

Balanced Living

December 2024



How to Beat Serious Stress

Every day we face stressful events. Most of these events are minor. But other events are clearly major sources of stress. These include things such as a marriage or divorce, or trouble at home or work. You may need help from others, such as a professional counselor, to judge how stressful a situation really is. After that, you can put in order what you need to get done. You also need to look at the resources available to help you understand and work through the problem. When you're faced with a highly stressful event in your life, these methods may help you cope:

- **Don't make unneeded changes in your life.** Instead, save what energy you have for dealing with the major stressor at hand. If possible, try to make your work and home environments stable while working out the main problem.
- **Quiet your mind.** Use deep breathing and visualization methods to calm your mind and slow your breathing. When you're stressed, your mind can make things seem worse. It does this by creating endless versions of coming disaster. This affects your body, too. The body can't tell the difference between what's real and what's not. So it reacts with a greater physical response.
- **Stay in the present.** You can calm both your mind and your body by keeping your mind in the present. The present is hardly ever as stressful as an imagined future or a past full of regrets. To stay in the present, center your attention on your breathing, a sound or visual pattern, a repetitive movement, or meditation.
- **Bravely and aggressively face the stressor.** Don't just ignore whatever is causing you stress. Instead, carefully think about the seriousness of the problem. But don't blow it out of proportion. Ask yourself, "What's the worst thing that is realistically likely to happen?" Then remind yourself of all the good things that will still be a part of your life even if the worst happens. Talk with others to confirm your view of the stressor. Make a special effort to speak to family, friends, or co-workers who have had similar experiences.
- **Review your coping responses.** Confidence is helpful in fighting stress. And it builds on memories of past successes. Think about successes you've had with other stressful life events. Recall some of the things you did to cope. Think about writing this down.
- **Take action.** Commit to a reasonable way to deal with what is causing you stress. Action is powerful in helping you to reduce stress. Studies show that your body lowers the amount of a powerful stress hormone (epinephrine) when you shift into action. Don't stop taking action because you're afraid you'll make the wrong decision. There are many ways to successfully handle a stressful situation.
- **Take time out to relax.** At least once or twice a day, take time to calm down by relaxing. Try listening to soothing music, taking a walk, gardening, reading, or exercising. You could also choose to do more formal relaxation such as deep breathing or meditation.
- **Be mindful of your time.** Consider making a day-to-day prioritized list of what you need to do. This can help decrease a sense of being overwhelmed.
- **Get enough sleep.** Lack of sleep can cause additional physical and emotional problems, such as drowsiness, memory problems, and trouble concentrating.
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs.** Far from helping you cope, these can actually make symptoms worse.

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The Power of Laughter

One aspect of self-care that is often overlooked is laughter. The average adult laughs 17 times a day while a child laughs 300 times a day. Though you are probably focused on completing your obligations each day, that doesn't mean you can't find time for humor and lightheartedness. As E. E. Cummings said, "The most wasted of all days is one without laughter." Here are some of the benefits of seeking out laughter and how to go about incorporating it into your day.

Benefits of Laughter

Embrace the moments of levity in your life. Finding humor and laughter in stressful situations can provide a sense of perspective and turn an overwhelming moment into a manageable challenge. Laughing can reduce stress and improve your mood, giving you more emotional space to handle difficult experiences. Additionally, it's good for your physical health by helping to enhance your immune system and relieve pain.

Seek Out Joy and Laughter

Think about the times you belly laughed until you cried. Who were you with? Spend more time with them. After interactions with people, ask yourself, "Do I feel better or worse?" Life is too short to be with people who bring you down. Having a good sense of humor will also make others want to be around you. If you know you're going to experience a particularly difficult period in your life, bolster your emotional defenses by planning a calendar of events or activities with the people who you enjoy being around. A positive mood is infectious, and gathering fun, lighthearted people around you during tough times can make the experience easier to work through.

Other Sources of Humor

Social media can potentially be a time waster and cause feelings of negativity. However, you can curate your feed so that it brings you a steady stream of positivity and humor. Follow accounts that make you laugh or bring light to your day. Alternatively, unfollow accounts that tend to make you feel down. You could listen to comedy podcasts during your commute to school or work or while running errands. There are also numerous comedy specials, shows, and movies on streaming platforms. Ask your friends and classmates for recommendations and remember the shows you enjoyed to share with others who might need a good laugh to turn around a particularly tough day.

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Keeping Your Employees Informed About Key Issues

Communication is a key element to successful organizations. By continuously updating your employees about the status of the organization, you provide them a sense of community and trust among and between all levels of staff.

Communicating About Other Departments

Employees may have questions about how other departments affect their work, and how their work affects other departments. In order to keep a positive work atmosphere that promotes healthy communication, arrange meetings between groups and departments.

Communicating About Customers

Have employees ask customers for written and oral feedback. Share these comments and suggestions at staff meetings.

Communicating With Workers About the Company's Financial Status

Share with employees as much as you can, explaining how each team has affected the company's financial picture. Supervisors can use sales or supply expense reports to demonstrate how much each team has contributed.

Communicating About Outside Competition

Use outside, competing companies to inspire a competitive edge to your workforce. Examining competing products during meetings is a great way to discuss the competition your company is up against, and generate ideas to help set your company apart from the competition. Mutual vendors and distributors can also give supervisors insight into how your company and outside companies are viewed in your market.

Communicating About Job Performance

Tell your employees daily about job performance. Clearly defining goals and reminding employees of these goals is crucial to company success and allows employees to critique their own performance.

© 2024 Written by Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremadi

Webinar Now Available:

Strategies for Stress Relief

Everyone is stressed. The responsibilities of modern living can be overwhelming. But is it really possible to learn techniques and strategies to manage and relieve stress? Yes! In this seminar, we will talk about the symptoms of stress, how they manifest in day-to-day life and ways to effectively manage stress. The goal of this seminar is to help every participant develop willingness to employ at least one new strategy towards feeling less stressed.

[Log-in](#) any time this month to watch the webinar!



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Parkinson's Awareness Month

Shake and Freeze Day is an annual campaign to raise awareness of Parkinson's disease held on December 21. The Shake and Freeze campaign was created by a mother and daughter who had eight family members diagnosed with Parkinson's. After taking care of both their parents/grandparents in their home for over 13 years, they launched their campaign to educate the public about Parkinson's and raise funds for charities dedicated to finding a cure and supporting Parkinson's patients. Those who participate in the Shake and Freeze campaign wear shorts on the shortest day of the year, stepping out into the cold to "shake and freeze" so that one day, thanks to awareness and fundraising, people with Parkinson's won't have to endure these symptoms without hope for a cure.

Parkinson's is a chronic and progressive movement disorder that initially causes tremors in one hand, stiffness, or slowing of movement. Non-motor symptoms and associated conditions may include behavioral and cognitive problems, apathy, anxiety, depression, and sensory or sleep problems. There are more than 200,000 cases of Parkinson's per year, and it is more common in males with a family history. The average onset is after the age of sixty.

The exact cause of Parkinson's is unknown, but researchers believe a combination of genetic and environmental factors plays a role. Ongoing exposure to herbicides and pesticides may slightly increase your risk of Parkinson's disease. Because the cause of Parkinson's is unknown, there are no proven ways to prevent the disease. Some research has shown that regular aerobic exercise might reduce the risk of Parkinson's disease. Other research has shown that people who consume caffeine get Parkinson's disease less often than those who don't drink it. Currently, there is not enough evidence to suggest that drinking caffeinated beverages protects against Parkinson's.

Shake and Freeze Day is a powerful reminder of the importance of raising awareness and funding for Parkinson's research and patient support. By taking part in this annual campaign, you can help shine a light on the daily challenges faced by those with Parkinson's, supporting a movement dedicated to finding a cure.

Source: <https://shakeandfreeze.com/>



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Winter-Proof Your Workout: Staying Active in Cold Weather

As temperatures drop, keeping up with a workout routine can be challenging. But with a few adjustments, you can stay active and motivated all season long! Here are some tips to winterize your workout routine and make the most of your fitness goals, even in colder weather:

- **Embrace Layering:** Start with a moisture-wicking base layer to keep sweat away from your skin, add an insulating layer for warmth, and finish with a water-resistant outer layer to protect against wind and snow. Dress in layers you can remove as you warm up, keeping in mind that cold air requires special attention to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Don't forget gloves, a hat, and breathable socks to stay comfortable from head to toe. This way, you'll be able to stay active outside, no matter how chilly it gets!
- **Shift Indoors When Needed:** Winter weather can be unpredictable. Consider exploring indoor workouts on days when outdoor conditions are too severe. High-intensity interval training (HIIT) is effective for maximizing calorie burn in a shorter time, which can be perfect for staying fit on those colder days when getting outside isn't as easy. A quick 20–30-minute indoor HIIT session can elevate your heart rate, build endurance, and keep your metabolism high without needing much space or equipment. Other home exercises like bodyweight routines, yoga, or indoor cycling can be just as effective. Many fitness apps and YouTube channels offer free or low-cost programs to help keep you active indoors.
- **Try Seasonal Sports:** Winter is the perfect time to add seasonal activities like skiing, snowboarding, or ice skating to your workout routine. These sports keep you fit and allow you to enjoy the season. Plus, they provide a full-body workout that builds endurance, balance, and strength.
- **Keep Warm During Cooldowns:** Cool down inside after working out, if possible, to avoid a rapid drop in body temperature. Stretching inside after a winter workout helps prevent muscles from tightening up too quickly in the cold. When you finish your workout, put on extra layers to prevent your body temperature from dropping too quickly. Wrapping up in a jacket or blanket post-workout keeps your muscles warm and reduces the risk of stiffness or chills after intense exercise in cold weather.

With the right adjustments, winter workouts can be enjoyable and keep you on track with your fitness goals, no matter the weather. Embrace the season, stay prepared, and keep moving

Source: <https://www.today.com/series/one-small-thing/how-stay-active-winter-11-winter-workout-tips-exercising-cold-t169615>



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Feeling Down This Season? Tips for Beating the Holiday Blues

The holiday season can be joyful, but for some, it brings feelings of sadness, anxiety, or isolation. Known as the "holiday blues," this phenomenon can often be exacerbated by the winter months' lack of sunlight, leading to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) or seasonal depression. Recognizing and taking proactive steps to address these feelings can make a big difference.

- **Stick to a Routine:** Maintaining a consistent daily routine, even during the holidays, helps provide structure and stability. Try setting a regular wake-up time, meal schedule, and bedtime to keep your body's internal clock steady, which can improve mood and energy levels.
- **Embrace Light Therapy:** With shorter days and limited sunlight, consider using a light therapy box. Sitting near one of these lights for about 20–30 minutes in the morning can help alleviate SAD symptoms by simulating sunlight and boosting serotonin levels.
- **Move Your Body:** Physical activity releases endorphins, which can reduce stress and improve mood. Winter offers unique options like ice skating or hiking, but even a brisk walk during the day can do wonders. Try to get outside during daylight hours, as exposure to natural light can improve mood.
- **Set Boundaries:** The holiday season often means numerous social obligations. It's okay to say no to events or activities that feel overwhelming. Setting boundaries helps you conserve energy and prioritize the things that genuinely make you feel good.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** Quality sleep is essential for mental health. Try to keep a regular sleep schedule, limit caffeine, and avoid screen time before bed to improve the quality and duration of your rest.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Writing down things you're grateful for each day can shift your focus from stressors to positive aspects of your life. Gratitude journaling can help enhance your mood and provide perspective during challenging times.
- **Stay Connected:** Feelings of isolation are common during the winter, so prioritize connection with loved ones. Even a quick phone call or a video chat with family or friends can reduce feelings of loneliness and improve overall mood.
- **Limit Alcohol Intake:** Alcohol can amplify feelings of depression and anxiety. Try to keep holiday drinking in moderation, focusing instead on staying hydrated and opting for non-alcoholic alternatives.
- **Seek Professional Help:** If holiday blues or seasonal depression becomes unmanageable, consider speaking to a mental health professional. Therapy and, if necessary, medication can provide effective support.

By implementing these strategies, you can reduce the impact of holiday blues and enjoy the season with greater balance and peace.

Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/how-my-brain-works/202312/what-are-holiday-blues-and-how-to-deal-with-them?msocid=387d785076de6f2d3bef6d5a771c6ec8>



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French Onion Grilled Cheese

Ingredients

- 8 (1 ounce) slices whole-wheat bread
- 1 cup caramelized onions
- 1 ½ ounces shaved Gruyere, about 1 cup
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme

Directions

1. Spray a skillet with nonstick spray. Place four slices of bread in pan over medium-low heat.
2. Top each bread slice with 1/4 cup caramelized onions and 1/4 cup cheese.
3. Sprinkle each sandwich with 1/4 tsp fresh thyme.
4. Heat on medium-low until the bread is toasted, onions are heated through, and cheese begins to melt.
5. Top with additional bread slice.
6. Flip each sandwich over and heat until cheese is melted, and bread is toasted. Serve immediately.

QUICK TIP!

Just a hint of Gruyere's bold, intense flavor goes a long way in this sandwich. Use a Microplane to shave it finely, so it melts perfectly throughout your sandwich, making each bite deliciously cheesy.

Nutrition

Per Serving: 1 Sandwich

Calories: 260 | Protein: 12g | Carbohydrates: 38g | Dietary Fiber: 3g | Saturated Fat: 3g | Total Sugars: 9g | Sodium: 399mg | Total Fat: 7g

Source: <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/8028397/french-onion-grilled-cheese/>

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Family Communication in Turbulent Times

As the holiday season approaches in the wake of a contentious national election, navigating difficult political discussions with family members might be challenging. But there are practical strategies to maintain peace and harmony. You can stay calm, set boundaries, and focus on connection rather than conflict so you preserve the joy of family time. Key strategies to get through a mixed gathering unscathed include working to steer conversations toward shared values or neutral topics in order to prevent conflict. A key rule is to prioritize your mental well-being and the overall harmony of your gathering. Not every statement needs correction or response, and sometimes the best way to keep the peace is to let an offhand remark slide. Ask yourself if engaging in a debate will lead to a productive outcome or just more tension. With a bit of mindfulness and focus on what truly matters, be determined to create a holiday experience filled with warmth, understanding, and cherished memories.

Parenting Tips to Help Teens Avoid Sexual Assault

If your kids have started dating, have you had a conversation with them about staying safe and reducing the risk of sexual assault? Don't assume they will come to you after facing a situation they weren't prepared to handle. Even if you believe your relationship with your child is close and trusting, they may be uncomfortable sharing with you because they feel guilt or embarrassment, are afraid of upsetting or angering the assailant and/or fear losing friends, or want to shield you from worry. Proactive communication is essential in ensuring your child understands how to navigate dating safely and recognize potentially dangerous situations. Many advocacy organizations offer parental education and teen guidance for safe dating. Start with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Preventing Teen Dating Violence page at www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/about-teen-dating-violence.html.

Exercise Your Way to a More Positive Mindset

Exercise offers well-known benefits for physical and mental health, but there's another reward worth noting: a brighter, more positive mindset. When you're tired, unmotivated, or tempted to postpone your workout, it's easy to forget how energizing even a short session can be. Regular physical activity triggers the release of endorphins—your body's natural feel-good chemicals—lifting your spirits and reducing stress. The more regularly you exercise, the more likely you are to trigger this effect. Beyond the immediate mood boost, exercise fosters a sense of accomplishment, improving your outlook and building resilience. Remind yourself of this payoff. You may discover that a positive and upbeat mindset is your greatest reinforcement for improving your health through engaging in regular exercise.

Stress Tips from the Field: Manage Stress with the 24-Hour Rule

The "24-Hour Rule" is one of the most powerful stress management techniques. When stress is overwhelming, this mindset encourages you to focus only on what you can handle or control right now and avoid focusing on worries until tomorrow. This approach allows you to compartmentalize your concerns, giving your mind the space to process immediate challenges without the added burden of future uncertainties. By limiting your worry to a specific timeframe, you create a psychological buffer that can significantly reduce anxiety and improve your overall well-being. Consider your past; how many times have you experienced extreme worry over a moment or set of circumstances about which you had no solution or control? And still, here you are today with those things now in the distant past—many of which you can't even recall! In the moment, it is easy to forget this stress management technique that relies on the reality that circumstances change, solutions emerge, and perspective shifts. And if one day at a time feels too tough, try taking it one hour at a time.

EAP Help for Coworker Conflicts

Workplace conflicts are normal and can improve productivity when resolved healthfully, but if left unaddressed, they can disrupt workflows and increase stress. Seek help from the EAP to resolve conflicts more quickly, reduce tension, and restore harmony. Here's a bonus: Resolving conflicts through the EAP equips employees with vital negotiation skills. So, instead of viewing conflict as a mere annoyance, consider it an opportunity for growth. Anticipate being provided with tools that can be applied in future situations—or even shared with others. You'll know it's time to visit the EAP if conflict disrupts your focus, increases stress, or produces strain within your team.

Men's Health Awareness Month

Men face unique health challenges, but their behaviors often hinder their own well-being. They are less likely than women to visit a doctor regularly or get preventive care. Additionally, men tend to engage in riskier behaviors, such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and neglecting mental health issues. If you are a man, recognize that societal norms often pressure men to "tough it out," thereby discouraging them from seeking help or admitting vulnerabilities. Don't fall for it. Make health a priority so those you love—not just you—benefit. Consider: 1) Redefine "strength" as taking control of your well-being. 2) Recognize that detecting and treating health conditions early will help you avoid fear, worry, and expense. 3) Don't view mental health issues like depression, stress, and anxiety as "not physical" and therefore best handled with denial and minimalization. 4) Let go of this myth: "Feeling fine means I don't need to see a doctor." Many serious conditions show no noticeable symptoms until they reach middle or late stages, when treatment becomes more challenging and may no longer be effective. 5) Don't depend on a partner or spouse to track your health needs or schedule appointments. Make it a nonnegotiable part of your life routine, just like car maintenance. 6) Choose a medical doctor you feel at ease with, so you won't hesitate to ask questions about your health, even those that feel sensitive or embarrassing.

Get Unstuck from a Rut

The majority of employees feel secure in their jobs but also stuck and unable to move up. Feeling stuck can be emotionally draining, reduce productivity, and negatively affect your life outside of work. Don't stay in this indeterminate state, because it can lead to long-term dissatisfaction and even health consequences. Take proactive steps to get some happiness back and overcome your feelings of stagnation. Set goals for yourself despite your current status. Identify what part of your job you like best and focus on building your expertise there, or even focus on courses to develop additional skills, volunteer opportunities, and mentorship. Connect with coworkers with whom you have good chemistry. These positive interactions can give your job more meaning. Pursue hobbies, side projects, or community involvement initiatives that bring joy and a sense of achievement. Don't just leave work, go home, and hit the couch. Instead, take action to cultivate a fulfilling and more dynamic life. This includes reaching out for EAP help. Source: www.glassdoor.com/blog/worklife-trends-2025/#Trend1

Breaking Free from Holiday Perfectionism Stress

It's impossible to avoid images of holiday perfectionism—Hallmark® movies, flawlessly decorated homes, stacks of presents, idealized family gatherings. If you are looking for less stress this year, the secret is redefining what perfect means. Shift your focus from flawless decorations, meals, and gifts to meaningful connections and personal joy. This means asking yourself what truly matters this season and letting go of the rest. Instead of that holiday dinner that takes three days to prepare, plan something manageable and delegate it. Resist the pressure to attend every event. Go for the experiences, not the things. Instead of focusing on picture-perfect moments, consider the perfectly joyful ones that don't come wrapped in a bow—laughter, connection, and some moments of peace.

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