PATHWAYS
November 2021
The **Employee** Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program

How to Be Energized by Stress

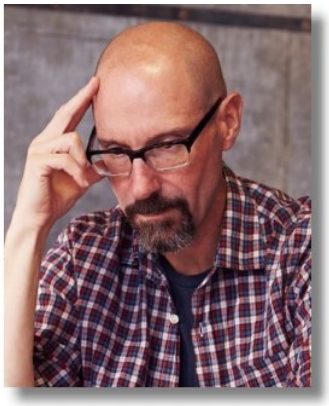
Better diet, journaling, sleep, meditation, exercise—they're ways of managing stress. But have you considered altering your mindset as a stress management tactic? Begin with this question: "How much anxiety will I accept in this stressful situation?" Surprisingly, this question prompts awareness, and it decreases the likelihood you will respond to a stressor in an unhealthy way. Rather than panicking, fleeing, or escaping the stress, you challenge it. You make it a launching pad for higher productivity. The goal: overcome rather than succumb to it. Successful stress management is when you actively are directing a desired outcome. You make stress work for you rather than on you. No stress management tactic works in every situation, but this one demonstrates that mindset matters, and you can direct stress away from taking its toll on your health.

Human Interaction with Plants Reduces Stress

For years, people have assumed that plants in the workplace can reduce stress, but scientific studies now confirm it. Here's the technical explanation: "Results suggest that active interaction with indoor plants can reduce physiological and psychological stress compared with mental work. This is accomplished through suppression of sympathetic nervous system activity and diastolic blood pressure and promotion of comfortable, soothed, and natural feelings." For plant options that don't need sunlight, go to www.joyfulderivatives.com [search "no sunlight"].

Source: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov [search "PMC4419447"]

Thinking about Alcoholism Treatment



Many people considering alcoholism treatment are stopped by fear. This includes the prospect of giving up drinking entirely and the mystery of treatment itself—what it might entail. Today, treatment closely follows a chronic disease model. This is dominated by education, supported by overwhelming research on the biogenic nature and inheritability of risk for the disease and fewer psychological processes. Education dispels myths while motivating the patient to not just want but also to be excited about abstinence. Most patients wonder why they did not do it sooner.

Delta-8 THC (Just Don't Use It, Too)

Delta-8 THC—derived from cannabis—has been in the news lately. It is also an intoxicant, but sellers bill it as "pot-lite." It's not less harmful. Between December 2020 and July 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reported adverse effects in 22 consumers who required emergency room or hospital intervention for side effects including hallucinations, loss of consciousness and vomiting. Note the FDA has not approved any psychoactive form of pot for any medical condition. Federal regulations prohibit employees from using THC if they have regulated, safety-sensitive positions, and over 150 research studies (and there are many more) have demonstrated the harm and risk of regular cannabis use.

See the list: www.independentsentinel.com [search bar: "150 scientific studies']
Source: www.FDA.gov [search "delta-8"]

Support for Military Families

Military families face many stressors, especially when separated by deployment. For years, surveys have sought to identify these stressors and rank them, with the goal of improving support programs. Military spouse unemployment, especially in 2020, was the top stressor, but a multitude of stressors associated with family life consistently dominate the list. These include isolation, limited social support, and the stress of separation. What makes military family stress important is its link to sustaining military readiness. The ability to focus on one's job while deployed is lessened and risk on a mission is increased when the family back home is in crisis. Everyone has a stake in family wellness. You can play a supportive role. Do you know of a military family separated by the miles? Many spouses and partners suffer in silence. This may be compounded by elder care/caregiver responsibilities. Reaching out, discovering needs, pitching in, and being a good neighbor can make a huge impact. There are hundreds of volunteer organizations that serve military families—from direct aid to distribution of toys to children. You can find most at charitynavigator.org, where you can identify ways to participate and examine organizations, including their financial profiles, mission, impact, and transparency.

Source: www.bluestarfam.org/#findings

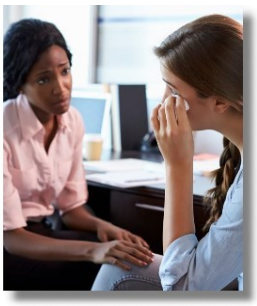
Making Seasonal Family Gatherings More Joyous

Family holiday gatherings and celebrations may be more popular this year. Indeed, many people seek to make up for time lost because of their inability to make close and personal visits because of the pandemic. Relatives often stress each other out at such gatherings, and volumes have been written that offer advice on coping with annoying spats. Practically speaking, helpful intervention suggestions boil down to a few key ideas. Consider the following if conflict is on the horizon this season. 1) Preempting: Before a visit, ask that certain subjects (like politics or "Are you dating someone yet?") remain off-limits. 2) Stay cool: Triggers happen, but with a bit of practice, you'll avoid reacting to them. Practice role-plays with a friend that test your triggers and build resilience to difficult topics you wish to avoid. 3) Assertiveness 101: Be direct and respectful but clear about your wants and needs. "Rise above" your trigger with a well-practiced request: "Aunt Sally, I'd like to talk about something else. Let's discuss . . ."

Recapture Your Energy after Work

Consider dozens of ways to recapture your energy if you're frustrated by being too tired after coming home from work. A quick search will locate many energizing strategies, but experiment with a combination of the following, which are frequently mentioned in workplace wellness articles: 1) Drink a glass of water and exercise for ten minutes or more. 2) Try a healthy, low-glycemic snack. 3) Take a short 20-minute power nap (set a timer so you don't nap longer). 4) Meet up or exercise with positive people (they'll energize you). 5) Meditate—no, it won't put you to sleep. Engage in rejuvenation activities immediately upon arrival at home. See a doctor if you feel chronically tired and fatigued or get a consult if you struggle with getting proper sleep.

Helping Someone Seek Help for a Social Emotional Problem



According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the most common untreated psychopathology affecting those in the workplace is depression. Depression can make it difficult for a person to finish tasks, and it can interfere with their ability to process information and think clearly on the job. Only 57% of employees who are diagnosed with moderate depression receive treatment, and only 40% of employees reporting severe depression get help, says the CDC. This makes it likely that you will interact with a worker who suffers from untreated depressive problems. You can't make a diagnosis, but you can encourage a coworker to visit the EAP or a community-based mental health provider when you hear statements of hopelessness or feeling trapped or you witness isolating behaviors and withdrawal from social connection with others at work.

Source: www.cdc.gov [search "workplace mental health"]

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