



The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

May 2020

Mental Health Awareness

What is mental health?

According to the National Institute of Health, mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important because it helps us to be physically healthy, build and have good relationships, and work productively.

What is a mental illness?

A mental illness is a condition that can affect a person's thinking, behavior and mood. Such conditions include depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia.

These conditions can be occasional or long-lasting and can affect your ability to relate to others and function each day. According to the CDC, mental illness, especially depression, increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness.

The CDC also states that mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the United States.

- More than 50% will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness each year.
- 1 in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression

What are the causes?

Although there is no single cause for mental illness, there are several factors that can contribute to the risk. Factors include but are not limited to trauma, history of abuse, experiences relating to other chronic conditions such as diabetes or cancer, or chemical imbalances in the brain.

It's important to remember that a person's mental health can change over time and get better. Many recover completely, depending on factors and treatments available. Staying positive, being physically active, getting enough sleep and getting professional help if needed, are all steps you can take to help you improve your mental health.

Resources:

www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm

www.medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html



BalancedLiving

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KEEPING YOUR SPIRIT HEALTHY

People talk about the importance of keeping their lives in balance. But when it comes down to it, few people really know how to achieve it.

"When you're stressed, taking steps to strengthen your personal integrity can bring you back to a sense of balance that restores a sense of inner peace and harmony," says Brian Luke Seaward, Ph.D., author of *Quiet Mind, Fearless Heart*. "The human spirit is composed of free-flowing energy. But unresolved anger, fear and other negative emotions can choke the spirit by creating stress."

According to Dr. Seaward, you can reduce stress by understanding the unique relationship that exists between less stress and more spirituality in your life.

"For many people, spirituality has been the missing link in strengthening the mind-body-spirit continuum that's the basis of a healthy life," he says. "People who have healthy minds and bodies but still feel stressed or uneasy haven't satisfied their spiritual hunger because it can't be satisfied by material things."

The following strategies can help you change or modify behaviors that increase stress and replace them with behaviors that promote harmony.

Keep everything in perspective

When you're stressed by a particular event, it's easy to lose perspective, particularly of how good your life is overall.

"When you find yourself focusing on the foreground of a problem or a crisis, take a step back and look at it in the context of the big picture of your life," says Dr. Seaward. "Doing so helps you realize that in many areas of your life things are going well."

Establish healthy boundaries

Boundaries let other people know how far they can go before they infringe on your personal integrity. Setting clear boundaries helps minimize misunderstandings between friends, family and coworkers.

Manage anger

Keep anger under control by changing your expectations. Many episodes of anger in day-to-day life are the result of unmet expectations. By lowering your expectations, especially about things you can't control, you can reduce angry and stressful responses. For instance, plan in advance to let go of things you know will drive you crazy, such as traffic delays.

Be thankful

Adopt an attitude of gratitude by directing your thoughts away from negative thought patterns that are common when you're stressed.

"When you're feeling as if nothing is going right, stop and make a list of all the things you're grateful for or take for granted," says Dr. Seaward. "Start with simple things, like being able to see and breathe. Then move on to personal things, such as family members and your job. Don't stop until you reach 100 items."

Turn off the TV

Prolonged TV viewing increases stress because of violent or disturbing content and the constant visual stimulation.

Forgive others

Carrying the weight of a grudge becomes immobilizing over time. But when you forgive someone, you bring light into your heart and the whole world benefits.

Seize the day

Choose one of your unmet personal goals and map out a strategy to make it happen. Fill in the specifics, identify the resources you need and come up with an estimated completion date.

"Human behavior is slow to change, but it can be done," says Dr. Seaward. "Start by selecting one strategy from those above and incorporate it into your life for several weeks. Then try another one for a while. Over time, you'll feel more whole and less stressed because you're consciously seeking balance in your life instead of imbalance."



HOW TO LOWER YOUR FINANCIAL STRESS



Money worries are among the most common sources of personal and family stress, according to Consumer Federation of America (CFA).

Living with too much of any kind of pressure on a daily basis can take an emotional and physical toll, contributing to sleepless nights, backaches or headaches or, over time, even life-threatening diseases, such as high blood pressure or heart disease.

Whether your credit card balances are soaring, or you and your partner are arguing constantly over nickels and dimes, there are

things you can do to relieve financial stress.

Take a breather

The CFA suggests taking these steps to ease money-related stress:

- Focus on what you have, not on how much you're lacking. List all your possessions, including material things, your health and your relationships.
- Eliminate clutter in your life. Tossing out what you don't need and organizing the rest also can tidy up your emotions. So can meditating or sharing your feelings with a nonjudgmental person.
- Take care of yourself physically. Exercise is one of the best stress reducers. Eat a balanced, healthy diet.

Talk it out

If conflicts with your significant other over money matters are a primary source of stress, talk it over honestly and openly. Write down your short- and long-term financial goals to learn where the two of you can focus your discussions. Put your relationship first, while nurturing each other's needs. Compromise, if necessary.

Take action

Exercise, positive thoughts and conversation may help in the short term, but if you aren't fixing the cause of your money worries, the stress will bounce right back into your life. You need to take action if the money coming in is less than the money going out; if you're able to make only minimum payments on your credit cards; or you're relying on plastic for essentials, such as food or rent.

To improve your financial health, the CFA suggests:

- Set up a budget. Write down where all your money is going -- mortgage and car payments, food, gas, telephone, clothing. Then, see what can be adjusted so you can live within your means. Create a new spending plan and stick with it. If there's nothing left to trim from your budget, you may need to think about new income sources.
- Stop taking on new debt, immediately. If this means not eating out, not indulging in expensive entertainment or giving up a second car and taking public transportation, then so be it. Learn if you qualify for public or private financial assistance. Use low-interest savings to pay down high-interest debt. Debt can be very expensive to carry; once it's paid off, your payments can go to savings instead.
- Get in touch with any creditors. If you can't pay what they want, explain your situation and ask about setting up an acceptable payment schedule. They may be willing to work with you. Stopping the nagging phone calls from creditors can significantly ease stress.
- Get help, if necessary. Be wary of for-profit or non-credentialed counseling organizations, especially if they ask for a large advance payment.

Did You Know?

You have access to hundreds of financial tools to help you not only manage your spending and savings, but handle the stress that may come along with financial worries. Reach out to your EAP today at AWPnow.com

It is possible to get out of debt, though doing so may require new ways of thinking and acting. But as soon as you start taking decisive steps, you should feel the financial stress start to ease.

HOW TO FEEL GOOD WHEN YOUR LIFE ISN'T PERFECT



Most people have thoughts and dreams about how their lives ought to be. When things don't work out the way they had pictured, they tend to blame other people or situations.

They don't realize that the bad feelings come from their own thinking.

"When things are bad, people say to themselves, 'Things aren't the way I like them,' and then say, 'That's terrible, that's awful' - meaning they think things are so bad that they shouldn't or mustn't be that way," says Albert Ellis, Ph.D., the creator of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and author of *Feeling Better, Getting Better, Staying Better*.

It's normal, however, to have to deal with difficult situations and difficult people as you go through life.

Here's how to change your thinking, so you can feel good when your life isn't perfect.

Unconditionally accept yourself

Most people want to do well in order to feel good about themselves and be loved by the significant people in their lives. But this way of thinking can make you feel crazy.

"It's important to accept yourself whether or not you do well and whether people who are important to you love you," says Dr. Ellis. "Don't think, 'I have to do well,' because then, if you don't, you'll worry. Instead, just prefer to do well. Even when people are doing well and being loved by significant people, they worry about tomorrow."

Don't over-generalize

You can evaluate what you think, feel and do, but don't give yourself a generalized rating. You're like a diamond in the making and have many facets. Some shine brilliantly, and others still need to be polished.

"People generalize and say, 'I failed a few times, and I might fail again.' That's true enough, but then they stupidly over-generalize and say, 'I failed a few times, and I'm a failure.' You can't be a failure or a success," says Dr. Ellis. "But you can fail at things and be successful at things."

Even evaluating yourself as a good person creates stress, because you'll always have to live up to your image and do good things. The truth is that you do thousands of things - some good, some bad.

Unconditionally accept others

You may get angry with relatives, friends, co-workers or other people because of things they've done. You'll feel far less miserable if you feel disappointed, instead.

"You can think, 'I don't like their behavior, but they're fallible humans who sometimes do good and sometimes behave badly. I can accept them and not make myself incensed or furious at them.' " says Dr. Ellis. "You can judge their behavior as bad or wicked, but never judge them, as people, as bad, evil or rotten."

This doesn't mean you should tolerate bad behavior. You can still try to get them to change how they behave, but you can do it without anger.

Unconditionally accept life

Many bad things may happen to you in your life, but you don't have to view them as terrible, because you can handle them and even be happy in spite of them. Therefore, it's not the bad things that upset you - it's your view of them.

Feeling bad comes from demanding that something turn out a certain way.

"A demand says, 'I have to have something, or to have something turn out a certain way, and it's terrible and I'm no good if I don't have it,' " says Dr. Ellis. "You don't need life to be good. It's preferable, of course - highly preferable - but it's not a necessity."

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Have a Team Refresher Meeting



Will you need to reenergize your team after months of social distancing?

Consider a refresher meeting: 1) Meet with your team and reaffirm that trust and open communication with each other is the mutually desired goal. Have each member discuss what this means to them. 2) Ask if there are any outstanding issues that need to be discussed. For example: a) Do we have any unresolved concerns about communication between ourselves or management? b) Do our duties or roles need clarifying? c) Are resources to do our jobs lacking? d) Do any roadblocks exist to impede our work at this time? Spend a few minutes during meetings revisiting these questions, and then periodically in the future. Your team will bounce back fast.

Don't Tough Out Acute Stress Disorder



Does your job include a higher risk of witnessing workplace

violence? If you are exposed to such an event, be sure to meet with a qualified mental health professional to discuss your experience and understand symptoms of acute stress disorder (ASD). ASD can follow any type of traumatic event. Don't tough it out or assume "Ah, I'm okay." Proper care for symptoms may help prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a mental disorder that can follow if ASD symptoms don't resolve after six months. ASD may include anxiety, depressed mood, sleep disturbances, nightmares, being constantly tense, being easily startled, irritability, poor concentration, and more.

Parenting Stress, Isolation, and Coronavirus



Many national associations for child abuse prevention are concerned about incidents of child abuse being underreported during the COVID-19 pandemic. School

closures, child care centers, and other programs are not open or operating. Typically, this is how adults outside the home spot signs and symptoms of abuse and make reports. Are you a parent who needs more parenting support or at least great ideas for child behavior management? Find hundreds of ideas at www.preventchildabuse.org/coronavirus-resources. (You will also find great ideas for taking care of, and even pampering, yourself during this difficult time.)

Grief, Loss, and the Pandemic



Those needing to attend or arrange funerals are facing extreme challenges because of social distancing and

travel restrictions related to COVID-19. These circumstances can make grief and loss worse. Thoughtful and effective answers to almost every question imaginable about funerary services and COVID-19 can be found at www.rememberingalife.com, with new content posted by the National Funeral Directors Association. You will find the answers about communication, support, grief, overcoming long-distance challenges, funeral options, safe viewing processions, planning, leveraging technology, holding multiple small ceremonies, and dozens of other issues.

Avoid Virtual Harassment as a Remote Employee



Know your responsibilities for avoiding sexual harassment and increase your awareness if you telecommute. On the job,

we are surrounded by coworkers, managers, and usually a dynamic workplace. These factors naturally create social and environmental controls that positively influence our civil behavior, manners, and communication. Many of these controls diminish or disappear entirely when we work remotely, although technology tools allow for more contact, along with more options for communication, including texting, chatting, videoconferencing, and telephone—most of it recorded. So, what if you type, text, or voice mail something to your coworker and they reject it, express displeasure with it, or otherwise take offense? The answer is, don't repeat it. Common sexual harassment behaviors include discussing one's sex life, asking a coworker about their sex life, sharing inappropriate photos or background images, making indecent jokes, sending suggestive texts, sending unwanted gifts, and repeatedly asking someone out on a date after they have said no. Most sexual harassment prevention relates to self-awareness, appreciating boundaries, and common courtesies. For example, with regard to communication, do you repeatedly use video chat when a simple text is sufficient? Do you sometimes say or do things at work that you suddenly realize you should not have said or done? Don't hesitate to reach out to the EAP or a professional counselor for confidential assistance with issues associated with communication and on-the-job relationships. You can discover resources, strategies, and new skills to help you enjoy your job more.

Managing Workplace Criticism



No one escapes occasional criticism at work. But with a few steps, you can face it like a champ, gain from it, and decrease the "ouch." Virtually all criticism produces tension, so remaining unflustered shows your

professionalism while making the impression you want. Get this far, and other steps to success will fall in line. Remember you have control over accepting "what fits" as true about the criticism and what does not. Knowing this, view any criticism as a free gift. This will inspire an attitude that elevates your reputation. Our positive self-evaluations often hide our ability to see fully how well we perform, but you will triumph from criticism when you welcome rather than fear it.

Prevent ARDS Effects of COVID-19



Are you still considering an exercise program or attempting to motivate yourself to get fit? Here's some motivation: New research shows that regular exercise can protect you against acute respiratory distress syndrome

(ARDS), a possible complication of COVID-19. Avoiding ARDS can keep you off a ventilator. The myth about ventilators is that they help you breathe, and when you are well, you go home without any issues. Not exactly. A ventilator often leads to other complications, including damage to the lungs. The older you are, the higher this risk—along with the possibility that it can't be removed. If the ventilator is successfully removed, risk of death from respiratory-related health problems later is also higher. COVID-19 is going to be around for a while, so if you are struggling to find the right exercise program, speak with an exercise coach, health advisor, doctor, or EAP.

Source: www.uga.edu (Search "ventilator elderly") and www.news.virginia.edu (Search "COVID exercise")

Challenges of Working Remotely



If you are new to working remotely, then you are discovering the challenges that come with it. The most frustrating are distractions. As soon as the last one is gone, the next one appears. To deal

with distractions, rely less on willpower and more on strategies for each one. Start by keeping a list of distractions you notice. How many did you find or experience, such as dings from email, TV and radio, pet needs, social media, phone calls, text messages, wandering thoughts, and leftover pie that calls out to you? Next, decide on an intervention for each one. If you still struggle, try setting a kitchen timer for 10 to 15 minutes of solid chunks of work time that you blast through—then repeat.

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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Here for you as life happens ...



May is Arthritis Awareness Month



Arthritis Awareness Month is an important time to stop and recognize the impact that arthritis has on individuals living with this condition. Arthritis is one of the most widespread health conditions in the United States. It affects about one in four adults overall. That's over 54 million men and women. To recognize this toll on Americans' health, CDC, the

Arthritis Foundation and other partners observe Arthritis Awareness Month in May.

Arthritis affects children, middle-aged adults and older adults. It is a leading cause of disability and causes pain, stiffness, aching and joint swelling. The most common types are osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout. This condition can limit movement and the ability to perform essential day-to-day tasks. It can also cause social and work limitations.

Physical activity can be a challenge with arthritis but being more active can decrease pain and improve physical function by about 40%. Walking has been proven to improve arthritis pain, fatigue and quality of life. May is a great month to commit to a walking program or get back into this healthy habit. All adults, including those with arthritis, should get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week. That translates into a brisk walk for 30 minutes, 5 days per week. You can break up the time into 10-minute increments and spread out the activity over your day.

Your health care provider can play a vital role in your treatment plan. Talk with your doctor about treatment options that might be right for you.

Vegan Chickpea Salad

Ingredients

- 1 cup of cooked or canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 3 tablespoons of diced green bell pepper
- 2 tablespoons of peeled, seeded and diced cucumber
- ½ tablespoon of chopped fresh parsley
- ½ cup of diced tomato
- 3 tablespoons of snipped fresh dill or ¼ teaspoon dried dill
- ½ tablespoon of lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste



Directions

1. In a medium-size bowl, combine all ingredients.
2. Refrigerate for several hours to allow flavors to blend.
3. Serve the salad on romaine lettuce leaves or in whole-wheat pita bread pockets.

You can also puree the salad in a food processor to make a chickpea spread.

Health Tip:

Skin Cancer Prevention

Love the skin you're in! Tips to keep skin healthy:

- *Drink more water* – hydrate your skin from the inside out
- *Avoid hot showers* – hotter temperatures can be drying to the skin
- *Apply sunscreen daily* – protect against harmful UV rays
- *Inspect your skin* – let your health care provider know about any changes

Action: *Lather up* to keep skin moisturized and avoid harsh soaps.

Water Exercises for Arthritis



Exercise is important for maintaining a healthy lifestyle for anyone. It is especially important for those who suffer from arthritis to allow increased mobility and to maintain strong muscles to support the joints that may be affected. It is recommended for everyone to accumulate 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity cardiovascular

exercise as well as muscle conditioning at least twice a week and regular stretching.

Arthritis sufferers commonly find that exercise can be uncomfortable or downright painful. If you suffer from painful joints due to your arthritic condition, consider water exercise. A water exercise program is a good choice if you have arthritis. Water is buoyant and supports your body so there is less impact on your joints. If you exercise in a heated pool, you'll get the added benefit of warmth, which helps soothe sore joints. You may even find a water class designed specifically for those with arthritis. These are typically for all fitness levels, so, good for anyone.

Water exercises typically resemble those exercises you would do on land, but they are done in the pool. You can do many types of exercises in the water including stretching and muscle conditioning exercises, and even exercises like yoga and Tai Chi. Some examples of typical water exercises include stretching the hamstrings, low back, upper back, and neck. Strengthening exercises may include the use of foam barbells that work against the resistance of the water. Cardio exercises such as walking, cross-country skiing, or slow jogging can be done in the water as well.

As with any new exercise program, it is important to discuss if exercise is right for you with your doctor. This will allow your doctor to caution you to any movements or exercises that you should avoid based on your specific condition.

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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