



A Healthy Outlook!

240-314-1040 • FAX 240-314-1049 • www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP • Vol.7 No.4

Managing the Stress in Your Life

1. Learn to have healthy relationships— This subject could fill an entire book. Let's look at some of the key components of this stress-reducing strategy.

a. Identify the sources of stress in your relationships. Write about them in a journal. Make a list of people who cause you stress and explore the issues.

b. Resolve the underlying issues. For each situation identified in step 1, assess what needs to happen to resolve it. Make a list and design a plan to improve the situation.



c. Learn skills to improve relationships. Relationship skills are learned. We are not born knowing how to get along well with others, and most of us learned only limited skills from our parents. Identify the skills you need to develop, and make a plan for yourself. You can learn these skills by reading books, taking classes, or working with a therapist.

d. Avoid toxic people and situations. Some people have a toxic effect on you. If you can, limit the amount of time you spend

with them. Look for opportunities to decline their invitations. When these people are family members, remind



yourself that you don't have to feel guilty about avoiding anyone who makes you feel bad about yourself. In work situations, look for ways to rearrange your schedule or your workspace to avoid interacting with such people.

e. Seek out positive people and situations. This step is the reverse of the previous step. Look for opportunities to spend more time with people and in situations that make you feel good. Think about people who make you feel good about



yourself, and look for ways to increase time with them.

2. Watch what you put in your body. Some substances amplify the stress response, including the following:

a. Caffeine stimulates the release of stress hormones. This increases heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen to the heart. Ongoing exposure to caffeine can harm the tissue of the heart.

b. Refined sugar and processed flour are depleted of needed vitamins. In times of stress, certain vitamins help the body maintain the nervous and endocrine systems.

c. Too much salt can lead to excessive fluid retention. This can lead to nervous tension and higher blood pressure.

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Stress often adds to the problem by causing increased blood pressure.

d. Smoking not only causes disease and shortens life, it leads to increased heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration.

e. Alcohol robs the body of nutrition that it might otherwise use for cell growth and repair. It also harms the liver and adds empty calories to the body.

During times of high stress, eat more complex carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads, cereals, and beans).

3. Get moving.

The human body was designed to be physically active. However, in most jobs today, people are sitting down much of the time. They hardly move at all except when it is time for a coffee break or lunch. Exercise is one of the simplest and most effective ways to respond to stress. Activity provides a natural release for the body during its fight-or-flight state of arousal. After exercising, the body returns to its normal state of equilibrium, and one feels relaxed and refreshed.

4. Look for ways to let go of tension and anxiety.

Meditation and progressive relaxation are two valuable ways to regenerate and refresh yourself. You can purchase meditation and relaxation audiotapes or record your own. This is especially important because your health and long life depend on minimizing stress and achieving a sense of balance and well-being.

Adapted from an article by Bob West, Ph.D., in the Therapists Newsletter. Used with permission.

National Depression Screening Day

On October 8th, the Employee Assistance Program will be conducting free screenings all day for depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and post traumatic stress disorder. The screenings take less than 30 minutes and are available for all employees and their family members. Schedule an appointment by calling the EAP at 240-314-1040.

Goal-Setting and How to Change

Anxiety stops people from reaching their goals. This destructive emotion paralyzes the cortex, the thinking area of the brain and center of creativity.

To set the groundwork for change, ponder these five questions:

What are you happy about?

What are you excited about?

What do you love?

Who loves you?

What are you grateful for?

Write a purpose statement. This is not a list of goals but a statement that points the direction of your life. It will force you to think specifically about the path of your life. It states what you believe and clarifies your values.

The reason most goals are not achieved is we spend our time doing second things first. Prioritize your life and give focus and energy to those things that give the highest return. By focusing your attention on the top 20 percent of all your priorities, you get an 80 percent return on your effort.

Boil your mission statement down to the single most important goal or task. Write down your goal in five to six words.

- Weekly organizing should be centered on roles-goals-plans (schedule and delegate).

- Take very small steps to achieve a seemingly impossible goal. It is the Japanese concept of continuous improvement to yield quality control.

- Run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. Living with purpose is the only way to really live.

Self-efficacy is the confidence that you can perform a particular behavior. It is a potent predictor of treatment outcome across dozens of health behaviors.

- Self-efficacy is the behavior that gets you to your goal. To strengthen it, pick and accomplish small goals that are easy to meet.

- Behavioral research suggests that it takes at least half a dozen attempts to instill a new habit. View unsuccessful attempts not as failures, but as moments to learn what didn't work.

Tips:

- Remember that the cause of almost all relationship difficulties is rooted in conflicting or ambiguous expectations around roles and goals.
- Give yourself a concrete reward as you meet your goals; it is a reminder that you can do it.
- Look for a good role model. Your best choice is someone similar to you who has succeeded.
- Get support. It is important for that person to provide constructive coaching.
- Healthy eating, peak fitness, skin protection, good oral hygiene, and weight loss are habits that need to be scheduled daily into busy lives.
- Research shows that meditation may change how the brain works. People who finished meditation training had more activity in the left prefrontal cortex, a region associated with positive feelings and pursuit of goals.

Sources: The Path, by Laurie Beth Jones; The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen R. Covey; Today Matters, by John C. Maxwell; The Washington Post; USA Today; The Purpose Driven Life, by Rick Warren; Psychology Today and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals.

Health Tip

The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. This information was provided by Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. For more information on health classes, screenings, or support groups offered at the hospital go to www.ShadyGroveAdventistHospital.com, or call 1-800-542-5096 to register.

Anger Management Tips: Tame Your Temper

Controlling your temper isn't always easy. Here are some effective anger management techniques that can help you get your anger under control.



Take a "time out." Although it may seem cliché, counting to 10 before reacting, or leaving the situation altogether, really can defuse your temper.



Do something physically exerting. Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. Go for a brisk walk or a run, swim, lift weights, or shoot baskets.



Find ways to calm and soothe yourself. Practice deep-breathing exercises, visualize a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase to yourself, such as "take it easy."



Once you're calm, express your anger as soon as possible so that you aren't left stewing. If you simply can't express your anger in a controlled manner to the person who angered you, try talking to a family member, friend, counselor, or another trusted person.



Think carefully before you say anything so that you don't end up saying something you'll regret. Write a script and rehearse it so that you can stick to the issues.



Work with the person who angered you to identify solutions to the situation.



Use "I" statements when describing the problem to avoid criticizing or placing blame. For instance, say "I'm upset you didn't help with the housework this evening," instead of, "You should have helped with the housework."



Don't hold a grudge. Forgive the other person. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want.



Use humor to release tensions, such as imagining yourself or the other person in silly situations. Don't use sarcasm, though—it's just another form of unhealthy expression.



Keep an anger log to identify the kinds of situations that set you off and to monitor your reactions.

It may take some time and intense effort to put these tips into practice when you're facing situations that typically send you into a rage. In the heat of the moment, it can be hard to remember your coping strategies. You may want to keep something with you that serves as a reminder to step back from the situation and get your anger under control. For instance, you can keep a small, smooth stone in your pocket or a scrap of paper with your tips written down.

With time, these anger management techniques will come more naturally and you'll no longer need such reminders.

By Mayo Clinic staff www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102

Eating Disorder Referral Sources

Eating disorders are characterized by an atypical pattern of eating or dieting behavior. These behaviors create significant physical and emotional distress and interfere with school, work, and relationships. Listed below are some websites that offer lots of information on specific eating disorders and treatment.

www.aedweb.org

Academy for Eating Disorders—lots of good information on the site about eating disorders and their treatment.

www.edreferral.com

Eating Disorder Referral and Information Center—contains articles and a database of treatment providers.

www.ANAD.org

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)—information on support groups, providers, and assorted articles.

www.somethingfishy.org

Something Fishy—described as a "website on eating disorders," contains articles, forums, and treatment information.

Employee Recognition Tips:

1. Encourage the Team

Ever find yourself working on a big, time-consuming project with a team of co-workers? Don't wait for "the end" to recognize the achievements of the group. We often wait until the end of a project to celebrate. Instead, select several milestones along the way and pause to reflect on your team's progress. It will re-energize and motivate people when they need it most.

2. Make Informal Recognition Personal

As individuals, not all people value identical recognition for similar activities or behaviors. Personalizing the recognition process is the most effective way to motivate and increase performance, acknowledge employees' contributions, and meet organizational objectives.

"Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known."

—Carl Sagan



Upcoming Events

September: Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Honoring the more than 12,500 children diagnosed every year in the United States as well as the estimated 270,000 childhood cancer survivors. For more information about childhood cancer and resources available to patients and families, visit the following sites:

- www.candlelighters.org — Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation
e-mail Jennifer Louis at jlouis5678@aol.com
- www.cancer.gov — National Cancer Institute
1-800-4-CANCER
- www.cancer.org — American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345

MCPS Cancer Support Group

This group is open to any MCPS employee or adult family member who has been diagnosed, or cares about someone who has been diagnosed, with cancer. The group meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month from 4:30–6pm. Contact the EAP for more information.

Literacy study: 1 in 7 adults are unable to read this story

A federal study finds that an estimated 32 million adults in the United States—about one in seven—are saddled with such low literacy skills that it would be tough for them to read anything more challenging than a children’s picture book or to understand a medication’s side effects on a pill bottle. If you would like to volunteer now or in the future to help adults learn to read, information is provided below. (Adapted from *USA TODAY* 2009)

The Literacy Council of Montgomery County will hold informational sessions for volunteers interested in helping adults learn to read, write, or speak English. Sessions will take place at the Rockville Library at 7:30 p.m. on September 2, October 7, and October 27; at the Germantown Library at 7:30 p.m. on October 5; and at the Wheaton Library at 7:30 p.m. on October 29. Once volunteers have completed the orientation, they can select a two-part training session that fits their schedules. No foreign-language skills are necessary. Tutors work one-on-one or with small groups, and typically meet with students in libraries or community centers at mutually convenient times. For complete details, call 301-610-0030, e-mail info@literacycouncilmcmd.org, or visit www.literacycouncilmcmd.org.

Ask the EAP

Q. How do I know if my problem is big enough to call the EAP for help?

A. If the problem is big enough to trouble you and you haven’t been able to figure out what to do about it, consider giving us a call. We encourage all staff and their immediate family members to contact us when a concern first develops. It is our belief that reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Generally speaking, the sooner you share a problem, the sooner you begin to find a solution.

Do you have a question for the EAP? Send us your questions via Outlook or through the Pony to Jeff Becker.



A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

SPECIALISTS: Debbie Tipton
Robyn Rosenbauer
Jeff Becker

EAP at Gaither Road
2096 Gaither Road, Suite 205
Rockville, Maryland 20850
phone: 240-314-1040
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP

Important Notice: Information in *A Healthy Outlook!* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to
Debra_Tipton@mcpsmd.org

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

