

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiving someone who has hurt you deeply — a parent, sibling, spouse, ex-spouse, employer, or even a stranger — is one of the most difficult challenges you'll face in life.

Until you can forgive, anger, resentment, and bitterness will continue to eat away at your heart and mind, causing emotional and even physical damage because of increased stress.

"Not forgiving means you carry in your heart the pain the person has caused you," says Kathleen Griffin, author of *The Forgiveness Formula: How to Let Go of Your Pain and Move on With Life*. "Not letting go of this burden can keep you trapped in the past and unable to move forward into a better future."

People who have been deeply hurt often say there's a "before" and "after" the hurt occurred. They remember the time before the hurt as one without problems, and withholding forgiveness becomes a way of trying to go back to how things used to be.

"But to begin the journey of forgiveness, you need to give up hope of things being as they were before the hurt occurred," says Ms. Griffin. "Your life is different, and accepting that what happened to you really did occur, but that you can forgive and let go of the pain it caused, is the first step."

Lighten your load

Choosing to forgive — and it is a choice — can make a significant difference in your peace of mind and future happiness.

"Think of people you know who can forgive," says Ms. Griffin. "Now think of those who bear a grudge. Which camp would you rather be in?"

To imagine the difference forgiveness could make in your life, think about a time when you took a trip and packed too much. Remember how grateful you were to put down your bags and not have to carry them anymore?

"Your forgiveness issues are just the same," says Ms. Griffin. "You may not be conscious of carrying them every day, but they weigh you down just the same. Imagine letting go of the burden of your resentment and anger, and think about how much easier your life journey would be."



Practice forgiveness

Make two lists: an "easy" list of people who have not done you a great wrong but with whom you still have issues, and a "hard" list of those who have hurt you deeply. Begin by working to forgive the people on the easy list first.

"Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting what was done to you, but it does mean completely letting go of the hurt someone has caused you, because you have decided to do so," says Ms. Griffin. "Forgiveness is never about the other person. It's all about you and your decision to live a less painful and more liberated life."

Writing in a forgiveness journal can help. In the journal, note how you feel about forgiveness and where you are in the process.

Other ideas

Meditate to help center and calm your spirit. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and become conscious of your breathing.

Take "life breaths" to help you cope with negative emotions. Choose a word that describes your feelings, such as anger, fear, or hate. As you take a deep, slow breath in through your nose, imagine you're breathing in the opposite words: hope, love, or peace. Now slowly and deeply breathe out through your mouth, breathing out the fear, anger, and hate.

Visualize a forgiveness room. Imagine a room deep within your heart. The room contains all the bitterness and sadness of not forgiving. Open that room, clean it, and little by little, make it a part of yourself again so that no part of your heart is shut down.

"As the years pass, you may have people who seem beyond your power to forgive," says Ms. Griffin. "But you always have a choice: Do I choose to hold on to bitterness or to forgive? To forgive is to say, 'It stops here. With me.'"

source: *The StayWell Company* © 2020

WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU RETIRE

For most people, the key to a happy and fulfilling retirement is simple: staying busy. Unfortunately, when planning for retirement, a lot of folks focus only on finances, and fail to think about, or plan for, how they will spend their time.

Why worry about retirement activities now, when retirement is years, or even decades, away? Because, put bluntly, people who count on developing new interests and involvements after 65 often don't. And that makes for a bored, depressed old age.



Start Planning Now

It's never too early to plan for what you will do in your golden years. To start, take a few minutes to write down the things you expect to be actively involved in. Don't count solo activities such as reading, watching TV, or jogging. While fine in themselves, they are not likely to keep you energized and interesting for long. Be as specific as you can. For example, if you plan to participate in charitable activities aimed at helping educate Third World children, who will you work with and what will you do?

Keep in mind that participating in just a few activities won't keep you interested in life and interesting to others. So if your list consists of travel, adult education courses, and golf, you'll need to do more planning. Here are some other activities to consider -- and how to plan for them:

Working Part-Time

Many people who enjoy the bustle and creativity of the workplace find that working at least part-time after retirement age offers the best opportunity to stay busily involved in life. And, of course, working a few extra years can go a long way toward helping solve money problems.

If you hope to establish a new career, turn a hobby into a business or find a part-time job more challenging than flipping burgers, it's important to plan ahead. Investigate whether you'll need more education, experience or skills in order to execute your plans. Then, take the time before you retire to develop the tools you'll need.

For example, if you'd like to convert your passion for gardening into a landscaping business, you may need to take courses in marketing and accounting, learn how and where to buy wholesale plants and begin developing a customer base. This may mean cutting back on current work and making some short-term financial sacrifices.

Volunteering

Many older people gain satisfaction from an active involvement with good causes. Here's why:

- **A chance to do interesting work.** Many nonprofits are involved in work that is fascinating. For example, nonprofits preserve rain forests, record oral histories of elderly immigrants, and teach low-income children to read. If you check around, you'll be sure to find an organization that piques your interest or passion.
- **A way to add meaning to life.** Knowing that you are doing good and needed work can give your life far more meaning than it might otherwise have. Working to improve the quality of others' lives helps some people cope with the inevitability of their own death.
- **A way to pay one's karmic debts.** Helping others gives many older people the opportunity to pass on the love and support once given them.
- **An opportunity to meet interesting people.** Regular workplaces are great places to make friends, too, but nonprofit groups tend to attract like-minded people (such as people interested in adult literacy or bilingual education or reptiles). Finding people you can truly bond with may be easier.

Planning ahead is key to succeeding as a volunteer. At first you may think this is silly -- after all, you're not asking to be paid, only to help out. Think again. Increasingly, bigger nonprofits rely on paid staff and technology to accomplish many day-to-day tasks, using only a small group of knowledgeable volunteers to staff the board of directors and advisory committees. People who know the field and have up-to-date skills are in great demand, but those who have little to offer beyond a desire to help may have a hard time finding satisfying work.

The lesson is the same as it is in the profit-making sector: explore your hoped-for nonprofit career well before you retire and actually need it.

Exploring Hobbies

Retirement is a great time to devote more time to your hobbies. But many people don't develop interests outside of work and family in their younger and middle years, thinking they'll do it after they retire.

If this is your plan, beware! Few people who have not cultivated authentic interests during their middle years are able to do so after age 65. Many of them end up bored and disappointed. So, take the time now to enjoy life, develop interests and pursue hobbies. When you retire, you can devote more time to your existing activities and add a few others.

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20 WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS

If your boss, coworker, or workload has you down in the dumps, try one of the proven relaxation methods below to blow off some steam in a healthy way:



1. **Concentrate on your breath.** Close your eyes and start breathing deeply and slowly. Let the breath out for a count of five. Repeat this practice ten times, focusing on the way the breath feels in the body. Feel the ribcage expand and relax, and feel your mind relax.
2. **Stretch the stress away.** Raise your arms above your head, then reach out to the right side of the room for four counts, and then to the left side of the room for four counts. Next, reach straight up. Reach all the way through your fingers to stretch your back and shoulder muscles. Then, take your arms back down and release your neck by moving your right ear toward your right shoulder. Then move your head back up to center, and move your left ear toward your left shoulder. Lastly, open your mouth as wide as you can and yawn.
3. **Walk it off.** Take a walk at lunch or during a break. Walk around the building or climb the stairs.
4. **Eat a healthy snack.** Keep fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods on or around your desk. They contain stress-busting B and C vitamins.
5. **Visualization.** Put a flower or blade of grass on your desk and spend a few moments each hour contemplating it. Imagine the cells within it teeming with life, or imagine you are a ladybug climbing up the flower or the grass, taking in its color and smell.
6. **Drink healthy liquids.** Switch your regular coffee drink for some healthy fruit juice, low calorie vitamin water, or electrolyte-infused water.
7. **Treat yourself.** Enjoy a banana, orange, or tangerine. Peel it slowly and enjoy the fragrance. Allow your thoughts to focus on the way the fruit smells, tastes, looks, and feels. Savor each bite. Don't do anything else while you're eating the fruit.
8. **Take time to laugh.** Write down some funny jokes where you can see them or find humorous points of the present situation.
9. **Talk to your coworkers.** While on break, chat with colleagues about hobbies and activities outside of work.
10. **Imagine a peaceful place.** Close your eyes and think of yourself resting on a beach, in a meadow, or at a spa. Take in the scene completely, thinking about how it would feel if you really were there.
11. **Take a minute.** Look out a window and let your thoughts take flight.
12. **Break time.** Take a break from your work and think about your life outside of your job. Think about something enjoyable you will do when you get home.
13. **Journey outside during breaks.** Sit next to trees or flowers. Enjoy the way their leaves float in the breeze.
14. **Take a meditation break.** Close your eyes, deepen your breath, and focus on peaceful feelings for five or ten minutes. When you open your eyes, take the peaceful feelings with you as you go back to work.
15. **Make a cup of hot tea or broth.** Enjoy the smell and the warmth.
16. **Complete something you've been putting off.** Notice how good you feel having completed it.
17. **Make time for play.** Do a crossword, play solitaire, or another game during a break.
18. **Massage yourself.** Rub your shoulders, neck, and scalp. Close your eyes and imagine the muscles releasing.
19. **Release tension through movement.** Follow this exercise: Sit up straight, then drop your upper torso, arms, and head between your knees. Exhale and then inhale as you roll up, starting from the base of your spine.
20. **Adjust.** Focus on your posture and adjust it if necessary. Place your feet flat on the floor, lower back supported against the chair, shoulders moving down, chest moving up, and chin parallel with the floor. Breathe through this posture.

Written by Life Advantages, Author: Delvina Miremadi ©2018





The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

February 2020

Sodium and Heart Health

Sodium is a mineral that occurs naturally in foods or is added during manufacturing. It's regulated by your kidneys, and it helps control your body's fluid balance.

Your body needs some sodium to function properly because it:

- Helps maintain the right balance of fluids in your body
- Helps transmit nerve impulses
- Influences the contraction and relaxation of muscles



Your kidneys naturally balance the amount of sodium stored in your body for optimal health. When your body sodium is low, your kidneys hold on to the sodium. When body sodium is high, your kidneys excrete the excess in urine.

How does sodium affect my heart?

When there is more sodium in your system it will pull more water into your blood vessels, increasing the total amount (volume) of blood inside them. With more blood flowing through your blood vessels, blood pressure increases. Extra water in your body can lead to bloating and weight gain.

Higher than normal blood pressure readings can be tough on your body. It causes the heart muscle to beat against a higher pressure, so the heart is becoming thicker. When the force exerted on your arteries is too high, it can create microscopic tears in the artery walls that then turn into scar tissue. Damaged arteries accumulate circulating materials such as platelets, fats, and cholesterol, that contribute to plaque build-up. This can increase your risk for coronary disease, heart attack and peripheral artery disease over time.

People with heart failure may improve their symptoms by reducing the amount of sodium in their diet. Eating too much salt causes the body to keep or retain too much water, worsening the fluid build-up that occurs with heart failure. Following a low-salt diet helps keep your swelling and blood pressure under control. It can also make breathing easier if you have heart failure. You should have no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day if you have heart failure. Less than 1,500 mg a day is ideal.

Where does the sodium come from? Table salt is a combination of two minerals — about 40% sodium and 60% chloride.

Here are the approximate amounts of sodium in each amount of salt:

- 1/4 teaspoon salt = 575 mg sodium
- 1 teaspoon salt = 2,300 mg sodium

More than 70% of the sodium we consume comes from prepared, packaged and restaurant foods. The rest occurs naturally in food or is added when cooking food or salted when eating.

Cooking Tips

- Use fresh ingredients or foods with no added salt.
- When selecting a recipe, you may need to use other ingredients or decrease the salt added. Salt can be removed from any recipe except from those containing yeast.
- Avoid convenience foods such as canned soups, canned meats, canned vegetables and frozen entrees.
- Check the nutrition label on the package for sodium content.
- Use fresh, frozen or no-added-salt canned vegetables. Rinse veggies in a can before preparing,
- Look for low-sodium canned options for soups/vegetables

It is possible to learn to enjoy less salt in your diet. You can gradually decrease your intake and your taste buds will adjust. Think about the health benefits and allow yourself to enjoy the taste of your food without the salt shaker.

Read More:

www.webmd.com/heart-disease/heart-failure/low-sodium-eating#3

www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/sodium-and-salt

Reading a Nutrition Label for Heart Health



Learning how to understand and use the Nutrition Facts label can help you make healthier eating choices and identify nutrient-dense foods for a healthy diet. Here are some tips from the American Heart Association for making the most of the information on food labels.

When learning what to look for on the label, it is important to start with the serving information at the top. This will tell you the size of a single serving and the total number of servings per container (package). Next, check total calories per serving and container and be sure to pay attention to the calories per serving

and how many calories you're really consuming if you eat the entire package. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients.

You also want to make sure you are limiting certain nutrients. It is important to check key nutrients and understand what you're looking for. Understand that not all fats are bad, and total sugars can include both natural and added sugars. Limit the amounts of added sugars, saturated fat and sodium you eat, and avoid trans-fat. The American Heart Association recommends 2300mg or less of sodium per day. When choosing among different brands or similar products, compare labels and choose foods with less of these nutrients when possible.

Lastly, understand % Daily Value (DV). This tells you the percentage of each nutrient in a single serving, in terms of the daily recommended amount. If you want to consume less of a nutrient (such as saturated fat or sodium), choose foods with a lower % DV (5 percent or less). If you want to consume more of a nutrient (such as fiber), choose foods with a higher % DV (20 percent or more).

Cauliflower-Crust Pizza with Vegetables and Balsamic

Ingredients

- Cooking spray
- 2 cups of finely chopped cauliflower florets and stems (about 1/4 of a large head of cauliflower)
- 1/4 cup of shredded or grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 large egg whites
- 1 large egg or 1/4 cup of egg substitute
- 1 teaspoon of dried oregano, crumbled
- 1 8-ounce can of no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup of coarsely chopped basil (fresh)
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 1 1/4 cups of frozen meatless crumbles, thawed
- 1/2 cup of sliced button mushrooms
- 1/2 cup of sliced orange bell peppers
- 1/2 cup of sliced yellow bell peppers
- 1/2 cup of sliced green bell peppers
- 4 sun-dried tomatoes, snipped into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup of shredded mozzarella cheese (low-fat)

Glaze Ingredients

- 1/2 cup of **balsamic vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon of **honey** (or) 1 tablespoon of pure **maple syrup**



Directions

1. Lightly spray the slow cooker with cooking spray. In a medium bowl, stir together the cauliflower, Parmesan, egg whites, egg, and oregano. Using your hands, gently press the mixture to form a crust in the bottom of the slow cooker.
2. In the same medium bowl (rinsed and wiped clean), whisk together the tomato sauce, basil, and salt until combined. Spread over the cauliflower crust.
3. Place the meatless crumbles, mushrooms, and all the bell peppers on the tomato sauce. Sprinkle the sun-dried tomatoes over all. Cook, covered, on low for 4 to 5 hours or on high for 2 to 2 1/2 hours, or until the mushrooms are soft and the bell peppers are tender.
4. Quickly sprinkle the mozzarella over the vegetable topping. Re-cover the slow cooker and cook for 30 minutes on low or 15 minutes on high, or until the mozzarella has melted.
5. While the mozzarella is melting, in a small saucepan, stir together the vinegar and honey. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer for about 8 to 10 minutes, until the mixture is reduced by half (to about 1/4 cup), swirling the pan and stirring occasionally.
6. Using a wide spatula, gently lift the pizza from the slow cooker and transfer to a work surface. Drizzle the glaze over the pizza. Cut into slices.

Health Tip:

Give Your Heart a Little Love

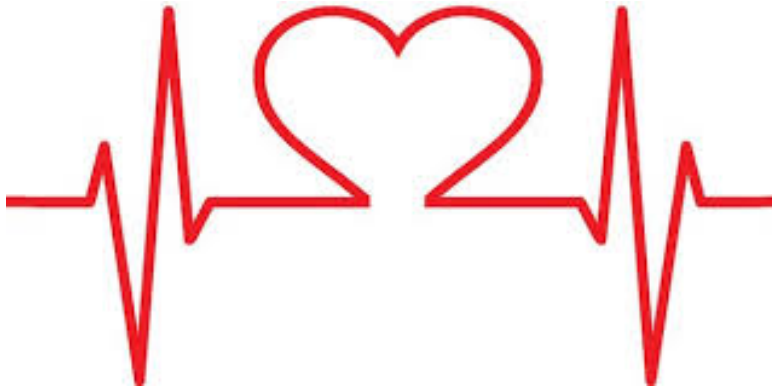
Focus on your heart health:

- ***Have an annual physical to know your numbers:*** blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight
- ***Quit smoking:*** cigarettes cause the arteries and vessels to constrict reducing blood flow
- ***Get moving:*** regular exercise promotes heart health
- ***Maintain a healthy weight***

Action: *Decrease fried foods* that will raise your cholesterol and *add fish once a week* to your diet.



Cardio Exercise for Heart Health



Everyone knows that exercise is important for your health, and it has many health benefits. There are many types of exercise, so what is the best exercise for a healthy heart? While your heart is a muscle, you certainly can't lift weights to strengthen that muscle. Exercise that gets your heart pumping and working harder is the way to go. Cardiovascular (cardio) or aerobic exercise does just this.

Cardio is steady physical activity using large

muscle groups like your legs, hips, and in some cases your arms and shoulders. This type of exercise strengthens the heart and lungs and improves the body's ability to use oxygen.

How hard do you have to exercise to reap the benefits of cardio? There are many ways to determine how hard you are working. You might want to use your Target Heart Rate as a guideline. Your target heart rate during moderate intensity activities is about 50-70% of your maximum heart rate. During vigorous physical activity it's about 70-85% of your maximum heart rate. You can estimate your maximum heart rate by subtracting your age from 220. You will either need to use a heart rate monitor to measure your heart rate during exercise or you will have to manually measure it by gently palpating your wrist or neck, counting for six seconds, and adding a zero.

However, there are some blood pressure medications, such as Beta Blockers, that control how high your heart rate can go. If you are on any medication that controls your heart rate, you will want to use another method to determine your intensity. This method is called the Talk Test and is much easier than palpating your pulse and figuring your heart rate.

You want to work out at a moderate intensity so that you can exercise for an extended period of time (20-60 minutes). Using the talk test, if you can sing while you are exercising, you are not working hard enough. If you cannot talk with a friend at all while exercising, you are working too hard. You want to be able to carry on a conversation but feel winded doing so. That is your sweet spot for cardio and heart health.

A general health recommendation is that you accumulate 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity cardio or 120 minutes a week of high intensity cardio or a combination of the two. If you are new to this type of exercise or have not done it in a long time, start slowly and build up to this goal. Choose an activity that fits your ability and lifestyle. You might choose to walk, jog, bike, row, hike, swim, dance, or something else. Maybe do a combination of a few of your favorites to keep it fresh. There is something for everyone. Like with any exercise program, be sure to consult your physician before starting any new exercise program or significantly increasing the amount that you are doing.

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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Here for you as life happens ...

Is Past Trauma Still Affecting You?



Can past traumatic events affect your health today, even if you hardly ever think about them anymore? You may have “moved past” those memories of abuse or

assault you experienced years ago, but if perceived as fearful enough—and you may not recall just how much—a type of invisible assault on the brain may have occurred involving stress responses of the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex. Effects can persist for years, contribute to nightmares, help explain your jumpiness, or perhaps why you’re easily startled, or struggle with vulnerability in relationships. Seven to eight percent of people will experience post-traumatic stress disorder at some point in their lives. The EAP can discuss symptoms, help you decide if PTSD affects you, and locate the right help. Learn more: www.ptsd.va.gov

Avoid Financial Health Denial



Are your money management habits leading to a financial crisis in the future? If you’re thinking, “maybe, but it will all work out later,” then you may be

using financial health denial to avoid critical changes you need to make right now. See the EAP or get financial counseling if 1) credit card debt is growing, 2) you’re unable to save up a small emergency fund, or 3) money worries are zapping your energy, interfering with sleep, or undermining happiness.

Help for Compulsive Video Gaming



Video gaming addiction is obsessive preoccupation with online games at the expense of real-life activities or obligations. It is not a recognized

psychiatric disorder, but has the same psychosocial consequences of other compulsive disorders like gambling addiction. In 2002, On-Line Gamers Anonymous (OLGA) was formed. It offers support, strength, and hope to addicted gamers and their families so they can heal and recover from this rapidly growing and disabling condition. Talk to a professional counselor first. Then discover what resources are available to help you or a loved one. Source: www.olganon.org

First Responders, Relationships, and Stress



If you are a firefighter or other first responder, you know that work relationships are critical for feeling support, buffering stress, and experiencing overall job satisfaction.

Recent research shows, however, that you may be protecting and shielding your spouse or partner from the stress and horrible knowledge you are exposed to at work. You might behave at home as if work is not affecting you. This desire to protect but also pretend that all is well can create additional stress that leads to conflicts at home and ultimately in relationships you value. Sound familiar? If so, and you’re concerned, talk to the EAP. Read the study: bit.ly/firefighter22



Keeping Work Stress from Coming Home



Is work stress coming home with you, along with tension, irritability, and anxiety? Experiment with these environmental controls and behavioral tactics to see if they don't steer your thoughts and reflexes away from work

and worries. 1) Before leaving work, participate in a ritual that "completes your day." For example, put things away, stack paper neatly, roll your chair under your desk, dust a couple of shelves, and empty the wastebasket. Take a good look at your office or work space, "feel the completion" of your day—and leave. These behaviors, practiced daily for just a week, will begin to compartmentalize work and home. 2) If bringing work home is unavoidable, don't place it on the kitchen counter, dinette, or with house clutter as you walk through the door. Instead, create a special location in your home physically removed from areas where you engage with loved ones. 3) Create digital communication habits that reinforce boundaries. For example, on your voice mail, say that you are gladly available, but only if it is urgent, along with instructions for the caller for what to do next. Note that you can experience a 99% reduction in unnecessary phone calls if you simply allow the caller to decide if the concern is so urgent that it can't wait. Most of the time, it really can. Compartmentalization, boundaries, and smartphone management—these are instruments of work-life balance. Make them work for you.

Making the Most of a Bad Day at Work



Everyone experiences job-related setbacks and mistakes at work ("a bad day"). Our initial focus is usually how awful we feel or how unfair "it" all seemed. The challenge is moving past the negativity. Accomplish these strategies

that add to your resilience. Here are six "T's" to recapture a positive you: *Temporary*: Remind yourself that feeling bad is temporary; it will soon dissipate. *Teach*: What can the day teach you? What part of it will add to your skills and abilities? *Talk*: Talk and vent your experience with a friend to experience emotional release. *Twirl*: Move, exercise, or play—engage in physical activity to influence a positive mood. *Transcribe*: Write down your feelings. *Thanks*: Focus on two to three things you are grateful for despite the setback, to help reenergize positivity.

Couples Counseling: Finding Motivation to Go



More couples have discussed couples counseling than will ever go. Many checklists online will help you decide whether your relationship could use help, but only a strong enough reason will empower you to make the call. If you're

hesitating, you may have misconceptions about couples counseling. One common fear is the therapist will align with your partner and together confront all your imperfections. That won't happen with an experienced professional. Instead, you will be put at ease, and what you envision as the stereotype will be quickly dismissed. Each of you will discover what you're doing healthfully, along with what you can consider doing differently in your relationship to make it what you want. The good news is the likelihood of feeling more empowered while you work toward changes you and your partner agree on. With commitment, most couples enjoy a reduction in tension they have grown weary of experiencing each day, along with hope that the changes sought will last.

Mechanics of Making Deadlines



Don't allow the quality of your work to suffer by missing deadlines. Meeting deadlines is an acquired skill with two influences—motivational and mechanical. *Motivational*: Agree on the deadline with your partner (recipient of the work). Next, commit to the

deadline. Then, acknowledge and empathize with the direct and indirect consequences of not meeting the deadline. Make an accountability pact—allow your partner to contact you at any time about progress. *Mechanical*: Know how much time each part of your project will take. Divide it into mini-deadlines. Adopt an early completion point (your buffer). Success will reinforce your on-time habit, and a positive reputation will follow.

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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