

National Observances

April

Stress Awareness Month

Workplace Conflict Awareness Month

National Cancer Control Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Week of April 1-7

Testicular Cancer Awareness Week

Week of April 6-12

National Public Health Week

National Youth Violence Prevention Week

Week of April 13-19

National Crime Victims Rights Week

National Robotics Week

Week of April 21-27

Administrative Professionals Week

National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week

Earth Day: April 22

What is the EAP?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** service that can assist you and your eligible family members with **ANY** personal concern, large or small.

Employees and family members can call Cascade 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We can help! Call Cascade to schedule an in-person appointment or get the resources you need. For more information, please call us at:

800.433.2320

www.cascadecenters.com



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Outsmarting Stress

You're familiar with the symptoms of stress — a pounding heart, increased perspiration, tight neck and shoulder muscles, anxiety, and fear. You may not know how to prevent or relieve these symptoms.

Stress can be triggered by events, ideas, memories, emotions, or failed expectations. The following actions can help you counteract the negative effects of stress, according to wellness experts at the Canyon Ranch Health Resort in Tucson, Ariz.

Exercise

A regular workout can release pent-up frustrations. Experts recommend getting 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Choose any aerobic activity: walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming, stair climbing, or step aerobics.

If life is too hectic for such a commitment, you can also find relief through briefs periods of exercise: Get up from your desk and take a walk around the building for 15 minutes or go up and down a few flights of stairs.

Keep communicating

One of the best ways to fight stress is to discuss your problems with a friend or relative. Our immune systems get a boost when our feelings are released, experts say. Talking to other people shows us we're not alone and helps us put our stress in perspective. Besides relieving the pressure,

talking things out may lead to a solution to your problem.

If you can't find someone to talk to or have difficulty talking about what's bothering you, writing about the situation in a journal can be equally effective.

Pay attention to your diet and habits

A diet of wholesome, healthful foods can help stabilize your moods. Consuming caffeine, sugar, alcohol, nicotine, and prescription or illegal drugs can increase your stress, making coping more difficult.

Make time for laughter and fun

Surround yourself with happy people who like to laugh. Let the child in you come out, and you'll find laughter is one of the best stress remedies.

Immerse yourself in a favorite activity or hobby

Participating in an activity will give you a block of time when you're focusing on a task instead of on the problems in your life. Gardening, carpentry, sewing, working with clay, painting, and drawing are good choices, but there are many other choices available depending on where you live and the time of year.

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Mediterranean Diced Salad

A vibrant combination of chickpeas, red bell pepper, cucumber, celery, and grape tomatoes.

Ingredients:

- 1 19-ounce can chickpeas (also called garbanzo beans)
- 1 red pepper
- 1 cucumber
- 2 stalks celery
- 1 cup halved grape tomatoes
- Juice of 1 large lemon (about ¼ cup)
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley

Directions:

Drain and rinse chickpeas and put in a large mixing bowl. Core red pepper and dice into half-inch squares. Add to bowl. Peel and chop cucumber; slice celery lengthwise and chop. Add to bowl. Add halved grape tomatoes.

In a measuring cup or small bowl, whisk lemon juice, vinegar, and olive oil. Pour over salad ingredients. Toss well to coat all ingredients. Add parsley and mix again. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Season to taste.

Serves six

(Outsmarting Stress....Continued from page 1)

Seasonal activities that you can look forward to as the year goes by can help you adjust to the restrictions weather might place on other hobbies.

Use a variety of relaxation techniques

Deep-breathing exercises, progressive relaxation, visualization, creative imagery, yoga, meditation, or listening to relaxation tapes can help. If you don't know how to get started, take a class. Relaxation techniques are skills that can be learned and practiced. Once you become fluent in

one or two techniques, you can use them to manage your stress.

Live in the present

Take a moment to think about the causes of your stress. Many of them may come from thinking about the past or worrying about the future. If you can plant yourself firmly in the present, you can leave many worries behind and focus more clearly on solutions to current problems.

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Control Breathing, Control Stress

You're stuck in rush-hour traffic, glancing at your car's clock every few minutes as you strain to get to work on time. You may not notice, but your breathing is shallow, your pulse rate is high, and your chest feels tight. In fact, you feel this way in many stressful situations. Sound familiar? Modern society creates more than its share of stress. It's difficult to change some situations — but you can manage how you feel about them, experts say.

Begin with something you take for granted — your breathing. If you're on that busy highway, pay attention to what's going on around you, but pay attention to your breathing, too. It's one of the few things you can control.

"Focusing on your breathing is one of the highly effective ways of reducing stress," says cardiologist James Rippe, M.D., author of 10 books on health and fitness, including "Healthy Heart for Dummies." "It brings you into the here and now," distracting you from your worries.

"We've become addicted to moving and thinking at hyper-speed," adds Stephan Rechtschaffen, M.D., wellness expert and author of the book Timeshifting. "When we're under stress, our breathing is short, high up in the lungs. More relaxed breathing doesn't rely on the chest wall, but rather on the abdomen."

Abdominal breathing, experts say, provides the lungs with more oxygen and is more rhythmic. It's something that opera singers and other performers have known for years: Abdominal breathing allows them to take control of their breath, to sing or speak with greater power, and to help them focus on the moment.

Breathing is just the beginning. If you can adjust your breath, you can adjust other things in your life, experts say. Slow your breathing down when you walk into your office or home and you'll notice that you won't jump at the first problem that hits you. When your breath is quiet, you are quiet.

Practice Your Breathing

Believe it or not, most of us could use a lesson on how to breathe. Practice at home a few times when you're not under stress. Then, try putting these techniques into practice when a stressful situation occurs.

In a relaxed setting, take three really deep breaths, focusing on your exhalations. "Really let it out," says Dr. Rechtschaffen. "It may feel unnatural at first, but stick with it."

Now, begin focusing on where your breath is coming from, experts say. Here's one practice method:

- Sit on the edge of a chair, feet flat on the floor.
- Place one hand on your lower back and the other hand on your abdomen, with three fingers below your navel.
- As you breathe in, your abdomen should rise, like a balloon inflating.
- As you breathe out, your abdomen should fall, with the sensation that the balloon is losing its air.

Concentrate on your abdomen, not your chest. Practice from a few minutes to 20 minutes each day. Soon, it will come naturally.

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