

Balanced Living

April 2025



Good Night, Sleep Tight

Dim the lights, lower the shades, breathe deeply and slide under the covers. It's bedtime. But as your body begins to relax, your mind starts to race. Did you get everything done today? What's in store for tomorrow? Meanwhile, your eyes get adjusted to the dark. Before you know it, you are wide-awake. Sleep? No way -- there's too much to think about. Insomnia, trouble falling asleep or trouble sleeping, is a growing problem in the United States. Studies show that many Americans don't get enough sleep because of stress, anxiety and bad sleep habits. Sure, a presentation or an interview the next day can make you toss and turn. But if insomnia lasts more than a week, or if you often experience daytime sleepiness, call your doctor. In most cases, you can put your sleeplessness to rest with good sleep habits.

How Much Is Enough?

Medical experts suggest anywhere say 6-8 hours for adults and up to 10 hours for children and adolescents. But according to the National Sleep Foundation, one in three adults gets six hours of sleep or less. How do you know if you're getting enough sleep? Listen to your body. Falling asleep at a symphony or at the movies isn't necessarily a sign that the event is boring. It's a sign that you're not getting enough sleep.

Don't Skip Sleep

With increasing activities, many people stay awake into the early hours of the morning. Most people think that sleep is easy to give up. They don't realize the negative effects that cutting down on sleep can have. In addition to feeling sleepy during the day, lack of sleep can cause memory and concentration problems, slower reflexes, and difficulty getting along with others. In some cases, lack of sleep can be deadly. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that drowsy drivers cause thousands of car crashes each year. If you need help getting to sleep at night, check out the following tips. And the next time you snuggle between the sheets, enjoy a sound, refreshing sleep.

Tips for Getting Sound Sleep

- Avoid caffeine for six hours and alcohol and nicotine for two to three hours before bedtime.
- Don't exercise too close to your bedtime. It is best if you finish exercising at least four hours before bedtime. Exercise raises your body's temperature, which can prevent or delay sleep. In the evening your body temperature naturally drops, which triggers a sleepy feeling.
- Clear your mind of the day's stress. Take a few minutes to talk about the day. Or, try making lists to help clear your mind of the day's stress. That way, when you get into bed, you will be able to focus on dozing, not doing. Deep breathing or relaxation



exercises may help lull your body to sleep. If you can't sleep, get up and do something that's not very stimulating until you feel sleepy.

- Control your exposure to light. Darkness is a cue for your body to sleep. Use night-lights if you need to go to the bathroom or if you often wake up during the night. Bright lights can interrupt the body's natural sleep pattern.
- Turn alarm clocks toward the wall. Waking up in the middle of the night and checking the time may increase anxiety and prevent you from getting back to sleep.
- Wake up at the same time every day. Your body will respond well to a consistent cycle.
- Talk with your doctor before you resort to using any kind of sleeping pills whether prescription or over the counter.

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Embracing Diversity in the Workplace

In your day-to-day interactions, whether during meetings, projects, or one-on-one conversations, you will often encounter similar situations, yet they play out differently due to people with different perspectives. Have you ever wondered why? It's because your perceptions are shaped by your unique realities and backgrounds. These differences in perspectives, while valid, can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, misalignment, tension within a team, and even conflicts.

Over the years, we've learned that working with individuals from diverse backgrounds can be both challenging and rewarding. Embracing diversity in the workplace is not just about focusing on race or different identity groups; it's about recognizing and appreciating the distinct contributions and perspectives of each person, regardless of their background or identity.

While different perspectives can be a catalyst for creativity, they can also present challenges when interacting with diverse colleagues due to their varying perceptions and personal realities.

So, how can we navigate these challenging situations with our colleagues? Here are some strategies to consider:

- **Seek to Understand:** Foster an atmosphere of mutual respect by genuinely trying to understand your colleague's perspective, even if you may not agree with it. Remember, understanding doesn't mean agreement.
- **Avoid Blaming:** Instead of assigning blame, focus on the issue at hand. Use "I" statements and be open to hearing the other person's perspective. It's important to remember that intentions don't excuse impact, and even the best intentions can have hurtful effects.
- **Let Go of the Need to Be Right:** Acknowledge that there are valid opinions and solutions beyond your own. Embrace differing viewpoints as opportunities for



growth. Successful collaborations build on each other's experiences and skills, shifting the focus to strength.

- **Focus on Shared Purpose:** Encourage collaboration by identifying common goals. Leverage each person's strengths to create a culture that values diverse contributions. When you understand what makes someone tick, accommodating their needs can help prevent conflict.
- **Be Open to Communication:** Open and transparent communication is crucial for resolving differences in the workplace and fostering effective teamwork. It can help create a safe space for open and respectful discussions. Remember, mutual respect creates understanding. Even when difficult feedback must be given, mutually beneficial solutions are possible.

Conclusion

By viewing diversity as a celebration of human differences, you can effectively overcome these challenges and create an environment where people feel valued and can contribute their best. Embracing diversity is not just the right thing to do; it is a strategic advantage.

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Managing Stress

Everyone experiences stress at times. It's a normal psychological and physical reaction to the challenges you face every day. As a college student trying to juggle the demands of your life, it's understandable why sometimes you feel overwhelmed. Since daily worries can become stressors that impact your overall health and wellbeing, as well as your academic performance, it's important to learn strategies to manage the stress in your life.

Seek support.

You might find it helpful to talk with a counselor or therapist who can guide you. They can help you create a plan of action and share techniques to manage the specific stressors in your life.

Set boundaries.

To prevent stress levels from getting too high, be realistic when scheduling activities. Don't be afraid to say no, especially during busy times. When necessary, scale back your schedule to take pressure off yourself. Decide what needs your time and attention first and what can wait.

Change your breath.

When you feel stressed, try tuning into your breathing pattern. Do you notice yourself taking short, shallow breaths? Try taking a big breath through your nose, feel your belly expand, and exhale through pursed lips. Do this a few times before returning to your normal breath. This can help you relax and clear your mind.



Prioritize self-care.

Adding a self-care routine to your daily activities can help you reduce your stress levels. The basic elements of self-care include getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and exercise.

Avoid substances.

Sometimes it might seem like alcohol or other drugs will ease your stress in the moment, but they can actually worsen your response to a stressful situation over time.

Identify stress.

Everyone is different in how they view and respond to a stressor. You might consider a stressor to be mild, while another person might view it as extreme. Some physical signs of stress include low energy, feeling a tightness in your shoulders and neck, clenching your jaw, gastrointestinal difficulties, sleep troubles, frequent colds, and an elevated heart rate. Examples of emotional and behavioral signs of stress include irritability or anger, anxiety, depression, feelings of worry, and a lack of motivation or focus.

Webinar Now Available:***The Latest in Sleep Science***

New research explains the mystery of sleep and why we need it. This session will explore what happens to the mind and body when we sleep, why it's important to get age-appropriate rest, and how sleep impacts health and well-being. The struggles of sleep disorders, disrupted sleep, and sleep schedules are discussed. Be empowered to sleep better using the latest in sleep science.



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Stress AwarenessMonth

Stress awareness month is a time to take charge of your wellbeing and find ways to manage your stress and improve your overall health. Stress can have a wide range of effects on your health, impacting both your body and mind. It can affect your physical health, mental health, and behavior. Key physical effects include cardiovascular issues, muscle tension, digestive problems, and a weakened immune system. Mental health can be affected by anxiety, depression, and reduced cognitive function. One may even experience sleep issues or substance use. There are many ways to manage your stress.

Recognizing that you may not always be able to be at home to practice stress management techniques, here are some tips for things you can do anywhere.

- **Deep Breathing:** Take slow, deep breaths. Inhale through your nose for a count of four, hold for a count of four, and exhale through your mouth for a count of four. Repeat this several times.
- **Progressive Relaxation:** Tense and then slowly release each muscle group in your body, starting from your toes and working your way up to your head.
- **Mindfulness:** Focus on the present moment. Pay attention to your surroundings, your breathing, and your thoughts without judgment.
- **Visualization:** Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful scene, like a beach or a forest. Try to engage all your senses in the visualization.
- **Stretching:** Simple stretches can help release tension in your muscles. Stretch your arms, neck, and legs gently.
- **Affirmations:** Repeat positive statements to yourself, such as "I am calm and in control" or "I can handle this."
- **Exercise:** If possible, take a short walk. Physical activity can help reduce stress and clear your mind.
- **Hydration:** Drink a glass of water. Staying hydrated can help your body cope better with stress.

Source: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/11874-stress>



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Earth Day and Beyond: Cultivating Environmental Wellness

What is a Carbon Footprint: Your carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that come from the production, use and end-of-life of a product or service. Greenhouse gas emissions include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases.

How Do I Estimate My Carbon Footprint?

To estimate your annual carbon footprint, you will need to know:

- Approximately how many miles you travel by car, bus, train, and plane
- The energy usage at the place you live
- How much you spend shopping
- The composition of your diet

Tips on Reducing Your Carbon Footprint:

- **Energy Consumption Tips:**
 - Unplug items when not in use
 - Switch to energy-efficient light bulbs and always turn off lights when leaving a room
 - Maintain air filters
 - Check thermostat settings – especially during extremely hot or cold seasons
- **Food Tips:**
 - Eat or grocery shop locally to reduce the distance your food must travel (farmer's markets, farm-to-table restaurants, etc.)
 - Skip disposable dinnerware by bringing your own food containers with you to restaurants
 - Waste less food at home by composting or freezing items when possible
- **Travel Tips**
 - Consider alternative transportation such as carpooling, public transportation, or riding a bicycle
 - While driving, think about checking that your tire pressure isn't low, decrease AC usage, and avoid heavy city traffic
- **Shopping Tips:**
 - Donate clothes to a friend/family member, thrift store, or local homeless shelter
 - Shop at thrift stores, resale boutiques, and local yard sales
 - Think twice when making purchases and ask yourself if you really NEED the item

Source: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/carbon-footprint-calculator/?redirect=https-301>



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The Positive Effects of Outdoor Activities on Mental Health

Spending time outdoors has long been recognized as a great way to improve physical health, but its benefits extend far beyond that—especially when it comes to mental health. In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, people often find themselves disconnected from nature, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues. However, engaging in outdoor activities can provide significant mental health benefits, offering a natural antidote to the pressures of daily life.

Reducing Stress and Anxiety

Research has shown that spending time in nature can help lower cortisol levels, the body's primary stress hormone. Activities like hiking, walking in a park, or even just sitting outdoors in a peaceful environment have been linked to a reduction in stress and anxiety. The calming effect of natural settings provides an escape from the hustle and bustle, allowing individuals to relax and recharge both mentally and physically.

Boosting Mood and Combatting Depression

Outdoor activities, particularly those involving physical exercise like cycling, swimming, or jogging, trigger the release of endorphins—chemicals in the brain that improve mood and reduce feelings of depression. Exposure to sunlight also increases serotonin levels, which plays a key role in regulating mood. Regular outdoor activity can provide a natural boost to mental health, helping to alleviate symptoms of depression and elevate overall wellbeing.

Enhancing Cognitive Function and Creativity

Nature has also been shown to improve cognitive function, including memory, focus, and problem-solving skills. Engaging in outdoor activities stimulates the brain in ways that help improve mental clarity and creativity. A simple walk in nature, for example, can lead to improved concentration and a greater ability to think creatively. Additionally, the combination of physical activity and exposure to fresh air can help clear mental fog, allowing individuals to feel more present and engaged in their daily tasks.

Social Interaction and Connection

Outdoor activities also provide opportunities for socializing and fostering connections with others. Whether it's joining a group for a hike, playing a sport, or simply spending time with friends at a park, being outside encourages positive social interactions that can reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. Strong social bonds are important for maintaining mental health, and shared outdoor activities offer an ideal setting for these connections to flourish.

Incorporating outdoor activities into your daily routine can be an effective way to combat the stresses of modern life and boost mental health. Whether it's taking a walk in the park, hiking in the mountains, or simply sitting outside to enjoy the sunshine, nature provides a powerful remedy for the mind. So, the next time you feel overwhelmed, consider stepping outside—you might find the peace and clarity you've been searching for.

Source: <https://talkhealthrive.com/post/what-are-the-benefits-of-spending-time-in-nature-for-mental-health/>



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Healthy Deviled Eggs

Ingredients

- 6 large eggs
- ¼ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Kosher Salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Sweet or smoked Spanish paprika, for sprinkling
- 2 teaspoons chopped chives, for garnish
- Capers, for garnish (optional)

Directions

1. Boil the eggs: In the bottom of a medium saucepan, carefully arrange the eggs in one single layer and cover with at least 1-inch of cold water. Set on high heat to bring to a rolling boil. As soon as the water is boiling fast and hard, turn the heat off and cover the saucepan. Leave the eggs in the covered pan for exactly 10 minutes.
2. Run the cooked eggs under cold water: Drain the cooked eggs and run them under cold water until they have fully cooled (this will stop the eggs from cooking and will make them easier to peel).
3. Peel and halve the eggs: Peel the eggs and slice them in half from top to bottom.
4. Prepare the filling: Using a small spoon, scoop out the cooked egg yolks and put them into the bowl of a small food processor fitted with a blade. Add the yogurt, mustard, garlic powder, and a big pinch of kosher salt. Close the lid of the food processor and pulse several times until the mixture is fluffy and well-combined.
5. Fill the egg halves with the deviled egg mixture: Transfer the egg mixture to a piping bag fitted with a tip and squeeze to fill each egg cavity with the egg mixture (or you can use a spoon).
6. Serve: Sprinkle with the paprika, then garnish with chives and capers (if using). Serve immediately, or store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 days.

Nutrition

Per Serving: 1/2 Egg

Calories: 34.7 | Protein: 3.2g | Carbohydrates: .4g | Dietary Fiber: 0.3g | Saturated Fat: .7g | Total Sugars: .2g | Sodium: 37.4mg | Cholesterol: 82mg

Source: <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/healthy-deviled-eggs/>

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, well-being & legal issues.

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Working Solutions



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Beating Workplace Fatigue

Workplace fatigue has contributed to some of the world's greatest disasters, including Chernobyl, the Challenger explosion, and the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Fatigue typically happens after prolonged mental and physical activity. In today's always-on, technology-driven world, its frequency and impact on health and productivity are gaining attention. Recognize the signs of fatigue and take action to protect your health. Symptoms include difficulty concentrating, slowed reaction time, irritability, persistent drowsiness, and reduced motivation. You may also experience frequent yawning, headaches, forgetfulness, blurry vision, and increased mistakes. If fatigue continues, see a medical doctor to discover its underlying cause, and if your lifestyle creates fatigue, talk to the EAP. On the job, take a break. Walk, stretch, hydrate, do breathing exercises, and get fresh air. If your fatigue is severe, let someone know to reduce the risk of injury or prevent a calamity. Learn more: healthmatch.io/blog/are-you-too-tired-causes-and-solutions-for-tiredness-and-chronic-fatigue

Alcohol Use and Breast Cancer Prevention

According to the World Health Organization, breast cancer is the most common type of cancer linked to alcohol consumption in women. One drink per day raises risk by 15%. A new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine reviews scientific evidence on the latest-understood relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and health outcomes. The report concluded "with moderate certainty that consuming a moderate amount of alcohol (one drink/5 oz. of wine) per day is associated with a higher risk of female breast cancer compared to never consuming alcohol." It also concluded with low certainty that higher amounts of moderate alcohol consumption are associated with a higher risk of breast cancer. Is alcohol use a concern for you or someone you care about? Learn more about how to get help or how to help another person by contacting your employee assistance program.

The Power of Feeling Time Affluent

Do you have enough time to do the things you want—and need—to do? Answering yes means you are "time affluent." It is a key to feeling happy and satisfied with life. The opposite would be feeling constantly under pressure, harried, and "without a second to breathe." That feeling of being in control of your time isn't necessarily acquired by having money—financial affluence—but instead by appreciating time as an irreplaceable commodity and applying skills that give you more control over it. To gain time affluence, consider seven skills: 1) Learn to prioritize to prevent less-important tasks from consuming time. 2) Practice doing key tasks in "chunks of time." This increases focus and speed and gives you more life balance. 3) Learn to say no; this requires learning when and what to say no to while staying proficient at it. 4) Delegate more—a cost-free example might be delegating household chores to other family members. 5) Reduce/avoid social media/technology use. 6) Change your perception. Put time gaps between chores to enjoy a break rather than stitching them together all day and feeling harried. 7) Discover the art of mindfulness and utilize this life skill to appreciate the present moment. Learn more: maxwellleadership.com/blog/team-potential-value-effective-delegation/

Don't Get Your Phone Hacked

Phone hacking is on the rise with more people relying on these devices for an increasing number of life tasks. Unfortunately, there is a misconception that a phone is less vulnerable than a desktop computer. Not true. There is a new cyber risk called a "zero-click exploit." This can attack a phone without trickery, clicks, or any interaction by the phone user. Smartphone companies are staying ahead, but if you don't stay on top of security updates in a timely way, you increase the risk of being attacked silently and invisibly. Periodically turn off your phone entirely, maintain updates properly, and install apps only from official and reputable sources. Source: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/21018353-nsa-mobile-device-best-practices/>

Fifteen Benefits of Walking

Knowing the benefits of walking 30 minutes a day five days a week may well increase your motivation for doing it. Do you see in the following list any benefits that excite you? Decreased risk of cardiovascular disease; decreased risk of cerebrovascular disease; decreased risk of type 2 diabetes; decreased risk of cognitive impairment and dementia; improved mental well-being; improved sleep; increased lifespan; reduced risk of cancer; increased effectiveness of immune function; greater calorie expenditure during and after the walk; reduced effects of stress; improved self-esteem and positive self-talk from achieving walking goals; improved overall endurance; improved insulin sensitivity and glucose control; and alone time to reflect on thoughts, feelings, and goals for improved self-awareness and personal growth. Talk to your doctor about your exercise plans. Note that incorporating short, intense bursts of walking fast or jogging for, say, 20 seconds periodically can help you achieve greater health benefits *in less time* compared to a moderate walking pace alone!

Source: [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10643563](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10643563)

Avoid Lifestyle Habits That Harm Kidneys

Don't harm your kidneys with lifestyle behaviors that place stress on their ability to function. Kidneys filter blood at the rate of about 200 quarts per day. They remove waste products, selectively reabsorb or excrete water, control blood pressure, produce hormones, and maintain electrolyte levels. The following put stress on kidneys: 1) Late-night eating and bedtime snacking interrupt your circadian rhythm and adversely affect metabolism, causing stress on kidneys. 2) Skipping breakfast is linked to poor metabolic control, specifically increasing the risk of protein in urine, a sign of unhealthy kidney function. This can also increase hypertension. 3) Poor hydration reduces blood flow to the kidneys, making them work harder. Stay hydrated by drinking water during the day to help your kidneys do their job. 4) Oversalting your food can increase blood pressure. Avoiding these behaviors can help prevent inflammation, poor hydration, and disturbances of your metabolism—all enemies of your kidneys' health.

Avoid Passive-Aggressive Communication at Work

Passive-aggressive communication is distressing and contributes to poor morale, higher turnover, and lower productivity. Recognizing its impact and avoiding it can create a more positive workplace, reduce stress, and decrease burnout. Do you participate in passive-aggressive communication? Common behaviors include sending emails to a coworker but copying it to their supervisor; withholding information; using the silent treatment; leaving notes that create distress (e.g., "See me" or "We need to talk"); giving a compliment containing a hidden insult (e.g., "Wow, good work for a newbie."); using an insincere tone (e.g., "Yeah, sure, I'll get that done pronto."); and undermining a positive relationship between two coworkers with gossip or falsehoods. Learn more: uk.indeed.com/career-advice [search "passive-aggressive"]

Stop the Doomscrolling

Excessive consumption of negative news online is called "doomscrolling." With thousands of competing news sources, there are dramatic increases in competition for the attention of viewers. Research studies show that humans are inclined to pay more attention to negative news than to positive news because our brains naturally pay attention to what threatens us. Negative news grabs attention—not just in newspapers but also online. If you find yourself drawn to social media or news sites, repeatedly searching for more details about the latest negative story, and if that starts consuming excessive time, interfering with your work or social life, or causing ongoing anxiety and stress, consider seeking support through your employee assistance program. Learn more: freedom.to/blog/why-you-cant-stop-doom-scrolling/

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