

Balanced Living

September 2022



As if being a single mother of two weren't enough, Krista Kurth was a high-powered consultant at a major accounting firm who was taking night classes toward a degree in organizational development. But when her body shut down with chronic fatigue syndrome, she realized that no motor could keep running without a pit stop.

Her two-year quest to recover taught her a lesson. The formula for success, she learned, must include mental and physical rest.

Millions of Americans have yet to grasp that fact. They believe that longer hours at work, combined with less recreation and relaxation, will lead them up the corporate ladder. The truth is that unchecked stress hinders more than it helps.

"People have the sense that they're important and successful if they're busy," says Dr. Kurth (yes, she went on to earn that Ph.D.) She also co-authored *Running on Plenty: Renewal Strategies for Individuals*, which offers advice on staying energized despite work demands.

Machines can run around the clock. But Dr. Kurth and co-author Suzanne Adele Schmidt, Ph.D., emphasize that people are living organisms who must stop and refuel to work properly. By not taking brief, hourly breaks, they say, you could take up to five times longer to complete tasks and grow more likely to make mistakes.

Research backs them up. In one study, 69 percent of people who reported feeling highly stressed on the job said the stress made them less productive, workplace stress expert Charles Spielberger, Ph.D., wrote in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. About half of those stressed-out people said they had suffered burnout, job-related medical problems or both.

A state of alert

Overwhelming paperwork, deadlines, meetings, phone calls and e-mails cause your brain to order the production of hormones that put your body in a state of alert. Whether you know it or not, your body pools its resources to deal with the threat causing the stress. Your muscles tense, you breathe harder and your heart beats faster.

If this keeps up too long, your body cracks under the pressure. The result? Headaches, difficulty sleeping and concentrating, short tempers, upset stomachs and lower morale. All are early warning signs of job stress, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Some studies suggest this stress can lead to heart disease, depression, anxiety, muscle pain, cancer, ulcers, a weakened immune system and even suicide.

"It's a big problem and it's growing," says Dr. Spielberger, director of the University of South Florida's Center for Research and Behavioral Medicine and Health Psychology. "The world continues to change faster and faster, which puts more pressure on people to try to keep up."

Companies face more foreign competition. Downsizing increases workloads. Some employees feel less secure in jobs. New technologies were meant to make jobs easier. But cell phones, e-mail, pagers, the Internet, mobile handheld devices and laptops have instead increased the pace. "We're expected to be available all the time," Dr. Kurth says. "People are expected to give an immediate answer."

Setting boundaries and learning how to take "productivity pauses," she says, will help you get more done, stay healthy and keep a positive attitude. These hourly mini-breaks can be as simple as taking three deep breaths or doing simple stretches. Gently roll your shoulders backward, move your head from side to side, elevate your arms to shoulder height and rotate at the waist.

Left brain break

Dr. Kurth suggests you take a break from using the left side of your brain, the half that handles job-related tasks like analysis and communication. You can do this by immersing yourself in acts that tap the right brain's creative power. For example, you can take a brief mental vacation by closing your eyes and thinking about your favorite place. "Use all your senses." If you like tropical resorts, "imagine what the sand feels like and what the ocean smells like," she says. "Do it for a few minutes and you come back feeling refreshed."

A great way to make breaks part of your day is to find a "renewal buddy" who will encourage you while benefiting from your support. If you're a supervisor, you can create an office environment that allows for "play," such as throwing Frisbees or knitting.

The worst stress is having a difficult boss who may be too critical or doesn't provide enough support, Dr. Spielberger says. Changing your boss's management style isn't usually possible. Looking for a new job usually is.

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Divorcing parents want to reduce the impact on their children, whether the children are young or already adults. The best way to do this is to recognize how the divorce is likely to affect your children, and then take steps to alleviate their pain and uncertainty.

How Divorce Affects Children

Researchers have filled volumes studying and analyzing the effect of divorce on children. Studies examining the children of divorce have found that most suffer a sense of loss that can manifest in many different ways, depending on the children's ages and unique personalities, as well as on how parents handle the divorce themselves.

Younger children may regress in areas such as sleeping and toilet training, or throw more tantrums. School-age and teenage children may show symptoms of depression, rebel against discipline, or change their eating and sleeping habits.

Recent research has shown that adult children of divorce have higher divorce rates than adults with parents in stable marriages -- and even those who remain married report they have less trust for their spouses than people whose parents have remained married.

As a parent, you can take an active role in easing your children's pain and reducing negative feelings and behaviors.

How to Help Your Children Cope with Divorce

The single most important way that you can help your kids during a divorce is to have a cooperative relationship with your ex and keep conflicts to a minimum. Especially if your kids are still young, it's important to reassure them repeatedly that you both love them, that the divorce was not their fault, and that they will always have two parents. It's also crucial to provide your kids with the practical information they'll want to know, like who will be driving them to school and where they will sleep.

But the proof is in the pudding. To provide them with the assurances they need, you will have to be a model of maturity. Here are some tips on how to do this:

Process, don't vent. You don't have to hide the fact that you are stressed or that the divorce brings up difficult feelings for you. It's fine to talk about those things in general ways, without burdening the kids with the details. In fact, airing some of these feelings and encouraging the children to reciprocate by sharing their own feelings may help them lose some of the fear and anger they may harbor about the divorce.

Even years after the divorce, make sure you are available to listen to your kids express their feelings whenever they want to talk. As they grow and develop, they may need new information or want to express differing perspectives. Depending on their ages and personalities, you may need to encourage them to continue to talk about their feelings about the divorce.

Keep children out of the middle. If the children are teens or even adults when you divorce, be especially careful not to drag them into the fray by confiding too many details or enlisting them as negotiators in your divorce. Be sure to address any nagging issues directly with your ex-spouse -- either alone or with the help of a mediator -- rather than using the kids as messengers or sounding boards.

Keep free of venom. Don't express bitterness towards your ex -- and don't in any way imply that your former spouse isn't a good parent or that your kids are wrong to want a relationship with their other parent. Instead, continue to support and foster their relationship in every way you can so that the kids can be free of guilt and ambivalence.

Establish new traditions. Remember that it isn't only young children who may feel a sense of loss around holidays and special times. Many adult children become angry and confused about losing family rituals (even if they once groused about them). Be flexible in establishing new traditions, especially around holidays and celebrations of special events, such as birthdays. Be sensitive about incorporating new individuals into family groupings, and look for fun activities to help relieve stress and encourage building or rebuilding relationships.

Be vigilant. Divorce is stressful for kids of any age. Even if your child has generally had a positive spin on things, keep an eye out for rough patches. Arrange for counseling or encourage your children to seek help if you see serious signs of emotional fragility.

If Your Children Are Young

If you have young children, your post-separation life will involve coordination and cooperation as parents. It's a good idea to anticipate parenting issues by spelling out guidelines and ground rules in a written parenting plan that goes beyond the cursory custody terms that might have been spelled out in a divorce agreement.

A parenting plan for young children of divorcing parents can cover:

- responsibility for medical and dental care
- the times your children spend with each of you
- holiday arrangements
- how to handle schooling, discipline, and extracurricular activities, and
- other specific issues that likely to come up, especially related to child-rearing.

If Your Children Are Adults

Even adult children may face thorny issues when parents divorce, particularly concerning the changed relationship they will have with each parent. Just like younger kids, adult children often go through a sort of grieving process when their parents divorce -- complete with anger, confusion, and despair.

Foster sibling bonding. One unexpected phenomenon related to divorce is that it often brings adult children emotionally closer to one another, even if they were not close as younger children. Do what you can to foster such relationships -- and resist the temptation to view them as threatening or divisive. Realize that your children, with their shared past and experiences, are often natural sources of comfort and support for one another.

Encourage them to seek support from outsiders. The overwhelming emotion adult children report when they learn their parents are divorcing is loneliness. Support groups in which they can talk with those experiencing similar feelings may be especially helpful in easing this pain. A number of such groups operate online.

Life is in a constant state of flux, and as our trajectories, relationships, responsibilities, physical health, and emotional wellbeing change, so does our ability to adapt to the stresses those changes can create. Over time, students you know may begin to feel disconnected, overwhelmed, or lost in the pace of life. As those emotions deepen and become even further entrenched in their minds, they may begin to feel as if suicide is an appropriate solution to the pain, loneliness, isolation, or persistent stress that they are unable to shake.

It's critical to understand that everyone you know has the potential to engage in suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Even those who you feel are the most emotionally stable may be secretly struggling with a past trauma or experience a future trauma at some point that may trigger suicidal urges. That is why it's so very important for you to pay attention to the comments and behaviors your friends, loved ones, and peers present to you, so you can help them seek the assistance they need to recover. Remember, suicide is not the only outcome for those who struggle with suicidal urges. Students in crisis can find a pathway to recovery through having access to professional assistance and having peers and friends ready to ask, "How are you?"

Reach out to your student assistance provider to receive recommendations for counseling opportunities and more support information. If you're offline, away from a computer, or need to contact someone to provide support when suicidal thoughts or behaviors are present, help is available through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The Lifeline provides free, 24/7 support at 1-800-273-8255.

Knowing the warning signs for suicide will help you know when you need to reach out and encourage someone to seek professional support. Here are some of the key behaviors to watch out for:

- Posting online or making verbal statements about wanting to take one's own life
- Researching or discussing ways to commit suicide
- Making statements about feeling lost, overwhelmed or hopeless
- Retreating from public activities and social interactions
- Mood swings, especially behaviors that are erratic, reckless or rageful
- Discussing feelings of being trapped or burdening loved ones or friends
- Expressing concerns about feeling a persistent or intolerable pain
- Noticeable or increased substance misuse
- Acquiring items, such as pills, a firearm, or other tools that can be misused

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Cholesterol Education

National Cholesterol Education Month seeks to inform the public about the dangers of high cholesterol and its connection with heart disease. It is a serious condition that affects nearly 102 million Americans over the age of 20. High cholesterol can be caused by an unhealthy diet and exacerbated by smoking and a lack of exercise.

While cholesterol is necessary for the body to build healthy cells, vitamins, and hormones, most people don't need cholesterol from their diet. The human body has the ability to create enough cholesterol on its own. Cholesterol comes from your liver and foods from animals including meat and dairy. Some tropical oils, such as palm and coconut, contain saturated fat that can increase bad cholesterol or LDL (low-density lipoproteins). Foods that are high in saturated and trans fats cause your liver to make more cholesterol than it otherwise would. High cholesterol is symptomless and it can be hard to diagnose.

One tool, **a complete cholesterol test**, includes the calculation of four types of fats in your blood:

1. **Total cholesterol** is the sum of your blood's cholesterol content.
2. **Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol** is the "bad" cholesterol. Too much of it causes plaque buildup in your arteries which reduces blood flow and can lead to a heart attack or stroke.
3. **High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol** is the "good" cholesterol because it helps carry away LDL cholesterol, thus keeping arteries open and your blood flowing more freely.
4. **Triglycerides** are a type of fat in the blood. When you eat, your body converts calories that it doesn't need into triglycerides, which are stored in fat cells. High triglyceride levels are associated with being overweight, too many sweets or too much alcohol, smoking, being sedentary, or having Diabetes.

Lifestyle changes such as regular exercise, a diet low in fat and high in fiber, and not smoking can help lower cholesterol.

Sources:

[NATIONAL CHOLESTEROL EDUCATION MONTH -September 2022 - National Today](#)
[What is Cholesterol? | American Heart Association](#)
[Cholesterol test - Mayo Clinic](#)



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Suicide Prevention

Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. As the second leading cause of death for people aged 10 to 34, spreading awareness about risk factors, warning signs, and taking care of your mental wellbeing can help prevent suicide.

Mental health conditions are often seen as the cause of suicide. However, suicide is rarely caused by a single factor. By understanding how factors such as individual needs, relationships, community, environment, and societal levels can affect one's wellbeing, we can lower and prevent rates of suicide in our society.

Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that an individual will consider, attempt, or die by suicide:

- Adverse life experiences, including trauma and abuse
- Losses and stressors such as school, job, financial, criminal, legal, relationship
- Substance misuse
- Access to lethal means
- Mental health disorders
- Prior suicide attempts

Warning signs indicate an immediate risk of suicide:

- Making comments about being hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Expressions of having no reason for living; no sense of purpose in life
- Often talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide
- Increased alcohol and/or drug misuse
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and community
- Dramatic mood changes

Protective factors are characteristics that make it less likely that individuals will consider, attempt, or die by suicide.

- Contacts with providers (Health Care professionals)
- Effective mental health care; easy access to a variety of clinical interventions
- Problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills

By practicing daily protective factors, spreading awareness, and checking up on loved ones, we can help prevent suicide.

If you are currently struggling, please know there is always help. Call 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Hotline Text HOME to 741741 for the Crisis Text line

Source:

<https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/suicide-prevention>

<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/strategy/intro.html>

<https://www.crisistextline.org/>

<https://988lifeline.org/>



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Food Safety Education

How many times a day do you eat, prepare, or store food in your home? Whether you enjoy cooking for your family or are more of a grab-an-apple-for-the-road type of person, it's probably a lot! And, while your mealtime routine may become mundane, food safety should not fall by the wayside. From complex cooking techniques, all the way down to how you wash and store your food, it is important to follow a few basic guidelines to ensure safe food handling and avoid foodborne illness.

Check out the recommendations below:

- You know this one already, but it bears repeating - wash your hands often!
- Rinse fruit and vegetables with soap before peeling, cutting, or eating.
- Separate raw meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood from other foods always.
- Cook your food to the appropriate safe internal temperature. Check out the [CDC's guidelines](#) for more details.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or microwave rather than on the counter.
- Freeze or refrigerate fresh perishable foods within two hours unless food was exposed to temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit. In that case, make it one hour.
- Leftovers can be tricky! [Click here](#) for more information about storing and reheating them safely.
- With the convenience and growing popularity of grocery delivery and meal services, know the guidelines for [food delivery safety](#).

Source: [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov)

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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Chicken & Spinach Skillet Pasta with Lemon & Parmesan

4 Servings

Ingredients

- 8 ounces gluten-free pasta of choice or whole-wheat pasta of choice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1-pound boneless, skinless chicken breast or thighs, trimmed and cut into bite-size pieces
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup dry white wine
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- 10 cups chopped fresh spinach
- 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large high-sided skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, salt, and pepper; stir occasionally until just cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes.
3. Add garlic and cook, stirring until fragrant – about 1 minute. Stir in wine, lemon juice and zest; bring to a simmer.
4. Remove from heat. Stir in spinach and the cooked pasta.
5. Cover and let stand until the spinach is just wilted.
6. Divide among 4 plates and top each serving with 1 tablespoon Parmesan.

Nutrition

- **Per Serving:** 335 calories; protein 28.7g; carbohydrates 24.9g; dietary fiber 2g; sugars 1.1g; fat 12.3g; saturated fat 2.7g; cholesterol 66.9mg; vitamin a iu 7100IU; vitamin c 30.8mg; folate 154.8mcg; calcium 143.6mg; iron 3.3mg; magnesium 107.9mg; potassium 684.5mg; sodium 499.2mg; thiamin 0.2mg.

Source: [Chicken & Spinach Skillet Pasta with Lemon & Parmesan Recipe | EatingWell](#)

Build Resilience with Awareness

Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from illness, change, and adverse events. Resilience is a tool or resource you can draw upon and strengthen. Consider these few tactics that help develop resilience: 1) Build relationships with those you can turn to for support and who are dependable in their ability to offer acceptance, patience, and empathy. 2) Practice daily positive self-talk by achieving small goals you can reflect on for self-praise. Tip: Identify what you've been putting off, and start there. 3) Develop reflexes to spot the lessons learned from daily mistakes, slipups, and frustrations, and nip self-criticism in the bud. 4) Maintain a forward-looking mindset, with enjoyable goals/activities/tasks planned for days or weeks in front of you. Each of these tactics helps build resilience you can count on when the going gets tough.

Spend More Time Thinking

Do you automatically look at your smartphone at the slightest lull in activity? Researchers discovered that people enjoy being immersed in their own thoughts instead of technology in a research experiment that asked them to make a choice not to pick up their device. Self-awareness is the key to overcoming the reflex to pick up the phone. The upside to spending time with your own thoughts is that you'll soon be solving more problems, improving the creative parts of your mind, and making more decisions that lead to the life you want more quickly. Source:

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2022/07/thoughts-mind-wander>

More About That Blue Light at Night

Blue light at night from electronic devices disturbs melatonin production in your body, thereby interrupting quality sleep. This news is nothing new, but did you know other parts of your body are adversely affected by this circadian rhythm imbalance? Scientists have observed that circadian rhythm disruption also affects the heart and possibly the kidneys, along with their natural functions. The advice is to turn off electronic devices with lighted screens an hour before bedtime to improve sleep—and now also for better heart health.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8954103/

Helping Kids Manage Stress

Kids feel states of emotional and physical tension just like adults do, but they are rarely taught stress management skills for the future. Why wait? Children are teachable, so simple coping skills taught early on can be lifelong tools for dealing with stress. Studies show stress levels are higher for kids today than in the past, thanks to pressure to accomplish, compete, and keep up. Easy stress management techniques to teach a young person include breathing exercises, meditation, and progressive relaxation. Could such skills play a role in preventing conditions like eating disorders or substance abuse? Hint: Model these strategies and gain the benefits for yourself, and you will make a bigger impact when you teach them to others. Learn more at

<https://parenting.firstery.com/articles/stress-in-children/> .

Your Role in Improving Workplace Communication

Studies show that strong workplace communication produces higher productivity and morale because employees sense a work environment that is more honest, reliable, and trusting. This leads to more employee engagement along with its benefits. Everyone wants better workplace communication, but spotting communication roadblocks and intervening in them is key. Most businesses experience trouble with internal communication periodically, often in similar ways. Knowing what these are can help you act to intervene and prevent you from becoming part of the problem. This is how you play a vital role in helping promote a healthy and productive workplace. Here are some of the most common workplace communication challenges: 1) Slow movement of information. Solution: Don't hold on to information or delay its dissemination as a tool for maintaining control or demonstrating authority. 2) Not thinking before you communicate. Solution: Know what your communication goals are so you communicate completely. 3) Fear of feedback. Solution: Ask for it. Better a bruised ego than be on the wrong track. 4) Not speaking up. Solution: Pay attention to that gnawing feeling that you should say something. 5) Silence. Solution: Be proactive and keep others up to date. Don't wait for others to ask, "How's the project going?" 6) Sitting on bad news. Solution: If others have to know, then they have to know. Similar to #6, be proactive. Delay tends to increase the shock value of bad news and it feeds on itself, making it even more difficult when it is ultimately shared.

Cannabis Oil and CBD Oil Are Not the Same

CBD oil does not contain THC but cannabis oil does. So, CBD oil and cannabis oil are not the same thing. Don't be misled. THC is a mood-altering substance. It is still illegal under federal law in the U.S. (although many states have decriminalized it), but its use by employees is prohibited in any of the millions of U.S. Department of Transportation-regulated safety-sensitive positions. The use of cannabis oil will subject you to job action for a positive drug test. Are you using THC? Despite many reported positive results, many THC users are surprised to discover that medical benefits are not scientifically proven enough, according to the American Medical Association, which still rejects prescribing medical marijuana, legalization, and related ballot initiatives. Source: <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/marijuana-policy-should-be-guided-evidence-not-ballot>

Count the Benefits of Exercise

Simply knowing that exercise is good for you never fired up anyone to get off the couch. But understanding more about the true benefits of exercise just might. Get your doctor's okay for an exercise regimen, but see whether these many reasons don't spur more enthusiasm. Exercise can 1) make you happier generally, and improve your mood quickly; 2) help you achieve weight loss; 3) increase your energy level and help eliminate that sluggish feeling; 4) decrease your risk of chronic disease from diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and hypertension, and help alleviate symptoms, like pain; 5) delay the appearance of aging skin on your body; 6) improve your brain health, including memory; and 7) improve your sleep and benefit your sex life.

National Recovery Month

National Recovery Month brings awareness to the effectiveness of treatment for substance use disorders (alcoholism) and addictive disease, and the initiatives that support effective recovery. Addiction is referred to as a family illness because everyone is affected. This means recovery is more successful when everyone in the family recognizes their need for individual healing. A personal program of recovery like one found at Al-Anon family groups can make all the difference. Al-Anon is for those who are worried about someone with a drinking problem, whether or not the subject of their concern is actively drinking. The free fellowship allows family members the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others who have faced similar problems. Personal healing, reduced isolation, hope, relief, and peace of mind are the most common positive experiences reported by Al-Anon members. If this sounds good, learn more from your EAP or through an online search.

Here for you as life happens ...

