

Balanced Living

April 2024



Coping with Burnout

Burnout is another way of describing the feeling of insurmountable stress that leaves you feeling delusional and completely exhausted. Burnout can happen to anyone – managers and employees alike. It is a serious issue that impacts all aspects of your life and daily functioning. If you or someone you know is suffering with burnout, here are some warning signs to look for:

- A sudden change in work performance and attitude
- A drop in drive and motivation
- An increase in negativity and confrontation
- Feeling a general lack in fresh ideas and creativity
- Frequently running late to work
- A rapid increase in time off

Dealing with Burnout

How do you stop burnout in your team? You need to pay attention to your employees, monitor their work habits, look out for the events and listen up for the conversations that hint at bigger issues. If the damage is already done, you need to work quickly to help the employee recover before the burnout gets worse.

Here are some common issues that lead to burnout:

Missed Opportunities

Employees who miss out on a promotion, don't receive a bonus when they're told it's coming, or aren't rewarded with feedback or support for a job well-done are more likely to experience burnout. They need to know that their hard work is noticed and that their efforts will be rewarded. By not recognizing employees, you might make them feel as if their work is undervalued or has no real contribution to the success of the organization.

Reorganization

A changing office climate can cause feelings of anxiety to develop. Employees might be concerned about a shift in roles or responsibilities. They might be concerned that the processes they have control over might be handed off to someone else. Long periods of anxiety can quickly wear on an employee and lead to burnout.

Uncertainty

A company that has experienced a failure or setback, is struggling to find a new customer base, or is experiencing layoffs, can expect to see a rise in employee burnout. Many employees are expected to take on the work of two or three employees without an increase in pay or time off. The fear of job loss coupled with the extra demand on their time and work performance can rush them into feeling burnout.

Change in Career Track

An employee planning on transitioning into another job or leaving for another organization is likely to experience burnout in his or her present position. The present position might feel tired or uninspired to the employee, causing him or her to slowly retreat from daily responsibilities and goals.

Provide a Release Valve

Burnout is often linked to feelings of frustration – frustration over not being in control, not having an impact, or not having a voice that's heard. By providing opportunities for employees to vent their frustrations, release the tensions that they carry, and engage in healthy recreational activities, you help them unwind, recharge, and feel renewed in the workplace.

Written by Life Advantages - Author Dr. Delvina Miremadi ©2024

The Art of Positivity

It might seem like some people are more inherently positive than others—they have a brighter outlook, a cheerier disposition, and maintain their overall positive attitude despite setbacks. However, even if you feel that positivity doesn't come as naturally for you, you can still take steps to live a more positive life. Here are a few ideas for getting started:

Start with Your Thoughts

Be more mindful of your thoughts and challenge negative ones. Try reframing your thoughts, especially in situations that can't be changed. Make an extra effort to find a silver lining, even when it's not immediately obvious. This doesn't mean you have to be happy or optimistic all the time, but shifting your outlook can help improve your mood and overall wellbeing over time.

Consider How You Talk to Yourself

Does your self-talk tend to be more positive and supportive, such as how you would talk to your friends and family, or do you tend to be harder on yourself? Notice if you often put yourself down or are more negative toward yourself than you are with others in your life. Challenge yourself to show self-compassion and put a more positive spin on your self-talk.

Smile More

Sometimes you can trick yourself into being positive, even when you don't feel like it, by smiling or laughing. On the other hand, you might feel happy, but hold back your emotions for some reason. The next time you're with friends or family, or are having a good day, live in the moment and don't be afraid to show your happiness.

Build Positive Relationships

Be mindful of how you communicate with people in your life. Try to avoid complaining, focusing on negative aspects of your life, or gossiping about others. Build your relationships around positivity and support for each other. If someone in your life often brings negative energy to interactions, try shifting the conversation. It's also okay to set boundaries when necessary and distance yourself from people who add negativity to your life.

Be Proactive About Finding Solutions

Everyone experiences setbacks and challenges at times in their lives, but don't let it run you off course. You can find positivity, even during tough times. It helps to be proactive and face situations head on. Brainstorm possible solutions and move forward. Even when you find yourself in a less-than-perfect situation, be comforted by the fact that you are doing the best you can and are actively looking for solutions.

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Helping Kids Cope with a Divorce

Since about 1 out of 2 marriages in the U.S. end in divorce, many American children are affected by divorce each year. Those kids often feel trapped in the middle as the family splits up. If mommy and daddy don't love each other, they wonder, do they love me?

Anger, fear, separation anxiety, a sense of abandonment, sadness, and embarrassment are common reactions for most children. Some children may feel they are to blame for the divorce.

During the first couple of years after a divorce, your stress may get in the way of your ability to parent well. You can help make sure your children have a healthier transition when you:

- Tell them you love them. And tell them often. Provide a secure relationship with both parents.
- Be open and honest. Explain in terms for their age the basic reason for your divorce. Your children must be told that they're not to blame. Don't wait until the last moment to tell them about the divorce. If possible, tell your child together.
- Respect your child's relationship with the other parent. Children should be able to spend time with each parent and express love for each parent without feeling guilty.
- Keep your kids out of it. Your divorce is between you and your spouse. Don't use your children as pawns, spies, or marriage counselors. Be sure to tell them that it's not their fault, and don't share more information than your child is asking for. Don't discuss each other's faults or problems with the child.
- Don't pull your children into your arguments. If they are not part of the argument, keep them out of it.
- Don't criticize each other in front of your child or when your child can overhear you. If this does happen, talk to your child and explain that when people are very angry, they sometimes say things that are mean and hurtful.
- Provide consistency. Coordinate with your ex-spouse about having the same house rules, bedtime, curfew, extracurricular activities, and favorite foods. As much as possible, try and keep the child's predivorce routine, for example school schedule, after school sports or clubs, or peer activities.
- Offer professional help. This could be individual counseling or a divorce group. Community agencies, schools, or courts provide them. Admit that the situation is sad and upsetting for everyone. Talk to your child's school psychologist or school counselor if they need more emotional support.
- Seek professional help for yourself. Having an objective person to talk to can help both you and your child. The better you can cope, the more support you can provide to your child.

If your kids aren't overwhelmed by feelings of responsibility surrounding your divorce, they'll generally mature sooner. They will also become more independent and have higher self-esteem than kids who are left with unresolved feelings of responsibility and guilt.

You and your spouse once loved each other. Remind your children of this, and that from that love, they are the greatest gift.

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Webinar Now Available:

Helping You and Your Child Adjust to Divorce

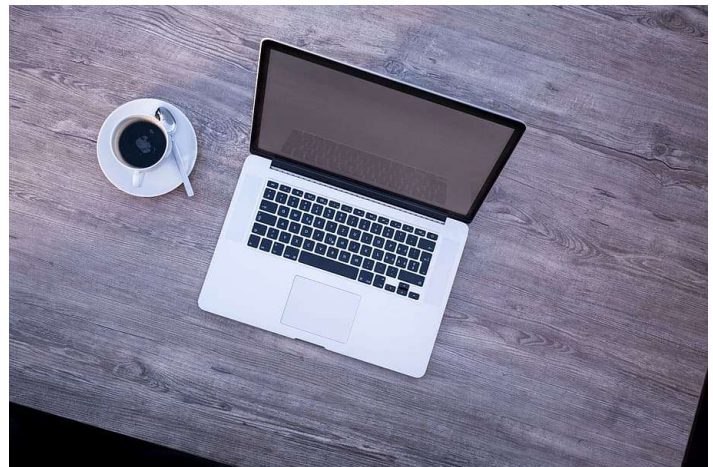
It's no surprise that the breakup of your marriage is tough on your child no matter their age. Supporting them as they react to your divorce, while also managing your own feelings, can be challenging. In this session, we will learn how to lend comfort – not confusion – to an already difficult situation and at the same time, help you manage your own feelings and anxiety. We will discuss how to adjust new living situations and effectively communicate with your ex-partner. The concrete tools, strategies, and supportive resources you'll gain during this session will help both you and your child to thrive throughout the divorce process and beyond.

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The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

April 2024

Unlocking the Potential of Intellectual Wellbeing

In a world that buzzes with constant activity and demands, nurturing our minds is as crucial as taking care of our bodies. This is where the concept of intellectual wellbeing comes into play, a less discussed but profoundly impactful aspect of our overall health. Intellectual wellbeing refers to the state of engaging your mind actively, continuously learning, and expanding your knowledge to improve your abilities and foster a stimulating, creative life.

At its core, intellectual wellbeing involves curiosity and lifelong learning. It's about seeking out new skills, challenging your mind with puzzles or complex problems, and engaging in stimulating conversations that expand your worldview. It's the kind of wellness that keeps your mind sharp, your interests diversified, and your creative juices flowing.

How to Enhance Your Intellectual Wellbeing

- **Embrace Continuous Learning:** Never stop learning. Whether it's picking up a new hobby, learning a new language, or reading about a subject that fascinates you, continuous learning keeps your brain active and engaged.
- **Seek Out Challenges:** Step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself intellectually. Try solving puzzles, playing strategy games, or tackling complex projects that require deep thinking.
- **Nurture Creativity:** Engage in creative activities such as writing, painting, or playing a musical instrument. Creativity stimulates your imagination and promotes innovative thinking.
- **Reflect Regularly:** Spend time in introspection. Journaling or meditating can help you understand your thought processes better, leading to a more robust intellectual life.
- **Engage in Healthy Debates:** Participate in discussions and debates on various topics. It exposes you to different viewpoints and forces you to think critically.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up with current events and trends. Understanding what's happening in the world makes you more informed and helps with decision-making.

By incorporating these strategies into your daily life, you can significantly enhance your intellectual wellbeing. As you continue to challenge and nurture your mind, you'll not only expand your knowledge and skills but also improve your quality of life, creativity, and even your relationships. Start today and unlock the endless potential of your intellect!

Source: <https://www.myamericannurse.com/intellectual-wellbeing/>



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National Minority Health Month

April marks the observance of National Minority Health Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the health disparities that continue to affect racial and ethnic minority populations and encouraging action through health education, early detection, and control of disease complications.

Historically, minorities in many regions, including the United States, have faced substantial obstacles to health and wellness. These barriers range from socio-economic factors, such as lack of access to quality healthcare and health insurance, to cultural barriers including language and distrust of the healthcare system. This results in higher rates of diseases like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers among minority populations.

National Minority Health Month is an initiative led by the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was first established as National Minority Cancer Awareness Week in the 1980s but has since expanded to encompass all aspects of minority health. The goal is to build a stronger nation by promoting healthier lives through the inclusion of strategies and policies that address the social determinants of health.

Activities and campaigns during the month encourage health education, community involvement, and the development of policies that improve access to quality health care. They also focus on promoting healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, and recognizing the role that individuals, families, and communities can play in improving the health of their members.

Healthcare professionals, policy makers, and community leaders come together to promote activities and develop programs that address the health needs of these communities. It's an opportunity for health professionals to advocate for and implement strategies to improve health literacy and health outcomes for minority populations.

The observance of National Minority Health Month is not just a time for reflection but also a call to action. It urges individuals, health professionals, organizations, and policymakers to work together to address health disparities and improve the health of minority communities. By doing so, it contributes to health equity and a healthier, more inclusive society.

Source: <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/>

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Prebiotics vs. Probiotics: Navigating the Gut Health Maze

Probiotics: The Friendly Bacteria

Probiotics are live microorganisms, often referred to as "good" bacteria, that add to the population of healthy microbes in your gut. They are the actual bacteria that help in improving gut health, boosting immunity, and even enhancing nutrient absorption. Found in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and supplements, probiotics help restore the natural balance of your gut flora, especially after it's been disrupted by illness, stress, or antibiotics.

Prebiotics: The Fertilizer for Bacteria

Prebiotics, on the other hand, are non-digestible fibers that serve as food for probiotics. Think of them as the fertilizer that helps the good bacteria grow and flourish. They're found in high-fiber foods like bananas, onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus, and whole grains. By feeding the friendly bacteria, prebiotics help enhance the functioning of probiotics, leading to a healthier digestive system.

Synergy for Health: Combining Prebiotics and Probiotics

For optimal gut health, incorporating both prebiotics and probiotics into your diet is beneficial. This combination is sometimes referred to as "synbiotics," reflecting their synergistic relationship. By consuming a variety of fermented foods and fiber-rich plants, you can create an environment in your gut that supports health and wellbeing.

Remember, balance is key. Overconsumption of either can lead to discomfort, so it's about finding the right amounts that work for your body. Consulting with a healthcare provider, especially when considering supplements, can help tailor the right approach for your needs. As you navigate through the choices, your gut will thank you for the care and attention you're giving to its tiny inhabitants!

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/expert-answers/probiotics/faq-20058065>



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Chickpea Pasta with Mushrooms & Kale

Ingredients

- 8 ounces chickpea rotini or penne (see Tip)
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large cloves garlic, sliced
- Pinch of crushed red pepper
- 8 cups chopped kale
- 8 ounces cremini mushrooms, quartered
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Reserve 1 cup of the cooking water, then drain.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and crushed red pepper; cook, stirring once, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add kale, mushrooms, thyme, and salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the pasta and enough of the reserved water to coat; cook, stirring, until combined and hot, about 1 minute more. Serve topped with Parmesan, if desired.

TIP

We chose chickpea pasta for this dish instead of whole-wheat because it's packed with tons of fiber, protein, and nutrients—some brands provide more than 40% of your daily recommended fiber, plus 20 grams of protein per serving. Look for it with other gluten-free pastas.

Nutrition

Per Serving:

Calories: 340 | Protein: 17g | Carbohydrates: 38g | Dietary Fiber: 10g | Fat: 18g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Sugar: 7g | Sodium: 366mg

Source: <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/7939117/chickpea-pasta-with-mushrooms-kale/>

Stress Awareness Month: Counseling for Stress Management?

Despite the many stress management tips that exist, not everyone can decide which ones will work best or how to apply them consistently for the desired impact. This is where professional counseling can help. Consider seeking support when faced with persistent, overwhelming stress that you believe interferes with your daily functioning. Physical symptoms of stress like headaches, gastrointestinal issues, or consistent sleep problems are also indicators that it is time to seek support. Typically, when stress is unmanageable, it will negatively affect your relationships with your family, friends, and colleagues. Based on the signs mentioned above, it may be beneficial to reach out to your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or seek additional support and resources. Doing so can provide you with the necessary help and tools, including lifelong skills, to better manage stress both now and in the future.

Keep Your Team Aligned, Engaged, and Productive

Don't overlook the importance of your team meeting regularly to deal with issues of communication, productivity, and job satisfaction. Many employees are on teams, but months or years often go by with some teams never taking time to address issues that impact productivity and cohesion. Do you recognize these "overdue for a meeting" signs and symptoms: 1) unaddressed issues leading to misunderstandings or conflicts; 2) cliques forming among like-minded employees to bond, vent frustrations, and protect each other using a "we vs. them" view of the work unit; 3) a perceived lack of trust among team members; and 4) team members demonstrating less initiative than in the past.

Understanding Self-Motivation and Self-Discipline for Enhanced Success

Self-motivation is the inner drive to achieve a goal, but *self-discipline* is what makes things happen. Self-motivation is easier to come by than self-discipline. You may know this already if you didn't stick to the action steps of a New Year's resolution. Self-discipline includes consistently resisting distractions, frequently delaying gratification, and adhering to routines or plans, even in the face of challenges. To improve self-discipline: 1) decide on—and visualize—a goal; 2) divide the goal into small tasks; 3) repeat #2, with the tasks made even smaller; 4) fit the tasks into time slots of an existing daily routine—a key point because a routine *pulls you* along with less reliance on willpower to act; and 5) reward your successes, big and small. New resource: "Self-Discipline: How to Keep Mental Control to Provide Self-Improvement and Achieve Goals Every Day" (December 2023)

What a Small Garden Can Do for Wellness

Spring is the perfect time to explore gardening—for both fresh produce and enhanced well-being. You can start with a single pot or a square foot of space, and with a bit of sunlight seize this wellness opportunity to help manage stress. Gardening promotes relaxation, relieves tension, enhances mood, improves emotional well-being, encourages mindfulness, and gives you a sense of grounding, connection to world around you, awe of nature, and achievement. A larger garden will give you loads of exercise too. Start today—a handful of seeds is only a couple of bucks! Resource: "Square-Foot Gardening: A Beginner's Guide" Mel Bartholomew

Reduce Personal Risk When Using Antidepressants

One in eight people takes an antidepressant. Do you or a loved one use an antidepressant? Dozens of antidepressants exist (e.g., Paxil, Zoloft, Prozac), but they are not without risk. Although antidepressants may help patients overcome depression, manage anxiety, and improve sleep, follow your doctor's instructions closely, especially while waiting for a specific medication to take effect and relieve your symptoms. Doctors typically seek to identify the right medication via short trials, and during this time communication is critical. Since 2004, the Food and Drug Administration has required patients to be informed that there is an increased risk of suicidal thoughts in children and adolescents who use antidepressants. Research is mixed about suicidality, but the warning now also applies to young adults who take antidepressants. One study showed more risk during the first week or so, and another study found that supportive psychotherapy was very helpful in reducing such risk. Tips: 1) report any increased agitation or anxiety to your doctor after starting an antidepressant; 2) expect your doctor to follow your reactions to the new medication closely initially—if this communication seems less than you anticipated, reach out; 3) have a thorough discussion with your doctor about the potential risks and benefits of antidepressant treatment but be aware that the benefits can far outweigh the risks; 4) educate yourself about antidepressants and how they work; and 5) discuss with your doctor how adopting a healthy lifestyle—through regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, and enjoyable activities—can complement your medication in treating your condition. Learn more at clevelandclinic.org/health (search “antidepressants-depression-medication”).

Overcome Resistance and Achieve More with Micro Habits

Micro habits are tiny, easily achievable actions linked to goals seamlessly integrated into daily routines. They circumvent resistance to change, offering a pathway past the intimidation of large goals that can keep us from what we desire most. Micro habits wield significant influence due to their cumulative impact. It starts with small manageable tasks. Resistance is almost nil. These behaviors then foster discipline and momentum. And this paves the way for larger successes. For instance, one daily pushup may seem trivial, but starting with just one and gradually adding more can evolve into a robust exercise routine over time. Delve deeper into this potentially life-changing strategy by reading “The Power of Tiny Wins: Building Success Through Micro Habits” (2024).

Avoid Couple Troubles Over Money

If you are Money troubles among couples are common, but resolving them is possible, or you can try avoiding them if your relationship is new. Tips for couples: 1) Communicate openly and honestly about financial goals, spending habits, and values to reduce misunderstandings and disagreements. 2) Set specific, achievable financial goals together so you work toward a common financial future. 3) Avoid resentment and imbalance in your relationship caused by unequal contributions to your shared financial responsibilities. 4) Few things will cause more stress than debt, so create a budget and stick to it to avoid overspending. (Many couples attempt this task, but they are undermined by not starting first with #1 above.) 5) Avoid secrets or hiding financial information. Money has a powerful impact. Don't underestimate it. Secrets can erode the essential trust needed to make your relationship thrive. 6) Turn to expert sources to help guide your financial future. Learn more:

<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/09/marriage-killing-money-issues.asp>

Understanding Alcohol's Impact on Health Beyond the Hangover

Acetaldehyde is a toxic substance produced by your liver when alcohol is metabolized (and is a main contributor to a hangover). But acetaldehyde is also considered a carcinogen. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that consuming three or more alcoholic drinks daily raises the risk of stomach and pancreatic cancers, but heavy alcohol use is also a risk factor for cancers of the head and neck (mouth, throat, and voice box), liver, colon, rectum, and breast! Strong suspicions are associated with prostate cancer as well. Is addressing a potential alcohol use disorder a priority for you? Begin with a free, confidential assessment through your EAP or consult with a professional treatment provider. Learn more at www.cdc.gov (search “alcohol and cancer”).

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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