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Social Wellness

Social wellness refers to the relationships we have and how we interact with others. Our relationships can offer support during difficult times. Social wellness involves building healthy, nurturing, and supportive relationships as well as fostering a genuine connection with those around you.

Social Wellness Checklist

Positive social habits can help you build support systems and stay healthier mentally and physically. Here are some tips for connecting with others:

Make Connections

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health. Whether with family, friends, neighbors, romantic partners, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being. Look for ways to get involved with others.

To find new social connections:

- · Join a group focused on a favorite hobby.
- \cdot Take a class to try something new.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$ Try yoga, tai chi, or another new physical activity.
- · Join a choral group, theater troupe, band, or orchestra.

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Take Care Of Yourself While Caring For Others

Many of us will end up becoming a caregiver at some point in our lives. The stress and strain of caregiving can take a toll on your health. It's important to find ways to care for your health while caring for others. Depending on your circumstances, some self-care strategies may be more difficult to carry out than others. Choose ones that work for you.

To take care of yourself while caring for others:

- Ask for help. Make a list of ways others can help. For instance, someone might sit with the person while you do errands.
- · Make to-do lists and set a daily routine.
- · Try to take breaks each day.
- · Keep up with your hobbies and interests when you can.
- · Join a caregiver's support group.
- · Eat healthy foods, and exercise as often as you can.
- Build your caregiver skills. Some hospitals offer classes on how to care for someone with an injury or illness.

Get Active Together

Where you live, work, or go to school can have a big impact on how much you move and even how much you weigh. Being active with others in your community can have a positive effect on your health habits and create opportunities to connect. You can help your community create ways to encourage more physical activity.

To help make a more active community:

- · Start a walking group with friends.
- Drive the speed limit and yield to people who walk.

- · Consider joining an exercise group.
- Participate in local planning efforts to develop walking paths, sidewalks, and bike paths.
- · Join other parents to ask for more physical activity at school.
- Try different activities!

Shape Your Family's Health Habits

Many things can influence a child, including friends, teachers, and the things they see when they sit in front of the TV or computer. If you're a parent, know that your everyday behavior plays a big part in shaping your child's behavior, too. With your help, kids can learn to develop healthy eating and physical activity habits that last throughout their lives.

To help kids form healthy habits:

- · Be a role model. Choose healthy food and activities.
- Make healthy choices easy. Have nutritious food and sports gear readily available.
- · Focus on making healthy habits fun.
- · Limit screen time.
- Check with caregivers or schools to be sure they offer healthy food and activities.
- · Change a little at a time.



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Bond With Your Kids

Parents have an important job. Raising kids is both rewarding and challenging. Being sensitive, responsive, consistent, and available to your kids can help you build positive, healthy relationships with them. The strong emotional bonds that result help children learn how to manage their own feelings and behaviors and develop self-confidence. Children with strong connections to their caregivers are more likely to be able to cope with life's challenges.

To build strong relationships with your kids:

- · Catch kids showing good behavior and offer specific praise.
- Give children meaningful jobs at home and positive recognition afterward.
- · Use kind words, tones, and gestures.
- Spend some time every day in warm, positive, loving interaction with your kids.
- \cdot Brainstorm solutions to problems together.
- · Set rules for yourself for mobile devices and other distractions.
- \cdot Ask about your child's concerns, worries, goals, and ideas.
- \cdot Participate in activities your child enjoys.

Build Healthy Relationships

Strong, healthy relationships are important throughout your life. They can impact your mental and physical well- being. As a child you learn the social skills you need to form and maintain relationships with others. But at any age you can learn ways to improve your relationships. It's important to know what a healthy relationship looks like and how to keep your connections supportive.

To build healthy relationships:

- · Share your feelings honestly.
- · Ask for what you need from others.
- · Listen to others without judgement or blame.
- · Be caring and empathetic.
- Disagree with others respectfully. Conflicts should not turn into personal attacks.
- · Avoid being overly critical, angry outbursts, & violent behavior.
- Expect others to treat you with respect and honesty in return.
- · Compromise. Come to agreements that work for everyone.
- Protect yourself from violent and abusive people. Set boundaries with others. Decide what you are and aren't willing to do. It's okay to say no.

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Decluttering & Your Well-Being

Clutter is defined as a large number of things that aren't arranged in a neat or orderly way; a crowded or disordered collection of things. Science has shown the visual clutter around us can impact us mentally and physically.

- · Clutter can increase cortisol, the "stress" hormone.
- · Clutter can increase negative feelings and lead to depression.
- · Clutter can decrease our ability to focus and be productive.
- · Clutter can cause sleep loss.
- · Clutter can negatively impact your weight.

Ideas To Tackle Clutter

Kitchen and pantry

- · Hang measuring cups & spoons on hooks on cupboard doors.
- · Make items you use often more accessible.
- · Organize spices alphabetically or by cuisine.
- · Downsize your gadgets or store elsewhere.
- · Pitch expired items regularly to free up space.
- · Use stacked organization.
- · Decanter ingredients.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$ Maximize wall space with shelves.

Bedrooms

- · Utilize underbed space for storage.
- · Roll clothes to maximize space.
- · Use hanging organizers.
- · Use hooks, pegboards or other items to hang jewelry.
- · Use gutters on walls as bookshelves.

Entryway

- · Create a command center for keys, mail, and bags.
- · Store off-season coats in another area.
- · Organize hats, gloves, umbrellas, and scarves.
- · Eliminate junk mail immediately.

Bathroom and laundry room

- · Control hair and bath products.
- · Store loose items in baskets or containers.
- · Add shelves over the toilet or washer and dryer.
- · Organize toiletries by AM/PM.
- · Use hooks for storage.
- · Decanter laundry soap.

Basement or attic

- · Use clear or colored stackable storage containers.
- · Add shelving to organize bulk items and holiday cookware.
- \cdot Use pegboards for tools or craft items.
- · Sort screws, nails, brackets, into containers.
- · Use stairway storage area.
- · Hang items from the ceiling.

Living or family room

- · Cull your decor.
- · Put board games into storage bags.
- · Create storage area for extra blankets and pillows.
- Organize magazines, coasters, and remotes.
- · Rotate toys and books.
- · Coil or hide cords.



Financial Wellness

Data shows that there is a strong connection between financial wellness and mental health. Financial stress has a very strong impact on a person's mental health.

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Top Tips to Achieve Personal Financial Wellness

Always live below your means. Living above your means is a very easy way to create poor financial wellness because it leaves little room (if any) for error and restricts saving.

Make saving money part of your identity. Savings should be systematic and occur both in retirement and non-retirement accounts.

Save 15%+ total in retirement accounts relative to an individual's household income. Your employer contribution can count towards this savings goal. If this is too much, then save as much as you can reasonably afford and increase your contributions 1-2% annually until you hit this goal.

Get on the same page with your spouse or significant other about money. You should discuss retirement plans, bank accounts, how to handle your monthly cash flow, financial goals, savings rates, etc. There is no one right way to do this, but the wrong way is to avoid the conversation.

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Take control of your debt. Debt is one of the top financial issues causing stress for Americans^[1]. Coming up with a plan to get it in control is a financial wellness must. Seek help if needed – we would suggest starting with reading books on the topic.

Take personal responsibility for becoming financially fit. You can hire professionals to assist you, but you need to learn about how to properly manage your money personally. This includes debt, monthly cash flow, and basic investment/savings knowledge. Your personal behavior regarding money will have a material impact on your financial success.

Want more information regarding how your organization can assist employees with their financial wellness? Subscribe to LoVasco Insights at lovascogroup.com/resources/insights or contact Chris Burke of LoVasco at 313-394-1717.

¹PWC 2021 PWC EMPLOYEE FINANCIAL WELLNESS SURVEY

5 Reasons To Rethink Financial Wellness

More Than Meets The Eye

Many employees struggle with cash for emergencies. A BenefitsPro study in 2020 found that 47% of respondents had difficulty finding \$250 for emergencies and had to resort to credit instead. While millennials are saddled with loan debt, members of the "sandwich generation" are burdened with dividing their limited resources between themselves, their children and their parents, while still trying to prepare for their own retirement.

Each employee demographic is struggling with their own financial challenges, which is why a dynamic financial wellness program needs to span the generations and provide potential solutions for each unique situation.

How Can Employers Help?

Oftentimes, one of the major problems is a lack of access to financial literacy resources. And it's a problem that employers can help solve by providing financial wellness programs for their employees. Here are five advantages of a financial wellness program:

• Engagement. Are your employees going through the motions or are they creating and sticking to their financial plans?

Financial worries can increase employee stress which leads to distraction at work. It has been shown that offering a financial wellness program breeds loyalty and focus. Six in 10 workers say they are more committed to their employer and more productive at work when they have a financial program.^[2]

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- Lower health care costs. Financially unhealthy, stressed employees frequently have higher health care costs.

 Financially stressed employees may increase corporate health care budgets, as their health care costs run 46% higher than non-stressed employees. Lowering overall health care expenses tend to lead to lower employer costs.
- Fewer incidents of "presenteeism." "Presenteeism" is a term that describes lost productivity by employees who are physically present, but not working. They are distracted by outside work stressors. This stagnant time costs employers in lost wages, lost productivity, and reduced job performance.
- Retention and attraction. As stated, employees say financial wellness programs demonstrate that their employers care about them, encouraging commitment to the company.
 Losing employees costs money in recruitment efforts and the training of new hires. Turnover can cost employers 120-200% of the salary of the positions affected. The presence of this program in your employee benefits package may also help attract new talent.
- Retirement saving. Employees who have their budgets and debts under control are much more likely to save via their 401(k) plan and increase their contributions as their financial situation improves. These employees are also less likely to take a loan from their 401(k) plan.

Becoming An Employer Of Choice

Joining the employers that offer a financial wellness program can help you demonstrate your understanding that happy, healthy employees are vital for a highly productive company. But keep in mind, helping your employees become financially healthy is a little more complex than it might seem at first glance.

Here are three tips for increasing employee financial literacy:

- Choose resources relevant to your specific workforce. What works for the millennials may not work for baby boomers.
- Ask your employees. Priorities often differ between genders, age groups, married, single, families, lifestyle, homeowners, renters, and so on. Send out an anonymous poll with targeted questions to better understand your employees and what resources they need to confront their financial challenges.
- Learn the boundaries. Employees want their employers to provide and facilitate the program but don't want them to be overly involved in their personal lives. So set clear expectations and firm boundaries to help prevent overstepping from work life into personal space.

The ultimate goal is financial well-being. It's not enough for employees to learn about what constitutes financial well-being; they must put it into action to achieve success.

Having a financial wellness program can benefit your employees in the form of improved employee morale and boost their productivity at the same time. It's a win-win situation for all.

[1] C. J. MARWITZ. "EMPLOYEE FINANCIAL WELLNESS: LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021." BENEFITSPRO. DECEMBER 2020. [2] PRUDENTIAL. "WELLNESS PROGRAMS EARN THEIR PLACE IN HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY." JUNE 2019. [3] JANE CLARK. "OFFERING FINANCIAL WELLNESS EDUCATION COULD IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY." JANUARY 29, 2019.

[4] UMASS LOWELL. "FINANCIAL COSTS OF JOB STRESS." 2019.

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Easy Ways To Practice Financial Wellness

- 1. Set time aside to review your purchases. This will cut down on impulse buys and help to give you a high overview of where your money is going. Small purchases add up fast so reviewing your purchase can help you reduce overspending and help manage your budget.
- 2. Don't feel guilty about occasional splurges. It's ok to splurge every now and then. If you don't, you can feel trapped by your budget and depressed by a lack of enjoyment. If you want to go out to eat, or check out a movie, that is totally fine. Just make sure that it doesn't become something that is done too often.
- 3. Sign up for purchase notifications to keep you on track. We live in a digital world and most monetary transaction take place without ever seeing it. Some purchases are even set up on autopay options where the money is automatically deducted from your account. Be sure to sign up for purchase notifications. This will make you more aware of where your money is going and when the money is being withdrawn.
- 4. Don't be afraid to ask for financial advice. Pride is an awful thing. Financial help is available and should be used. This could mean that you seek out a financial advisor or maybe seek the advice from a friend or family member that seems to be financially responsible.



Healthy Eating

A well-balanced diet can help you think more clearly and improve your mental health.

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Homemade Chicken Patties

Ingredients:

1 to 2 pounds chicken breast, tenders or thighs thawed

1 tablespoon paprika

1 table spoon smoked paprika (optional)

1 tablespoon chipotle seasoning (optional)

1 tablespoon onion powder

1 tablespoon garlic powder

1 tablespoon Italian seasoning

1 teaspoon of sea salt

1 teaspoon pepper

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, coconut oil or avocado oil

Directions:

- 1. Place to the thawed chicken into a food processor or blender depending on how big your machine is.
- 2. Blend chicken until there are no chunks of chicken and the chicken is like a paste.
- 3. Place the seasonings into the blender and mix until all the ingredients are well incorporated. Place the ingredients into a big bowl.
- 4. Turn on the stove to medium-high to warm up your cooking pan. Place olive oil in the cooking pan.
- 5. Form the chicken into 1-inch thick patties.
- 6. Place 2 to 3 patties into the cooking pan. Cook the chicken patties until they're cooked through. They will turn a white color. Feel free to use a meat thermometer to check temp.
- 7. Patties can be stored in an airtight freezer container or food storage container to save for later.

Roasted Veggie Tacos

Ingredients:

1 can of chickpeas

2 sweet potatoes, diced

1 head of cauliflower, broken into small pieces

1 onion, diced

Barbecue or taco sauce

Directions:

- 1. Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees F.
- 2. Place vegetables on a 9-by-11 sheet pan. Lightly coat with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss to coat all the vegetables.
- 3. Roast for 15 minutes.
- 4. Toss with a little barbecue or taco sauce and roast again for 5 minutes.
- 5. Fill a tortilla with the veggies. Add cheese, salsa or other toppings based on your tastes.

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Cooking Marleigh's Magical Popsicles

What you will need:

Popsicle molds (we use the silicone type)

Fruit of your choice

Coconut water

Directions:

- 1. Wash and cut fruit into bite sizes.
- 2. Put fruit in popsicle molds; leave room to add coconut water.
- 3. Add coconut water; leave enough room at the top for expansion when they freeze.
- 4. Freeze at least 4 hours or overnight.

Gracie And Mimi's Smoothie

Ingredients:

1 cup skim milk

½ cup vanilla or fruit-flavored Greek yogurt

½ cup frozen raspberries

1/4 cup frozen strawberries

1/4 cup frozen blueberries

Spinach (optional)

1 scoop protein powder (optional)

Directions:

- 1. Place all ingredients in a blender. Add ice to increase volume and creaminess if you want.
- 2. Use the pulse setting to blend until smooth.
- 3. Pour into glass and enjoy. Makes one 18-ounce serving.

Marleigh's Mason Jar Salad

What you will need:

Quart size mason jars (16 ounces)

Leafy greens

Bell peppers, red and yellow

Carrot, sliced

Strawberries, washed and cut into bite size

Blueberries

Almond slices

Grilled chicken breast (can use leftovers, frozen or rotisserie)

Assembly of mason jars (this order is imperative, so you don't have soggy salads):

- 1. Put dressing on the bottom of the mason jar.
- 2. Add carrots, peppers, chicken, strawberries, blueberries, and almonds.
- 7. Top off with lettuce.
- 8. Refrigerate or eat immediately.

Strawberry vinaigrette dressing: Blend the following until smooth

- 8 ounces fresh strawberries
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper



Power of Giving

Research into the brain has shown that giving and co-operating with others can stimulate the reward areas in the brain, helping to create positive feelings. Helping and working with others can also give us a sense of purpose and feelings of self-worth.

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Epic Bike Ride: A Mission Of Joy

When Ganesh Shenoy thinks back on his 25 years building a business as an Amway IBO, there's something he wishes he had figured out sooner: it feels good to give back to society.

"I learned this very late," Ganesh says. "I was so aggressively building the business that I didn't pay a lot of attention to giving back. And so a year ago I started to ask myself, 'What could I do to not only inspire myself, but also inspire other IBOs to get involved?"

That's how Ganesh's professional journey turned personal – and the Epic Bike Ride was born. In August 2021, Ganesh plans to ride his bicycle 1,000 miles in 30 days, from New York City to Amway World Headquarters in Ada, Michigan. The goal is to raise awareness and money for Easterseals Michigan, a nonprofit that provides services for people with disabilities and their families.

His money-raising goal is not modest. In fact, it's huge: he wants to raise \$500,000 for Easterseals, in particular for programs that serve kids with autism and homeless veterans. He was inspired to help kids with disabilities by his experiences dropping his own kids off at school. "When you see families that have kids with disabilities, you see how much they have to overcome just to do certain things that are easy for us," Ganesh says.

His drive to address the needs of homeless veterans comes from times he and his family have donated to food kitchens. "We've seen families without a home and also veterans, and they have paid a price," he says. "We feel strongly that we need to give back."

Easterseals is honored and excited that Ganesh wants to raise money for the organization. "We were blown away when we heard what he is doing," says Regan Goldberg, Senior Vice President and Chief Development Officer for Easterseals Michigan. "Ganesh is a true believer in the power of philanthropy. He is a relentless leader. I think he has so much grit. And he's selfless."

Ganesh originally planned the ride for the summer of 2020. But due to the pandemic, and for the health and safety of the participants, the ride will take place in August 2021. In the meantime, virtual rides, walks, jogs and swims are taking place with IBO participants from several countries have so far raised \$24,130 to help Ganesh reach the goal. He hopes the Epic Bike Ride will motivate other IBOs to help causes they believe in, "so that the idea of giving gets into their minds and it becomes part of their lives."

When Ganesh reflects on his efforts, the Epic Bike Ride comes down to one simple idea: joy. "As you go through life, you want to experience joy, and you spend a lot of time trying to find and receive joy," he says. "I've realized that to truly experience joy, you need to give joy. The Epic Bike Ride will raise awareness for Easterseals," children with autism and homeless veterans – to help put joy in their lives and their family's lives."

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Benefits Of Giving Back

We all know giving helps others, whether we volunteer for organizations, offer emotional support to those around us, or donate to charities. But did you know that the warm and fuzzy feeling you get from helping others is actually good for you?

According to the Cleveland Clinic, studies show that giving can actually boost your physical and mental health. (Good news in today's world where many people are suffering from the emotional complications of a global pandemic.)

From volunteering at a soup kitchen, to committing to raise money for a specific charity – health benefits associated with giving can include:

- · Lower blood pressure
- · Increased self-esteem
- Less depression
- · Lower stress levels
- Longer life
- · Greater happiness and satisfaction

"I can recall giving my daughter a dollar to buy a gift for us during the holidays in elementary school," Scott Bea, PsyD., said. "When she returned home, she couldn't wait to give us the gift she picked out. In fact, she insisted we open it immediately."

There's just something about the delight of gift-giving that makes us feel good, but there's actually science backing it up.

Research says that people who give social support to others have lower blood pressure than those who don't. Supportive interaction with others also helps people recover from coronary-related events.

Researchers also say that people who give their time to help others through community and organizational involvement have greater selfesteem, less depression, and lower stress levels than those who don't.

Giving Can help You Live Longer

According to one study, people who were 55 and older, who volunteered for two or more organizations, were 44% less likely to die over a five-year period than those who didn't volunteer — even accounting for many other factors including age, exercise, general health, and negative habits like smoking.

Another study found similar numbers for elderly people who gave help to friends, relatives and neighbors, or who gave emotional support to their spouses versus those who didn't.

Feeling Happier

Biologically, giving can create a "warm glow," activating regions in the brain associated with pleasure, connection with other people and trust. This is the reason why you feel excitement when you're about to give a gift to someone else (and why you feel close to them during), or why you feel happy driving back from a volunteer experience.

There is evidence that, during gift-giving behaviors, humans secrete "feel good" chemicals in our brains, such as serotonin (a mood mediating chemical), dopamine (a feel-good chemical), and oxytocin (a compassion and bonding chemical).

When you look at the functional MRIs of subjects who gave to various charities, scientists have found that giving stimulates the mesolimbic pathway, which is the reward center in the brain — releasing endorphins and creating what is known as the "helper's high."

And like other highs, this one is addictive, too. So go ahead and reach out to someone in need, decide what charities you'd like to give to, and identify opportunities to give back in your community. Your mental and physical health will thank you – and so will the people you help.

RESOURCE: WHY GIVING IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH - CLEVELAND CLINIC

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Put the FUN In Fundraising

Fundraising doesn't always have to be boring. We invite you to get creative when you are thinking of hosting a fundraiser for your charity or organization of choice. Below is a list of some great fundraisers that we have seen be very successful!

Outside the office in the community: (Engage a committee of co-workers or friends to organize)

- · Cooking Class
- Wine Tasting
- · Host a Silent Auction
- Golf Tournament
- · Host a special dinner at a restaurant

Online sales: (Percentage going to charity and easiest to execute)

- · Popcorn Sale
- · Clothing company sale
- · Jewelry Sale
- Host an online Email Campaign (Easterseals can give you a free platform to use)

*Utilizing online fundraising tools can help reach friends & family from wherever they are.

Businesses giving back: (Host an event/team building activity)

- Kendra Scott Jewelry Party
- · Painting for a purpose
- · Bowling Outing
- · Restaurants i.e., Chick-Fil-A, Chipotle, Pizza companies

Hosting a fundraising event in your office or virtually

(Staff donations to participate and fun team building)

- · A Dress-Down or Dress up day: Spirit Day, Team Day, Jeans Day
- Host a Walk at Work: during lunchtime or special afternoon wellness break
- Host a Healthy Recipe Contest: create a cookbook with favorite recipes
- · Host a Spare Change Collection Drive
- Host a Company Olympics or Sporting Event i.e., Cornhole, Baseball, and Kickball games
- · Staff Talent Show
- · Host a Bake Sale or Potluck
- · Host a special dinner at work

*Remember to ask your company/group if they would be willing to do a Company Match to match what your group raises.

To get your team involved in fundraising email Linda Kozianowski at: lkozianowski@essmichigan.org



Mental Health IS Health

Join us during May and beyond by ordering our Mental Health IS Health T-shirts for yourself or your group with a percentage coming back to Easterseals Michigan!

Mental Health IS Health T-shirts at probitasstore.com/easterseals-mi/

Join us to Wind Down Wednesday on May 11th at 7:10 p.m. at Comerica Park as Easterseals Michigan will be the nonprofit of the night. We will be highlighting our campaign throughout the evening in partnership with the Detroit Tigers.

Receive 10 tickets to the Detroit Tigers game for your group for every \$1,000 raised.

It will make you feel good by releasing endorphins and creating what is knows as the "helpers high" by giving back to Easterseals Michigan!

To get your team involved email Linda Kozianowski at: lkozianowski@essmichigan.org





Physical Wellness

Working out – even in a non-traditional way - is proven to reduce anxiety while also improving self-esteem and brain function.

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A Mindful Walk Outdoors

- 1. As you begin, walk at a natural pace. Place your hands wherever comfortable: on your belly, behind your back or at your sides. Start down your own trail or simply envision walking on a trail like the one pictured here.
 - If you find it useful, count steps up to 10, and then start back at one again.
 - With each step, pay attention to the lifting and falling of your feet. Notice any shifting of your body from side to side.
 - Should something else capture your attention, come back to the sensation of walking. Your mind will wander, so without frustration, gently guide it back again as many times as you need.
 - Maintain a larger sense of the environment around you, taking it all in, staying safe and aware.
- 2. Now for a few minutes, expand your attention to sounds.

 Whether you're indoors, in the woods or in a city, pay attention to sounds without labeling, naming or getting caught up in whether you find them pleasant or unpleasant. Notice sounds as nothing more or less than sound.

- 3. Shift your awareness to your sense of smell. Again, simply notice. Don't force yourself to feel anything at all, just bring attention to the sense of smell, whatever you discover. Pay attention to the smells around you without labeling, naming or getting caught up in whether you find them pleasant or unpleasant.
- 4. Now, move to vision: Notice colors, objects and whatever else you see. Patiently come back each time something grabs your attention, or if something needs addressing, like avoiding an obstacle. Stay natural, not overly rigid, not daydreaming and drifting, but with sustained awareness. Take it all in.
- 5. Keep this open awareness of everything around you, wherever you are nothing to do, nothing to fix, nothing to change. Be fully aware and walk. Utilize all your senses to experience this moment in time as you continue down your path.
- 6. In the last moments of your mindful walk, come back to awareness of the physical sensations of walking, wherever else your mind found itself throughout the practice. Notice your feet again touching the ground. Notice again the movements in your body with each step. Continue using your senses to observe your surroundings until your walk concludes.

When you're ready to end your walking meditation, stand still for a moment. Pause, choose a moment to end the practice. As you finish, consider how you might bring this kind of awareness into the rest of your day. 36 | PHYSICAL WELLNESS 37 | PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Relaxation Techniques For Computer Fatigued Eyes

Palming - First, rub your palms together to create a bit of warmth. Next, form your hands into cup shapes. Now take your hands and press them over your closed eyes. Put your left hand on your left eye and your right hand on your right eye. Let the heat warm your eyes. Relax for a few minutes.

Eye rolling - Just as neck rolling can do wonders for stiff neck, eye rolling can do wonders for your eye muscles, especially when you've been sitting in front of a computer screen for hours. Close your eyes and roll them around in circular motions. It almost feels like your eyes are getting a massage, so enjoy. This helps lubricate your eyes and eases muscle strain.

Focusing - Take a visual break from your computer. Take your eyes off the computer screen and look at something else for up to a minute. Aim to do this at least once every hour.

Visual scanning - Sit back and observe the room. Find an object and begin to scan its outline. Then move to another object. For example, start with the computer and move to the plant next to it and then the window behind it. Basically, you want your eyes to be in constant, deliberate motion as you visually take stock of everything around you. You may already think you're doing this, but most people focus entirely on what is on the screen.

Glancing - As you're seated, close your eyes and roll them up as far as comfortably possible. Hold for a moment, then look down. Repeat a few times and then take an eye breather (open your eyes and look around). Close your eyes again and look to the right and the left. Repeat this a few times.

20/20/20 Rule - Look up from your book or computer and focus on an object that is at least 20 feet away from you for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.

SOURCE: INSIGHTVISIONCENTER.COM*

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Four Breathing Exercises

Equal breathing - Find a breath length that is not too easy and not too difficult. Usually, this is between three and five counts.

- 1. Choose a comfortable seated position.
- 2. Breathe in and out through your nose. Count during each inhale and exhale to make sure they are even in duration.
- 3. You can add a slight pause after each inhale and exhale if you feel comfortable. Continue practicing this breath for at least five minutes.

4-7-8 breathing

- 1. Begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position. Your eyes can be open or closed. Press the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth, slightly open your mouth, and exhale until you reach the bottom of your breath.
- 2. Close your mouth and quietly inhale through your nose for four counts. Then hold your breath for seven counts. Exhale very slowly so that it takes a total of eight counts to return to the bottom of your breath.
- 3. Repeat for four full breaths and work your way up to eight breaths over time.

Alternate nostril breathing - This is best practiced on an empty stomach. Avoid the practice if you're feeling sick or congested.

- 1. Choose a comfortable seated position.
- 2. Lift your right hand toward your nose, pressing your first and middle fingers toward your palm and leaving your other fingers extended.
- 3. After an exhale, use your right thumb to gently close your right nostril.
- 4. Inhale through your left nostril and then close your left nostril with your right pinky and ring fingers.
- 5. Release your thumb, exhale out through your right nostril.
- 6. Inhale through your right nostril and then close this nostril.
- 7. Release your fingers to open your left nostril and exhale through this side. This is one cycle.
- 8. Continue this breathing pattern for up to five minutes.
- 9. Finish your cycle with an exhale on the left side.

Ocean breath

- 1. Sit tall with your shoulders relaxed away from your ears and close your eyes. To prepare, become aware of your breath without trying to control it at all. Then begin to inhale and exhale through your mouth if you have been breathing through your nose.
- 2. Bring your awareness to your throat. On your exhales, begin to tone the back of your throat slightly constricting the passage of air. Imagine that you are fogging up a pair of glasses. You should hear a soft hissing sound.
- 3. Once you are comfortable with the exhale, begin to apply the same contraction of the throat to the inhales. You should, once again, hear a soft hissing sound. This is where the name of the breath comes from: it sounds like the ocean.
- 4. When you can control the throat on both the inhale and exhale, close the mouth and begin breathing through the nose. Direct the breath to travel over your vocal cords, across the back of your throat. Keep your mouth closed, but your lips soft. Continue applying the same toning to the throat that you did when the mouth was open. The breath will still make a noise coming in and out of the nose.

SOURCE: HEALTHLINE.COM*, GREATEST.COM*, VERYWELLFIT.COM*



Mental Welness

Remaining mentally healthy doesn't have to cost anything. Here are a few quick, easy, and free ways to reduce stress and anxiety.

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Basic Self-Care Ideas

According to the World Health Organization, self-care is "what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness." Below are ideas for incorporating self-care into your everyday life.

Community self-care

- · Volunteer at organizations you support.
- · Take a meal to an elderly or sick neighbor.
- · Help at your community garden.
- · Take a bag on your walks and pick up trash.

Financial self-care

- · Create a budget.
- · See retirement planner.
- · Set up a savings plan.

Physical self-care

- · Eat nutritional food.
- · Exercise daily.
- \cdot Sleep the recommended 7+ hours a day.
- · Address fatigue with prolonged computer use.

Emotional self-care

- · Meditate daily.
- \cdot Seek therapy if necessary.
- · Learn something new.
- · Do a digital detox.

Career self-care

- · Update skills or attend a professional development webinar.
- · Seek a mentor or become one.

Social self-care

- · Spend time with loved ones.
- · Call a friend.
- · Get a workout buddy or an adventure buddy.
- \cdot Honor your commitments to others.

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Meditation And Well-Being

Meditating a couple times a day for just 10 minutes can make a difference to our overall well-being. There are many ways to meditate, including listening to music. However, an effective way is to simply concentrate on your breath, and count as you breath in and out. When you reach 10, start counting from one again. Aim to not think, and simply count and listen to your breath. Breathe deeply and if a thought does enter your mind simply acknowledge it and let it go.

Here are some benefits of meditation:

- Lowers blood pressure
- Restores balanced function to the digestive system, aiding absorption of nutrients
- · Relaxes the nervous system
- · Relieves muscle tension
- · Diminishes intensity of headaches and migraines
- · Relieves insomnia
- · Frees the mind from self-doubt and internal chatter
- Releases fears
- Reduces anxiety
- · Reduces symptoms of depression
- · Enhances attention and memory
- \cdot Reduces the inflammation response caused by stress
- · Generates optimism, self-esteem, confidence and motivation

Mindfulness Techniques

Below are two simple techniques you can use throughout your day to reduce stress or remain present in the moment.

When you're experiencing a particularly stressful moment, a popular mindfulness exercise, known as **S.T.O.P.**, may be helpful.

- **Stop.** Just take a momentary pause, no matter what you're doing.
- Take a breath. Feel the sensation of your own breathing, which brings you back to the present moment.
- **Observe.** Acknowledge what is happening, for good or bad, inside you or out. Just note it.
- **Proceed.** Having briefly checked in with the present moment, go back to the task at hand.

A simple exercise, known as R.A.I.N., may also help you stay in the present moment and not get caught up clinging to the experiences of others or your own emotions.

- **Recognize.** Acknowledge what is happening, just noting it in a calm and accepting manner.
- Accept. Allow life to be just as it is, without trying to change it right away, and without wishing it were different somehow.
- Investigate. See how it feels; perhaps it's making you upset or happy, giving you pleasure or pain. Just note it.
- **Non-identification.** Realize the sensations you're feeling make for a fleeting experience and will soon pass. The experience isn't who you are.

SOURCE: POSITIVEPSYCHOLOGY.COM* BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN AND BLUE CARE NETWORK DON'T OWN OR CONTROL THIS WEBSITE.



