

For Your Information

RELATIONSHIPS 101

For a relationship to be successful, both partners must be willing to share and accept each other's feelings. The ability to share feelings is essential to creating intimacy and openness in a relationship. Both "negative" and "positive" feelings need to be shared. For many, these are "emotional" skills that need to be learned.



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QUICK TIP FOR RELIEVING JOB STRESS

To help ease stress at work, take some "time out" every day. Get away from your work activities. Relax in a peaceful setting or take a short walk. Even a 15-minute time-out has the ability to dissipate stress, energize you and make the rest of your workday more productive and enjoyable.

ALCOHOL AND SLEEP

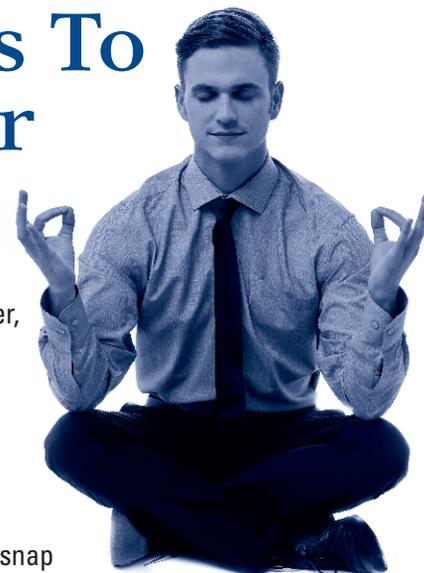
Use alcohol only in moderation and not before bedtime. Do not use alcohol to induce sleep. A nightcap can lull you to sleep, but alcohol typically produces light, unsettled sleep. Additionally, using alcohol to fall asleep could lead to dependency.



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WELLNESS

Healthy Ways To Improve Your Mood



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Bad moods are an inevitable part of life. What can be particularly frustrating, however, is when we know we're in a bad mood, but seem unable to snap ourselves out of it. Are you aware of the many short-term and long-term, healthy techniques and strategies you can utilize to improve your mood?

If you find yourself feeling down, anxious, grumpy, low in energy, irritable and quick to snap at family, friends or coworkers, try a few of the suggestions below and find what works best for you:

1. Practice deep breathing. Break the grip of a bad mood with controlled, slow and deep breathing. Here's what to do: Sit comfortably at your desk or alone in a quiet room. Close your eyes and inhale slowly and deeply through your nose (for approx. 7 seconds), then exhale slowly through your mouth (for approx. 8 seconds). Focus your attention entirely on your breathing. If you prefer, say (or think the word) "relax" or "calm" or another soothing word as you exhale. Do this for ten repetitions any time you feel particularly anxious or stressed. This technique, known as the "relaxation response," will calm your brain, relax your body and lift your mood.

2. Exercise. When you exercise, your brain releases endorphins, adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine – natural brain chemicals that work together to relieve tension, lift your energy and boost your mood. Researchers report that even a short brisk walk can give you an energy and mood boost. What types of exercise are best? Cardiovascular exercise (such as brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming or other aerobic activity), weight training and yoga have all been shown in studies to reduce tension and anxiety and improve your emotional state.

3. Adjust your diet. When you eat and what you eat affects your blood sugar levels, which in turn affect your energy and mood. Nutritionists recommend the following to help stabilize your blood sugar levels and mood:

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Back To School Tips For Parents

Research shows that outcomes are generally better for children whose parents actively engage them in daily conversations about their lives in and out of school. As a result, these kids tend to have better grades, are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, have higher self-esteem and are more likely to attend college. According to a recent survey of teens who were asked what they needed most to succeed in life, the majority responded by saying they desired more communication with their parents.



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“Back-to-school time offers a great opportunity to talk with children about what is happening in their lives,” says Michael Faenza, president of the National Mental Health Association (NMHA). “By spending at least 15 minutes a day listening and talking with your child, parents can provide valuable emotional support, especially during the turbulent times of childhood and adolescence.”

Additional back to school tips

In order to promote positive behavior, higher academic achievement and prevent school bullying, the NMHA recommends the following for parents:

- Spend time each day talking to your child about what happened at school. Engage in discussion about your child’s friends, classes and activities. Give your child positive feedback about his or her new experiences.
- Praise and encourage your child to become involved with school activities and try new things.
- Attend school functions and stay involved in your child’s education. Children whose parents are more involved with their education have higher achievement, are better adjusted and are less likely to drop out of school. Introduce yourself to your child’s teacher(s) within the first few weeks of school.
- Make a point to learn about how your child develops not just physically, but socially and emotionally, as well. If you are aware of what’s typical behavior and thinking for your child’s stage of life, you will be able to tell more readily when things may not be right.

Your EAP is here to help

If you need help with any personal, family or work-related concern, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). We can provide you or your dependents with short-term counseling, referrals or information to help you face life’s challenges. All EAP services are FREE and strictly CONFIDENTIAL. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help.

Improve your mood...

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- Eat small meals and snacks every few hours to avoid peaks and valleys in your blood sugar levels. Eating consistently throughout the day provides your brain with a constant source of fuel to help stabilize your energy and mood.
- Limit consumption of simple sugars and refined carbohydrates to lessen major blood sugar swings. Concentrated sources of sugar like soda, candy, fruit juice, jam and syrup can create radical spikes (and drops) in your blood sugar levels, which can leave you feeling irritable and tired. Additionally, refined white starch foods like white bread, crackers, bagels, muffins, breakfast cereals and white rice can have the same effect on your blood sugar and mood. Limit your consumption of these foods. Instead include more complex carbohydrates in your diet, such as vegetables, fruit, beans, peas, lentils, whole grains, brown rice and oatmeal.



- Include protein with meals and snacks. The addition of protein to a meal or snack will help slow the absorption of carbohydrate in the blood and lessen blood sugar and mood swings. Good protein sources include chicken, turkey, seafood and fish, veal, pork tenderloin, tofu, eggs and low-fat yogurt.
- Cut down on caffeine. Although it can provide an initial boost in energy and concentration, too much caffeine is linked to depression, fatigue and mood swings.

4. Let it out. If you’re in a bad mood, there could be an obvious problem or emotional reason for it. Try to determine why you’re in a bad mood and talk to a family member, friend or counselor about it. Simply talking about your problem will help you start to feel better. Allow yourself to feel your emotions. Remember, bottling up your feelings will only darken your mood, so let your feelings out.

5. Make adequate sleep a priority.

Scientists have documented the link between sleep deprivation and a poor mood. According to a survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, those who got fewer than six hours of sleep on weekdays were more likely to describe themselves as stressed, sad, angry and pessimistic. Conversely, those getting adequate sleep reported more positive feelings. For a better mood, make the quality and quantity of your sleep

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a priority. Research suggests that most healthy adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Keep a consistent sleep and wake schedule on workdays and weekends. Choose relaxing activities before bedtime, such as reading or taking a warm shower or bath, instead of turning on the TV or computer. Make sure your sleeping environment promotes relaxation and sleep. Your bedroom should be quiet, dark and at the proper temperature (in the mid-60s).

6. Bask in the sun. Sunlight is another element that is associated with mood and health. About 20% of Americans report feeling more depressed during the winter, when the amount of sunlight during the day is less and foul weather keeps people indoors more often. Why does this happen? When you're out in the sun your serotonin levels go up. Serotonin is a hormone in our body that helps elevate our mood. In the winter, we don't get as much sunlight, so we don't produce as much serotonin. As a result, more people feel blue. Try to get out more during daylight hours to help break a bad mood. An early morning or lunchtime walk will increase your exposure to natural sunlight, release the brain's natural mood-lifting chemicals like endorphins, and includes the additional benefit of being outside and breathing fresh air.

7. Eliminate the worry habit. If you're stuck in "worry mode," changes take place in your physiology (changes in blood chemistry, blood sugar level, blood pressure, muscle tension) that undermine your energy and mood. If you're prone to worry, ask yourself these questions: Will any amount of worrying change the future? Will worrying pay your bills, prevent an accident, make your job more secure, or show that you care more because you worry? The truth is you can spend the rest of your life worrying and you will not have changed a thing. Worrying is passive. It gets you nowhere. The first step to eliminating worry is to recognize it as a bad habit (a learned, negative way of thinking) that can be changed. To eliminate worry, try the following: The next time you catch

BETTER MONEY MANAGEMENT

Tips To Ease Financial Stress

According to the latest *Stress in America* survey commissioned by the American Psychological Association, 64 percent of Americans single out money as the number-one factor that affects their stress level. If you're feeling stressed about money, how can you solve your money problems and get financial stress under control?



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How to get financial stress under control

- 1. Seek professional help.** If financial pressures are getting you down seek professional help. Call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for information and referrals. Your EAP counselor can help you assess what issue(s) may be contributing to your money problems and refer you to the proper resources to help you overcome the problem(s). These resources may include a financial planner, debt consolidation agency, mental health/substance abuse assistance, or other community services.
- 2. Don't let credit card debt break your back.** Consumers who run up high credit card balances and then regularly pay only the minimum amount due each month are paying very high prices for goods and services. The key to relieving financial stress is to get out of debt. Too much debt eats away at your take-home income and undermines your financial future.
- 3. Eliminate credit card debt.** Borrowing money for an asset that accumulates value (e.g. family home) can be a good thing. All other debt should be eliminated. Examine the interest rates you are paying on your debts and pay off those with the highest interest rates first.
- 4. Curb your spending.** For most people, overspending and having too much debt is the cause of money problems – it is not because they are not making enough money. Learn basic money management skills. Commit to living within your means.
- 5. Keep money in reserve for the unexpected.** Unexpected financial expenses hit all of us from time to time. Make sure you have a reserve to cope with these out-of-the-blue expenses. Having money in reserve will give you peace of mind.

Your EAP is here to help

Remember, your EAP is always available to help you or your immediate family members with any type of personal, family or work-related concern, including financial difficulties. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

yourself worrying, change your "worry" to "wonder." Your internal dialogue could go something like this: "I wonder how I can overcome this obstacle? Maybe I could try this. If it doesn't work, I'll try something else." By changing worry to wonder, you turn unproductive, stress-promoting thinking into thought and action that can create positive change in your life. If persistent worry is a problem for you, seek out additional resources

or counseling to help you overcome this destructive habit.

8. Take a break. Give yourself a break from negative thinking or a bad mood by doing something different. Suggestions that might work for you: Take a warm bath, read a good book, listen to relaxing music, get a massage, engage in a hobby, work in your garden, watch your favorite comedy or visit a library or

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museum. A change of pace, no matter how short, can help give you a more objective or positive perspective on what may be souring your mood.

Your EAP is here to help

Everyone experiences a bad mood from time to time. However, if you're feeling "down" for more than a few weeks, or having difficulty functioning in daily life, you may be suffering from a serious medical condition called depression. If you suspect that you, or one of your dependents, may be suffering from depression, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for FREE and CONFIDENTIAL assistance. EAP counselors are specially trained to help people get the right kind of help for depression. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help you.



Stairways Behavioral Health's New Opportunities Employee Assistance Program

Please call for free,
confidential assistance

(814) 456-0584
1-800-321-7988

The information in this newsletter is for the purpose of information only and is not meant to replace consultation with your EAP professional, mental health professional or physician. Your EAP is a benefit provided for you by your company. We encourage you to call. No issue is too big or small.

Stairways Behavioral Health's

New Opportunities Employee Assistance Program, Erie, PA

As normal healthy adults, we all experience set-backs and difficulties from time to time. Most often, we are able to recover from them and resolve our problems ourselves. Sometimes professional assistance can help when problems have grown too complicated to manage alone and begin to affect our happiness, relationships, health and job performance. During these times, an employee assistance program can be very helpful.

As one of your employee benefits, you and your family can take advantage of free, professional and confidential help through Stairways' Employee Assistance Program (EAP). New Opportunities EAP is staffed with trained counselors dedicated to help with any type of personal problem including:

- Job-related problems
- Workplace conflicts
- Marital/Family issues
- Parenting issues
- Emotional problems such as stress, grief, anxiety and depression
- Crisis situations
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- Eldercare issues
- Communication and interpersonal problems

You and your immediate family members are eligible to use this EAP service free of charge. Just call New Opportunities at **(814) 456-0584** or toll-free at **1-800-321-7988** to make an appointment. Appointments can be arranged to fit your schedule including evenings and weekends.

Remember, anything discussed with the counselor is strictly confidential. Information will not be released to your employer, family or anyone else unless you want it shared and sign a written consent form.

New Opportunities EAP provides an initial assessment of your situation and short term counseling as needed. Our counselors can also give you referrals to appropriate community resources. Contact New Opportunities EAP today to schedule an appointment.

WE ARE THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU NEED US!