

RECOGNIZING & OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Learning the barriers to effective communication will not only help improve your communication, but also your overall quality of life. Below are some common communication barriers to learn and avoid:

Preconceived Notions

These are the preconceived ideas, feelings, motives, and prejudices that we bring into a conversation. Due to the complex nature of our opinions, these preconceived ideas can actually affect what you hear. For instance, if you realize that the way a person speaks reminds you of an irritating acquaintance, be on guard for reacting to that person the way you would react to the acquaintance.

You don't have to try to completely rid yourself of these preconceived issues; what you want to do is recognize them when they come up, and then do your best to set them aside and listen and connect with the person in the conversation. The key is that by recognizing these notions when they arise, you can avoid letting preconceived thoughts shape your communication.

Bringing Expectations to a Conversation

When we bring expectations into a conversation, we set ourselves up for disappointment. These expectations can include how the person will respond to us or how the conversation will transpire. By focusing on what we expect to hear or encounter, we cast a shadow over the conversation and convolute what is actually said. Further, by going into a conversation with preconceived expectations, you close yourself off to any new and interesting information. If you focus on keeping an open mind and reducing expectations for an interaction, you can fully engage in and learn from what is really being said:

When listening, try not to judge how well the person conforms to your standards or other expectations. Listen with an open ear. You may be in situations where you think you have already heard what's going to be said. This may or may not be so. The only way you will be able to tell is if you drop your expectations and listen.

Do you think the speaker is going to take a particular stance on a subject before the person opens his or her mouth? This can inhibit you from listening effectively; chances are you can't completely predict how a person will respond.



Physical Barriers to the Other Person

Body language can often speak louder than words. It's important when communicating with another person, that you take note of the physical characteristics of effective communication. For the best communication, follow the tips below and make sure:

- You can see the other person.
- You both engage in eye contact. Wearing dark glasses or not making eye contact can prohibit active listening.
- You sit at a reasonable distance to the other person. When listening to a speaker, try to be in an area where you can see his or her body language.
- You remove objects between you. Sitting behind a desk and communicating with a person isn't always best. Try to sit next to the person when chatting.
- You talk to the person in-person. E-mailing and phoning can be barriers to effective communication, as through these two means, you'll miss the body language of the other person. Tone of voice, enunciation, facial expressions, and other physical keys all give indications of what is really being said.

Busy Settings

Try to speak with others in a quiet place. Noise, activity, and other people may all cause enough distraction to make conversation ineffective. By being in a quiet, safe, and non-distractive setting, you can better focus on the person and his or her words and body language.

Personal Distractions

If we are thinking about other things while conversing, we're not being effective communicators. While you are engaged in conversation, try to put the worries of the day aside. Clear the mind of distracting thoughts and try to be in the present moment with the person who is speaking. Try not to fiddle with objects or read documents while a person is talking; these things will keep you from being fully engaged in the conversation.

If you feel bored or tired, try taking notes. By staying active while you're listening you will be more engaged and alert. You can also review these notes when you are more focused.

To help maintain an active focus in conversation, get enough sleep, exercise, and healthy foods in your diet.

written by: Dr. Delvina Miremadi-Baldino © 2020



REDUCING WORKPLACE STRESS



Relaxing at work may sound like an oxymoron, but research shows you'll be healthier in the long run if you avoid letting your job stress you out.

Moreover, "practicing relaxation techniques can improve your ability to think clearly," says Warren L. Huberman, Ph.D., a New York psychologist. "When you're relaxed, the quality of your work will improve."

You can use the following techniques throughout your workday to manage your stress, feel better and get more done.

Breathe deeply

Taking a few deep breaths is one of the most powerful techniques you can use to quickly lower your blood pressure and slow your pulse.

"Pick a number, say 25, and count backward on each breath until you get to one," suggests Dr. Huberman. Or teach yourself to relax on cue by picking a word such as "calm." Slow your breathing slightly while repeating the word.

"If you practice relaxation while repeating a word such as 'calm,' the word itself eventually becomes a cue to relax," says Dr. Huberman.

Another technique: While concentrating on your breathing, close your eyes and picture yourself bathed in a blue light," says David Edelberg, M.D., co-founder of American WholeHealth, a medical practice in Chicago that combines conventional and alternative medicine. "And to get even better at meditating when there's a lot of activity going on around you, listen to a guided meditation in your spare time."

Personalize your workspace

Posting photos of loved ones, relaxing places, a vacation you've been on or destinations you want to go to also can provide a much-needed respite from stressful situations.

"It's easy to get lost in whatever is going on when you're at your desk. Looking at a pleasant picture temporarily takes you someplace else," says Dr. Huberman.

Fragrant fresh-cut flowers also can help you reduce stress, as can a memento from your childhood.

Go for a walk

To physically break the stress cycle, "walk around the block or to a different part of the building," says Dr. Huberman. "People often make jokes about feeling like they're chained to their desks -- but very often, they're not."

If you can't leave your desk for long, you can at least visit the bathroom. "The bathroom is one of the few places where nobody will follow you, where you can actually get a few minutes to yourself," says Dr. Huberman.

Keep a stress journal

Write in your journal for two weeks. Include what is causing your stress, the day of the week and time of the day it occurred and how you handled it. At the end of the two weeks, read your journal to determine if there's a pattern. Is your stress related to the type of work you're doing? Is the job too complicated? Do you need more training? Is your workload too much? Is the work boring with not enough challenge? Or does your stress come from people: managers, co-workers or complaining customers?

Listen

Sometimes people are so anxious to tell their side of a problem that they forget to listen. Ask your co-workers their perspective of the situation, then listen.

Take a vacation day

You don't function well at work when you're overly stressed, so take a day off to have some fun. This will recharge your batteries and keep things in perspective.

Take time to reflect

Besides these short-term stress-reducing techniques, investigating the causes of your stress also can help. "It's vital to explore your life and the sources of your stress," says Dr. Edelberg.

Ask yourself: Am I doing with my life what I like? Are the decisions I've made in my life genuine, or am I living somebody else's expectations? What steps could I take to improve my life?



"You can be having the time of your life in a stressful job if it's genuinely what you want to do," says Dr. Edelberg. "The job doesn't affect your health adversely because you've made the decision and you have control. You start running into problems with stress-related issues when you relinquish control."

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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

March 2020

Strategies for Successful Meal Planning



There are so many benefits to planning your meals ahead of time. Meal planning takes the stress out of planning lunches and dinners every day during your busy week. It is also helpful if you have a weight loss goal to know what you are going to be eating so you can strategize how you want to spend your extra calories. If you don't already meal plan, you may be surprised how much money you can save at the grocery store when you have a plan.

Here are some tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to help you get started:

- Make a menu
- Keep a running grocery list
- Stock up on foods from the five food groups

Make a menu! First decide how many meals you want to plan and how often. You may want to plan just dinners for a week or two or plan all three meals a day. Then make a menu. Try to include a variety of foods for a good balance of nutrients. Use some of your favorite staples and even look up some new recipes. You might ask each family member if they have any menu items they would like to see, or even volunteer to make.

Keep a running grocery list. Go meal by meal in your menu and determine what ingredients you already have and start a grocery list for the items that you need. Any time you run out of something or it gets low, add it to the list so you don't forget about it when it's time to grocery shop. Keep it on the refrigerator so other family members can add things they need to avoid multiple trips to the store.

Stock up on foods from the five food groups. Consider the foods and recipes that you eat often and stock up on some staples from each food group. Some items may be cheaper to buy in bulk. You may consider keeping some frozen or canned fruits and vegetables on hand for when you don't have any fresh available. Maybe keep some powdered or evaporated milk to have in a pinch. Keep some oatmeal, brown or wild rice, and whole-grain pasta available. You might also consider keeping a variety of canned beans on hand or some already cooked and diced chicken breast available to have for a quick add to a salad or for quesadillas for a quick lunch or light supper.

For more great information on meal planning go to:

www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/smart-shopping/3-strategies-for-successful-meal-planning

Shopping Healthy on a Budget

Many people believe that it is expensive to follow a healthy eating plan, but that's not always true. A budget does not mean that you must compromise your health goals. Below are a few budget-friendly shopping strategies.

Buy fresh food. When grocery shopping, try opting for fresh food. Fresh whole foods belong to any healthy eating plan and they are typically cheaper than prepared and processed foods. In addition to avoiding unhealthy processed foods, you might want to avoid pre-cut fruits and vegetables, which tend to be more expensive than their whole counterparts. Pre-cut fruits and vegetables are typically less nutrient-dense than whole foods.



Opt for generic brands. If you're trying to shop healthy on a budget, choose generic items and store brands which are often significantly cheaper than name brands. In most supermarkets, the less expensive generic products are placed on the top and bottom shelves, while higher priced products are shelved at eye level.

Compare prices. If shopping healthy on a budget is your priority, make sure you check out and compare prices of healthy foods and ingredients. Shelf price label displays tell you how much the food costs per ounce, 100 grams, or kilogram. Smaller packages are often cheaper at face value, but the cost per ounce or kilogram might be more. And in case your local grocery store does not show the unit prices on the shelves, you can quickly figure them out by using the calculator on your cell phone.

Create a shopping list, and don't shop while hungry. One of the best strategies to keep your grocery shopping within your budget is to create a shopping list and stick to your plan. Another way to avoid buying unhealthy groceries, is to shop only when your stomach is full. If you go shopping hungry, you are more likely to buy expensive junk food rather than the healthy items on your shopping list.

Buy foods that are in season and choose frozen over canned foods. It may be tempting to buy fresh berries in winter, but if you're trying to eat healthy on a budget, fruit and vegetables that are currently in season may be a better choice. Fresh fruit and vegetables that are in season are usually cheaper, tastier and more nutritious than out-of-season produce. The seasonal food charts included in many of the condition-specific nutrition guides on HealWithFood.org (see list of conditions and diseases in the blue menu bar at the bottom of this page) can help you decide which seasonal foods you want to put into your cart on your next visit to the grocery store.

While most fruit and vegetables lose a lot of nutrients when they are canned, frozen fruit and vegetables can be quite nutritious, and are thus a good alternative for those are trying to eat healthy on a very low budget. Choose low sodium/no sugar added items.

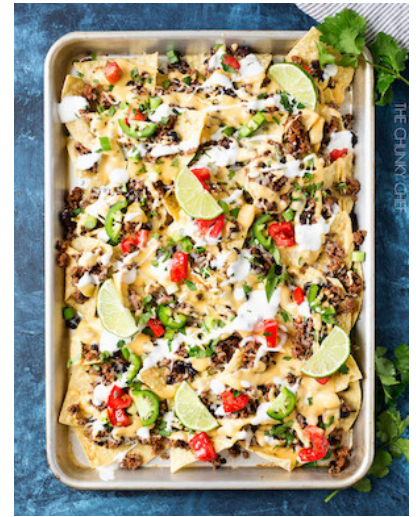
Take advantage of coupons and sales. You can cut your grocery bill by searching for coupons and sale offers. To ensure that you won't forget the coupons, it is great practice to paper-clip the coupons to your grocery list. In addition to using coupons to lower your grocery bill, you may also want to consider joining a valued customer program which offers extra savings to the store's regular customers.

source: www.healwithfood.org/articles/shop-healthy-budget-tips.php#ixzz6BD8iZ017

Sheet Pan Beef and Black Bean Nachos

Ingredients

- 1 (15-oz.) can of unsalted black beans, rinsed, drained, and divided
- 1/2 cup of water
- 2 Tbsp. of water
- 8 ounces of 90% lean ground sirloin
- 1/2 teaspoon of chili powder
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 8 (6-in.) corn tortillas, cut into wedges
- Canola Cooking spray
- 2/3 cup of fat-free evaporated milk, divided
- 1 1/2 of teaspoons cornstarch
- 1/2 cup of shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup of light sour cream
- 1/3 cup of chopped tomato
- 1/4 cup of coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt



Directions

- Preheat broiler on high
- Place 1/4 cup of beans in a bowl; reserve. Place remaining beans and 1/2 cup of water in a mini food processor; process until smooth. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. Add beef; cook 8 minutes, stirring to crumble. Stir in chili powder. Stir in reserved 1/4 cup of beans, pureed beans, and green onions; cook 1 minute. Remove pan from heat.
- Arrange tortilla wedges in a single layer on a large foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Coat tortillas with cooking spray. Broil 2 minutes on each side or until lightly browned and crisp. Remove pan from oven. Spoon beef mixture evenly over tortillas.
- Combine 1/4 cup of milk and cornstarch in a bowl, stirring with a whisk. Combine cornstarch mixture and remaining milk in a small saucepan over medium-high; bring to a simmer. Stir in cheese; cook 2 minutes or until smooth, stirring frequently. Combine 2 tablespoons of water and sour cream. Drizzle cheese mixture and sour cream mixture over nachos. Top with tomato, cilantro, and salt.

Health Tip:

Feel Your Best, Get Some Rest

A good night's sleep helps you:

- Improve concentration and productivity.
- Be more energized.
- Fight colds and illness.
- Lose weight.

Action: *Plan for better sleep* by preparing for bed an hour earlier.

Sleep and Your Blood Pressure



Sleep is needed for optimal health and wellbeing. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. The body requires periods of sleep to restore and rejuvenate, to grow muscle, repair tissue, and synthesize hormones. During sleep, your body is working to

maintain your physical health and support healthy brain function. The best sleep habits are made up of consistent, healthy routines that allow everyone, regardless of age, to meet our sleep needs every night, and keep on top of life's challenges every day.

A study of 3,000 adults determined that those who slept fewer than six hours per night had double the risk of stroke or heart attack than those who slept up to eight hours. This may be because too little sleep exacerbates health conditions, including high blood pressure. It is thought that sleep helps your blood regulate stress hormones and helps your nervous system remain healthy. Over time, a lack of sleep could hurt your body's ability to regulate stress hormones, leading to high blood pressure.

One possible, treatable cause of your lack of sleep contributing to high blood pressure is obstructive sleep apnea — a sleep disorder in which you repeatedly stop and start breathing during sleep. Loud snoring is commonly associated with sleep apnea. When breathing is restricted it can cause lower oxygen levels in the body. This drop-in oxygen will trigger brain receptors to have blood vessels increase available oxygen to the brain and heart. This increase in blood flow puts pressure on the blood vessel walls and elevates the blood pressure.

Talk with your doctor if you feel tired even after a full night's sleep, especially if you snore. Obstructive sleep apnea may be the cause, and it can increase your risk of high blood pressure, as well as heart problems and other health issues.

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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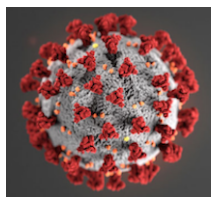
Strengthen Your Immune System



Vaccinations may boost resistance, but cures for virus-based illnesses like the flu don't exist. So, keep your immune system "tuned"—it's the only one

you've got! Boost your immune system with 1) adequate sleep; 2) getting recommended vaccinations; 3) eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables rich in antioxidants; 4) getting recommended exercise; 5) washing your hands and maintaining good hygiene; 6) avoiding smoking and heavy alcohol use (or getting evaluated for addictive illness if you struggle with these issues); and 7) maintaining a healthy weight. The immune system becomes less efficient with age. Examine gaps in your immune system maintenance plan, and talk to your EAP, medical doctor, or health/wellness adviser to overcome roadblocks. It may be a first step to a longer life.

Fear & Facts about COVID-19 Coronavirus



Much misinformation exists about the Wuhan coronavirus. Heed health precautions, and seek authoritative information. The death rate from the virus for

those under 60 years of age averages less than one-half of 1 percent, and for those under 50 years old, it averages less than one-quarter of 1 percent. Persons over 60, especially those with compounding medical problems, comprise the majority of deaths. Did you know that 8,000 to 20,000 deaths occur each year in the USA from our seasonal flu, and since Jan. 1, more than 100 of those have been of children? Source: www.CDC.gov and www.worldometers.info/coronavirus.

Using an EAP When the Problem Isn't Yours



Reach out to your employee assistance program for help with personal problems that aren't directly your problem but still affect

you. Examples include mental illness that affects a relative, a close friend experiencing homelessness, a loved one or a friend you fear is at risk for self-harm following a tragic incident, etc. Employee assistance programs do not apply extreme and rigid interpretations to prevent employees from accessing help, and upon inquiry, the EA professional will help you take the next step.

Music Can Make More of Exercise!



New studies show that upbeat, engaging, and fast-paced songs can reduce the perceived effort put into workouts with endurance and cardio exercises, like

running, but not so much, however, with strength-based workouts like weightlifting. The reason? Music has been shown to have an impact on our physiological responses. This includes our emotional responses, our coordination, and our automatic and planned movements. That means the rhythmic patterns of certain songs can empower you to perform better and engage more during low-intensity exercises. So, if you're having trouble pushing through your workouts, listening to some of your favorite high-tempo, upbeat music may be the push you need. Source: frontiersin.org [search "tempo endurance"]



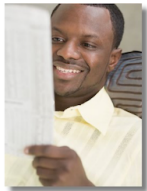
Should You Freeze Your Credit Report?



Visit the federal government website IdentityTheft.gov for free advice on fixing problems caused by identity theft. You can print off an entire recovery plan, and it will walk you through each step, including tracking progress. You

also can find prepared forms for communication with credit bureaus and debt collectors—free services that otherwise would cost a lot of money. Do you know what a “credit freeze” is? It prevents others from accessing your credit report so it can't be used to obtain credit. It's free, it doesn't affect your credit rating, and you're in control of lifting it. Learn more at IdentityTheft.gov.

Flip the Script to Fight Negativity



Overcome negative self-talk more effectively by “flipping the script” and transforming the moment of negativity into positive energy. Examples: 1) Whether you stub your toe or are criticized on the job, be aware of the impulse to engage in

negative self-talk. Instead, think “I could make myself feel worse or beat myself up about this, but I refuse. I'll focus on preventing a similar experience.” 2) If you're dieting, don't say, “I can't have cake.” This is self-limiting and self-punishing. Flip the script and say, “I don't want cake.” It's more empowering. 3) Be your own best personal coach. After a mistake, rather than say, “I am not good at this,” flip the script, and consider how to do it better. If you don't know how, say, “If I did know how to do this better, what would I be doing?” Then try that!

Supporting a Suicide Loss Survivor



Losing someone to suicide is traumatic and overwhelming. Suicide loss survivors often don't know where to find support. Whether you're a survivor or supporting someone who is, seek counseling help. The aftermath can

be so traumatic that mental health problems may follow. If you are supporting a survivor, make yourself easy to reach. Don't pressure a survivor to talk or “get it all out.” Don't ask for reasons (for instance, “Why do you think he did it?” or similar questions). Experience shows it is often impossible to know exactly why someone has taken his or her life. What's important is finding a way to move forward. Surviving suicide is a long process, but with the right support—perhaps from a friend like you—it's possible. Source: SAVE.org Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

March Is Optimism Month



Optimism has received attention in recent years, with research attesting to its significant health benefits. One study showed that optimistic people are more likely to live past 85 years old, or 15% longer than non-optimistic people. That makes pessimism

as a life orientation nearly as harmful as poorly managed type 2 diabetes! Fortunately, optimism can be understood, learned, practiced, and acquired as a naturally reactive way of viewing the world. You may have an awareness of how optimistic you are (or are not) from feedback you have periodically received from others. Viewing the need to be more optimistic as a health issue can inspire you to take the next steps to improve your disposition. The key is practicing a few exercises that will shift and slowly reinforce behavior change with their results. For example, experiment with a “coincidence journal.” Unlike a diary or the daily recording of positive affirmations, a coincidence journal is a highly proactive approach to maintaining awareness and spotting positive events and pleasing interactions as they occur. In a way a diary can't (although diaries can be helpful, too), this trains your brain to think ahead, spot, and eventually expect daily life experiences that are affirming. You can find more ideas for retraining your thought patterns to reflect more optimism through hundreds of books and resources online. There is more to discover about the impact of optimism, but scientists think being optimistic may be accompanied by more goal-setting behaviors, staying on top of one's health needs, and proactive communication skills that reduce stress and conflict. They're not sure, but with experimentation, you may discover optimism's fortunes in your own life. Source: www.harvard.edu [search: “optimism live longer”]

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