Begin looking toward the future.
- Start looking for others who might replace some of the lost aspects of the relationship.

Getting help

Some people do get stuck in the process, Dr. Goodkin says, and that's why grief-specific treatment can help.

According to Dr. Goodkin, people with the following symptoms of "complicated grief" may benefit from treatment:

- Persistent guilt feelings regarding actions taken or not taken at the time of death.
- A morbid preoccupation with self-worthlessness.
- A severe slowing down of one's thoughts and overall activity.
- Hallucinations, other than thinking one might be in connection with the deceased, or briefly hearing the voice of the deceased.

Grief can lead to depression or abuse of alcohol or drugs. Grief that lasts for more than two months and makes it difficult to deal with daily life may indicate a more serious problem.

Treatment options for unresolved grief include:

- Group psychotherapy sessions designed specifically for bereavement. Guided by a leader with grief expertise, these groups provide a non-threatening structure for talking about one's loss, expressing one's feelings, benefiting from the social support offered by the group, and learning to move on in healthful ways. "Many general mental health counselors will say they're capable of addressing death and dying issues," Dr. Goodkin says. "That can be true, but working with someone who has grief expertise can make a big difference in a person's long-term recovery."
- Individual psychotherapy. Private counseling can be helpful for people who are dealing with deeper emotional issues not related solely to the recently experienced loss. It is also recommended when privacy issues related to the circumstances of the loss would prevent the person from speaking up within a group.
- Antidepressant or anti-anxiety medications. Drugs can often help when combined with psychotherapy. By improving mental health symptoms, medications can aid the person in moving through the grieving process more quickly.

Where Fentanyl Is Found

Smuggled fentanyl into the U.S. is up 400% compared to 2021, according to the U.S. Border Patrol, and in Texas it is up over 1,000%. The killer drug, now the number one cause of death among young people, finds its way into many substances purchased on the street, including cocaine, heroin, pain pills like Percocet (oxycodone), and even anti-anxiety pills like Xanax. Many people assume fentanyl is only added to opioid-based drugs. This is not true. It can be laced into any drug, and legitimate-seeming prescription drugs on the street are often counterfeit, laced with fentanyl. (Sources: www.tn.gov [search “fentanyl health”] and www.drugfree.org [search “laced with fentanyl”].)

Will Pooling Finances Aid Relationship Health?

It's an age-old argument. “Will couples have a more harmonious relationship and be less likely to break up if they pool all of their income or if they keep it in individual accounts? What about pooling some and separating some?” One large research study examining 34,000 couples that were previously part of six smaller studies may have the answer: Pooling it all together is better. And the more financially stressed the household is, the more the recommendation to pool income applies. Is it a decision that's right for you? (Source: www.cornell.edu [search: “couples pool finances”].).

Match Your Exercise Program with Healthy Changes

Are you ramping up your exercise program with the spring weather? If so, consider healthy lifestyle changes along with an increased exercise regimen. Eat better by consuming less sugar, less white flour and starchy foods, less red meat, and more veggies, and make fewer stops at the drive-in window on the way home. You will improve the value and impact of your exercise program with a healthier body to respond to it.

Protect Your Back in Construction Work

Ask anyone plagued by periodic flare-ups of a back injury, and they'll tell you: “Don't take chances with your back.” This is especially true if you work in construction trades, where 40% of workers complain of chronic back pain by the time they are age 50. Back injuries also happen as a result of slips and falls, not just when lifting, tugging, pushing, twisting, and carrying heavy objects. So avoid fall risks. Back injuries are invisible to others, so if a coworker has modified duties, others should not question the severity of the coworker's back injury or pressure the coworker into participating in a prohibited work activity while in recovery. Such peer pressure is a key contributor to reinjury and sometimes ongoing disability. (See www.cpwr.com [search: “back pain older worker”].)

Learn to De-escalate Conflict in Relationships

The ability to de-escalate a heated argument or conflict is a life skill that can help you avoid unnecessary stress and, in the workplace, allow you to experience greater job satisfaction. Conflict is not an inherently bad thing if it leads to positive outcomes, but many of our verbal skirmishes create serious tension. Unnecessarily intense arguments can erode trust, build resentment, involve hurtful insults, and ultimately undermine productivity. To help de-escalate conflict, keep this in mind: You will rarely succeed in winning control over someone or outwitting them in a heated exchange. To interrupt tension quickly, try one of these three tactics: (1) Interrupt the flow of anger with a relevant statement about something you both agree on. This often creates a “reset” effect and halts intensity. (2) Switch your role from “co-arguing” to that of an empathetic listener. This also flips the script. (3) Let go. Don’t tie your psychological survival to winning or losing. Virtually all heated arguments are fueled by the fear and psychological impact of loss. It is often easier to end a conflict by reminding yourself you don’t have to prove anything to the other person. To become a de-escalation pro, practice these intervention techniques. You will fear conflict less, discover the arguments that are worth pursuing, and create more collaboration, while making your job more enjoyable

May Is Mental Health Awareness Month: Is My Family Member Mentally Ill?

Families may worry about a loved one’s mental health. Changes in mood, personality differences, worries and fears, strange thoughts, anger issues, unusual habits, sleeping or eating too much, and more. Is it mental illness? Not necessarily. Does their behavior interfere with their daily activities? Is their social life or occupational functioning adversely affected? If you are concerned about another’s mental health, the best first step is to speak with a professional counselor/EAP to discuss the issues. You can then determine next steps, including how to influence your loved one to get help. Mental illness is common, and one in five people will experience a mental illness in any given year, but a supportive loved one is often the path to early and successful help.

Avoid the Top Three Career Regrets

Three commonly cited career regrets are (1) not taking more initiative; (2) not having enough mentorship or guidance; and (3) playing it safe and not taking more chances. These are the findings of a recent survey conducted with 1,000 late-career workers by Zety.com, a career, resume, and online job recruiting company. Are you at risk for one of them? Regrets 1 and 3 are closely related. Initiative means taking action without being prompted by others—acting on your imagination, firing up your ambition, and motivating yourself to take massive action on something you want to do—not someday, but right now, without putting it off another second. Talk to a counseling professional or your EAP and discover how to get fired up to employ initiative today. (Source: zety.com/blog/biggest-career-regrets.)

Try This: To-Do List Tip

Do you make a to-do list to help you manage your workday? Many people do, but there is one thing they are not doing correctly—they are making it in the morning. Instead, the to-do list should be written at the end of the previous day to be followed the next. Creating a to-do list at the end of the day allows you to spend more time on it so it is more meaningful and thought out. You are at less risk for distractions that may present themselves first thing in the morning, and the to-do list can be created with less stress. (The dynamic is similar to laying out your exercise clothes the night before to help you follow through.) And here’s a bonus—you don’t have to get up early in an effort to find time to write it!

Here for you as life happens ...

