



# A Healthy Outlook!

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## More Habits for HAPPY PEOPLE

IN OUR WINTER 2016 AND SPRING 2017 editions, we shared 16 habits for happy people. Here are seven more habits you can incorporate into your life to increase your happiness. Happiness does not always just happen to us; it is often something we need to focus on. Read below for more habits to be happy.



**1. Dream Big:** Go ahead and dream big; you will be more likely to accomplish your goals. Rather than limiting yourself, when you dream big you are opening your mind to a more optimistic, positive state where you have the power to achieve virtually anything you desire.

- 2. Live in the Present:** Allow yourself to be immersed in whatever it is you are doing right now, and take time to really be in the present moment. Avoid replaying past negative events in your head or worrying about the future; just savor what is going on in your life now.
- 3. Wake Up at the Same Time Every Morning:** Getting up at the same time every day (preferably an early time) is deceptively simple. Doing so will help regulate your circadian rhythm so you will have an easier time waking and likely feel more energized. Plus, the habit of rising early every day is one shared by many successful people, as it enhances your productivity and focus.
- 4. Nurture Social Relationships:** Positive social relationships are a key to happiness, so be sure you spend time with friends and family.

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- 5. Meditate:** Meditation helps you keep your mind focused, calms your nerves, and supports inner peace. Research shows it even can lead to physical changes in your brain that make you happier.
- 6. Live Minimally:** Clutter has a way of sucking the energy right out of you and replacing it with feelings

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### Healthy Outlook TIP STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES.

**No, seriously. Stop, and smell the roses.** Oftentimes, when we are stressed or upset, it is because we are thinking about either the past or the future. Mindfulness challenges us to think in the present. Start by taking note of what is around you, right now, in the moment. Channel your five senses: what do you hear, smell, see, taste, and feel? Pick up a random object and just notice how it looks and feels. What color is it? Is it heavy? Is it bumpy or smooth? When you are eating, take note of texture, temperature, and tastes. Pay attention to your heart rate and your breathing. Is the air you are breathing in cold or warm? Next time you are overwhelmed

or feeling down, slow down and bring yourself back into the present. Stop, and smell the roses.

## More Habits for Happy People

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of chaos. Clutter is an often-unrecognized source of stress that prompts feelings of anxiety, frustration, distraction and even guilt. So, give your home and office a clutter makeover, purging it of the excess papers, files, knick-knacks, and other “stuff” that not only takes up space in your physical environment, but also in your mind.

- 7. Establish Personal Control:** Avoid letting other people dictate the way you live. Instead, establish personal control in your life that allows you to fulfill your own goals and dreams and develop a great sense of personal self-worth.

Remember, happiness comes from within. It is not something someone gives to you. This is why, if you truly want to be happy, you need to work on your happiness habits first.

Source: [www.hungryforchange.tv](http://www.hungryforchange.tv). Article reproduced and adapted with permission.

## Ask the EAP:

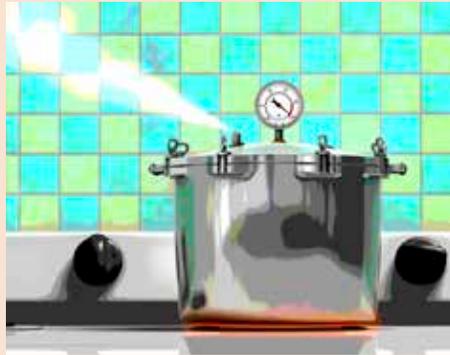
**Q. Does the EAP offer long-term treatment as part of its services?**

**A. No.** The EAP does not provide long-term treatment. However, we do offer short-term problem resolution. When longer-term treatment is indicated, EAP staff will give appropriate referrals to therapists in the community. To keep costs down for you, we always will try to find a provider who is in the network of your insurance plan.

**Do you have a question for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)? Send your questions to Jeff Becker at [Jeffrey\\_Becker@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Jeffrey_Becker@mcpsmd.org) or via the Pony mail.**

## Anger and Stress Management: WHERE DO I START?

ANGER AND STRESS are part of our everyday lives. It is normal to feel both anger and stress. However, some of us end up getting angry and stressed all the time. We get angry at traffic, children, parents, employers, the computer, and just about anything else. When we find



ourselves getting angry and stressed too often, it is usually a signal that something is wrong. We often find ourselves with “too much to do and not enough time to do it.” We forget to take time for ourselves or to think things through before reacting to stressful situations. Here are some tips for fighting anger and stress all the time:

- ◆ **Remember to take a deep breath** and think things through before you lose control.
- ◆ **Choose your battles wisely.** (Is it really worth the effort to get angry over the little things?)
- ◆ **Ask yourself** if whatever is bothering you will still matter one year from now.
- ◆ **Recognize** the fact that you cannot control 9 out of 10 things that make you angry. If you cannot control it, is it worth your energy or time?
- ◆ **Make a list of 10 positive things** you can say to yourself when you are angry and stressed, and then say them.
- ◆ **Make a list** of at least 10 things you love about the person you are mad at. (Remember no one is all bad.)
- ◆ **Remember to look at the big picture**, do not get caught up in the little things that are insignificant.
- ◆ **Ask yourself** if you tend to anticipate disaster or something pleasant. If you think disaster, try to think about all the positive things in your life.
- ◆ **Sing to yourself**, instead of getting angry.
- ◆ **Make a list** of all the things you love about yourself and remember them when you feel angry with yourself.
- ◆ **Make a list** of 10 things to do that cost less than \$5.00 and take less than one hour. Then pick one to do each day.
- ◆ **Allow yourself some time to relax** and do things you like to do.
- ◆ **Talk to a friend**, a religious leader, or a professional.

Remember that getting angry is normal. Just keep in mind that it is not healthy to be angry all the time. Using the above-mentioned tips can help reduce stress and anger in your life. Remember to enjoy life, this is not a dress rehearsal.

Written by Jennifer Alfonso



## EAP Is Open All SUMMER

THE EAP REMAINS OPEN throughout the summer months.

**Feel free to call us at 240-314-1040**

to schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor.

The summer also is a good time to check out our website: [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap). It is full of information about the EAP and the services we provide as well as resources related to personal issues and concerns you might be experiencing.

## WARNING SIGNS of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Problems

IT CAN BE TOUGH to tell if troubling behavior in a child is just part of growing up or a problem that should be discussed with a health professional. But if there are signs and symptoms that last weeks or months; and if these issues interfere with the child's daily life, not only at home but at school and with friends, you should contact a health professional.

### Your child or teen might need help if he or she—

- ◆ Often feels anxious or worried;
- ◆ Has very frequent tantrums or is intensely irritable much of the time;
- ◆ Has frequent stomachaches or headaches, with no physical explanation;
- ◆ Is in constant motion, cannot sit quietly for any length of time;
- ◆ Harms others;
- ◆ Has trouble sleeping, having frequent nightmares;
- ◆ Loses interest in things he or she used to enjoy;
- ◆ Avoids spending time with friends;
- ◆ Has low or no energy;



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## BRAIN BASICS in Real Life: How Depression Affects the Brain

SARAH IS A MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN who seemed to have it all. She was happily married and successful in business. Then, after a serious setback at work, she lost interest in her job. She



had problems getting to sleep and generally felt tired, listless, and had no appetite most of the time. Weeks later, Sarah realized she was having trouble coping with the stresses in her life. She began to think of suicide because she felt like things weren't going to get better and that there was nothing she could do about it.

Worried at the changes he saw, Sarah's husband took her to the doctor, who ran some tests. After deciding her symptoms were not caused by a stroke, brain tumor, or similar conditions, Sarah's doctor

referred her to a psychiatrist, a type of medical doctor who is an expert on mental disorders. Other medical professionals who can diagnose mental disorders are psychologists or clinical social workers.

The psychiatrist asked Sarah and her husband questions about Sarah's symptoms and family medical history. Epigenetic changes from stress or early-life experiences may have made it harder for Sarah to recover normally from her low mood. It is important to remember that everyone gets "the blues" from time to time. In contrast, major depression is a serious disorder that lasts for weeks. Sarah told the doctor that she had experienced long periods of deep sadness throughout her teenage years, but had never seen a doctor about it. She has faced a few bouts since then, but they have never been as bad as her current mood.

The psychiatrist diagnosed Sarah with major depression and gave her a prescription for a type of antidepressant medication called a selective

serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI). SSRIs are the most common type of medication used to treat depression.

SSRIs boost the amount of serotonin in the brain and help reduce symptoms of depression. Sarah also has several follow-up visits scheduled with the psychiatrist to check how she is responding to the treatment. She also began regular talk-therapy sessions with her psychiatrist. In these sessions, she learns how to change the way she thinks about and reacts to things that may trigger her depression. Several months later, Sarah feels much better. She continues taking SSRIs and has joined an online support group. Sharing her experiences with others who are also dealing with depression helps Sarah to cope better with her feelings.

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## Warning Signs

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- ◆ Has trouble doing well in school, or grades decline;
- ◆ Fears gaining weight; exercises, diets obsessively;
- ◆ Has spells of intense, inexhaustible activity;
- ◆ Inflicts self-harm, such as cutting or burning her/his skin;
- ◆ Engages in risky, destructive behavior;
- ◆ Smokes, drinks, or uses drugs;
- ◆ Has thoughts of suicide; or
- ◆ Thinks his or her mind is controlled or out of control (hears voices).

## Mental illnesses can be treated.

If you are a child or teen, talk to your parents, school counselor, or health care provider. If you are a parent and need help starting a conversation with your child or teen about mental health, visit <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/>. If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your pediatrician or family doctor or visit NIMH's Help for Mental Illnesses webpage.

It may be helpful for children and teens to save several emergency numbers in their cell phones. The ability to get immediate help for them or for a friend can make a difference.

- ◆ **The phone number for a trusted friend or relative;**
- ◆ **The nonemergency number for the local police department;**
- ◆ **The Crisis Text Line: 741741** from anywhere in the U.S.A., anytime about any type of crisis;
- ◆ **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).**

## If you or your child are thinking about self-harm, get help immediately.

Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Article from the National Institute of Mental Health

## Upcoming Events:

### CAREGIVER MCPS SUPPORT GROUP

MCPS EAP offers a Caregiver Support Group designed to provide helpful resources and establish connections among the caregivers within our MCPS community. The meetings are held from 4:15-5:30 p.m. at 45 West Gude Drive. Guest speakers present on important topics related to caring for a loved one. All are welcome to attend. For more information or to register, please contact the EAP at 240-314-1040.

*“Not knowing when the dawn will come,  
I open every door.”*

~ EMILY DICKINSON

*“Be ready when  
opportunity comes.  
Luck is the time  
when preparation  
and opportunity  
meet.”*

~ ROY D. CHAPIN JR.



## A Healthy Outlook!

*To help employees with  
troubling issues before they  
become overwhelming.*



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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 [Jeffrey\\_Becker@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Jeffrey_Becker@mcpsmd.org)

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

Published by the Department of Materials Management  
for the Employee Assistance Program

1105.17 • EDITORIAL, GRAPHICS & PUBLISHING SERVICES • 6.17

