



A Healthy Outlook!

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Coping with Summer Stress

Author: Ronnie Nijmeh from ACQYR.com

The weather is blistering hot, the vacation (or lack thereof) is causing conflict among friends or family, and your lack of interest in work has only doubled your workload. You are experiencing summer stress.

Well, you're not alone. Right now, millions of people just like you are dealing with the reality of summer stress. However, you have an advantage over them since you are reading this article; and when you have finished reading, you will take the next steps needed to beat the summer blues.

These are the times when the kids are at home and looking for something to do. These are the times when, seemingly, everyone talks about their vacation plans, leaving you resentful. These are the times when you are teetering on burnout because you quite simply need a break.

Give Yourself a Break!

So, why don't you take a break? What's stopping you? In these times you need to seek some comfort. That might be at the pool, inside with the air conditioning, outside reading a good book, or away on a vacation.

If money's the stressor (and often it is), that's no excuse. No one said you had to go to an exotic place to relieve stress. Last I checked, taking a stroll through a park, watching a youth baseball game or participating in one of the

many community events and activities is a healthy and free way to get your mind off the routine and often that's all you'll need.

Short of that, taking up a new hobby or reviving an old one will certainly ease your stress. If you're looking for ideas, just think of things you're passionate about—a sport, game, activity or otherwise—then make it happen and ensure that it is embedded into your routine. It's been suggested that scheduling a weekly family games night will give you something to look forward to during the week and lets you and your family unwind together.

Don't Overbook Yourself.

The summer months can be full of activities, parties, and barbecues. It's easy to lose track of your health and overexert yourself when you really shouldn't. This means you need to watch your diet, be cautious outside in the excessive heat, and leave extra time so you can unwind and catch up on household errands.

If you go on a vacation, strive to find the right balance between enjoyment and the creation of additional stress. We tend to organize our trips with lots of sightseeing activities and early mornings coupled with late nights. While it may be fun to experience as many sights and sounds as possible, try doing one or two fewer so you

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The Employee Assistance Program Offices Are Moving!!

The EAP is excited to be moving to new office space sometime around July 1, 2006. Our new location will be at 2096 Gaither Road, Suite 205, in Rockville. You will be informed of our new phone number as soon as we know it. Although our office will remain open all summer, there will be a few days during the move when we will not be able to schedule client appointments. However, we will continue to answer our phones and return calls in a timely manner. Please watch our Web site www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/eap for updated information about our move. ■

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can enjoy each activity even more without feeling rushed or stressed. You shouldn't have to take a vacation from a vacation!

The key to resolving summer stress is to be aware of your physical and emotional needs. Don't neglect yourself; otherwise you'll be taking on another load of unnecessary stress. Always remember that taking a few hours a week to relax should not cause guilt!

About the author

Ronnie Nijmeh is the executive director of ACQYR Skills (pronounced: "acquire"), a report series on transferable skills that condenses hundreds of pages of information into a handy 16-page reference report. ACQYR Skills contains dozens of useful tips & tricks, interviews with experts, and case studies to help enhance your skill set. For more information, go to <http://www.acqyrskills.com> or visit <http://www.acqyr.com> for many free articles and a free e-newsletter. ■

Substance Abuse in the Workplace is Everybody's Problem

Substance abuse in the workplace is detrimental not only to the employee who abuses drugs but also to coworkers and employers. Substance abuse can result in poor balance, diminished motor skills, irritability, inability to concentrate, impaired vision and slower reaction time. The employee who uses alcohol or other drugs may suffer from or cause an accident in the workplace due to these factors. And it's not just when someone drinks during work hours that these dangers are present. Studies show that an employee experiencing a hangover may also have the same symptoms listed above.

Besides the chance of experiencing physical injury to self or others, the employee may lose time from work. This can result in less pay and also may affect his or her chance for promotion. In some cases it may result in termination.

When an employee does not perform well on the job, production suffers,

and so does morale. This can damage business and services. In addition, when attendance is affected, other employees are often left to pick up the slack.

If you know someone with an addiction problem, you might feel like you want to encourage that person to get help. You may worry, though, that you're being a busybody or intruding on that person's private life. You're not. As this article shows, substance abuse becomes everyone's problem when left untreated.

If you want to help ensure your safety and that of others in the workplace, mention the Employee Assistance program as a confidential source of help to the person with the addiction. Other resources that provide services to those who have a substance abuse problem include Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and local mental health agencies. ■

Adapted from Health Sentry, Volume 16, Issue 4

Tips for Staying Safe After Dark

☪ When traveling at night, call someone and let him or her know when you're leaving and when you plan to arrive.

☪ Travel with a companion whenever possible. There is safety in numbers.

☪ When walking after dark, choose well-lighted, heavily traveled walkways. Avoid alleys, dark doorways and areas where visibility is blocked by shrubs or other obstacles.

☪ Walk briskly and with an air of confidence. Attackers prefer to pick people who look unaware. Don't walk at night if you've been drinking. Call a cab.

☪ Wear shoes and other clothing that won't restrict your movement. If you must wear high heels, be prepared to kick them off if you need to run.

☪ Leave a porch light on at your house. Criminals prefer to stay in the shadows.

☪ If you feel you're being followed, don't go home. Walk or run to a lighted shop or area where there are people.

☪ If you feel you are in danger from an attacker, don't be afraid to make noise. Scream loudly, yell "fire," or carry a whistle around your wrist and blow it hard if you need to get help. Many attackers are frightened away by loud noise.

☪ Don't resist if an attacker demands money or valuables. Try to get a good description to take to the police.

☪ Always park your vehicle in a well-lighted, clearly visible spot.

☪ Have your keys ready before you reach your vehicle.

☪ Lock your vehicle doors immediately after getting in; before putting on your seat belt.

☪ Never allow strangers to approach your vehicle. Drive off if you can do so safely.

☪ If you're involved in a minor vehicle accident in an unsafe area, don't stop. Drive to the nearest police station, fire station, or other safe place and report the accident.

☪ If your vehicle breaks down, stay inside. If someone offers to help you, ask him or her to call help from the nearest phone. If you're threatened, honk your horn and turn on your emergency flashers to attract help.

☪ Keep your vehicle in good working order and the gas tank at least half full at all times. ■

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Facts About Late-Life Depression

- * Depression is not a normal part of aging, but over 58% believe it is.
- * Late-life depression affects an estimated 6 million older adults, mostly women, yet only 10% get treatment.
- * Older patients with significant depression have roughly 50% higher health care costs than nondepressed older adults.
- * Clinical depression can be triggered by medications or chronic illnesses common in later life such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, Alzheimer's disease, and arthritis.
- * Older adults are considered the group most at risk for suicide, as the suicide rate in older adults is more than double that of any other portion of the population.
- * More than 80% of people with depression improve when they receive appropriate treatment with medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of the two.

If you are concerned about the mental status of an elderly relative and are not sure what to do, consider contacting the EAP (301-460-2100) for information on resources you may find helpful. ■

Quote:

"Live out of your imagination, not your history."

—Stephen Covey

Parenting a College Student

Do you currently have a student in college, or might your child be going to college in the near future? For many parents, this is both an exciting and anxiety-provoking time. If you're looking for some guidance on how to parent your child while they are away at school, here are some tips from the National Orientation Directors Association.

- * Don't ask if they are homesick. The power of association is a dangerous thing. Some homesickness is normal.
- * Write (even if they don't write back). In spite of a surge of independence, many new students are still anxious to maintain family ties.
- * Ask questions (but not too much). Balance your interest in your child's life with parental curiosity and concern.
- * Expect change (but not too much). You can't stop change, you may not understand it, but it is within your power (and to your child's advantage) to accept it.
- * Don't worry (too much) about frantic phone calls or letters. Be patient with those "nothing is going right, I hate this place" calls or e-mails. You're providing a real service by being an advice dispenser or sympathetic ear.
- * Visit (but not too often). Visits by parents, accompanied by shopping sprees or dinners out, are another part of first-year events that new students are reluctant to admit liking, but greatly appreciate.
- * Do not tell your child that these are the best years of their lives. Parents who perpetuate and insist on the "best years" stereotype are working against their child's already difficult self-development. Support and encouragement is what's needed most during the first year.
- * Trust them. Finding oneself is a difficult enough process without feeling that the people whose opinions you respect most are second guessing your own second guessing. ■

Tip for Supervisors: Reward on a Daily Basis

According to Louise Anderson, author of *Cream of the Corp*, consider the following in regard to rewarding staff:

- 1** Determine what your top performers are doing and how they're doing it.
- 2** Ask questions.
- 3** Use the answers to identify the best practices they're using that could help average employees achieve at superstar level.
- 4** Define what you need in terms of behaviors and results.
- 5** Reward people on the spot for achieving the behaviors.



Upcoming Events

- ▶ **May 1–31** Older Americans Month, U.S. Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201, 202-619-0724, www.aoa.gov
- ▶ **May 1–31** Better Hearing and Speech Month, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852, 800-638-8255, www.asha.org
- ▶ **June 10–14** National Headache Awareness Week, National Headache Foundation, 820 North Orleans, Suite 217, Chicago, IL 60610-3132, 888-NHF-5552 (643-5552), www.headaches.org
- ▶ **Aug. 1–31** Cataract Awareness Month, American Academy of Ophthalmology, P.O. Box 7424, San Francisco, CA 94120-7424, 415-447-0213, www.aao.org
- ▶ **Aug. 1** National Minority Donor Awareness Day, National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program, Ambulatory Care Center, Suite 3100, 2041 Georgia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20060, 800-393-2839, 202-865-4888, www.nationalmottep.org

Pump Up the Fiber with Fresh Fruits This Summer

By Linda Watson and Ajibike Adeniyi, Dietetic Interns, Sodexo Mid-Atlantic Dietetic Internship

Did you know that most Americans only get about half of the recommended 25–30 gm of fiber each day?

Fiber is a substance found in plants such as fruits, vegetables, and grains. The body cannot digest or absorb fiber. The part of the plant that you eat is called dietary fiber. Fiber is an important part of a healthy diet. It helps to move food through the intestine and out of the body quickly by taking up water and giving bulk to waste product as it passes through the digestive tract.

So, why do we need fiber?

Fiber plays a role in the prevention and control of heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and obesity.

Now that summer is finally here, a variety of fresh fruits is blooming everywhere. Take this opportunity to boost up your fiber by trying an assortment of fruits.

Fruits to keep in mind

🍓 Go berry crazy by trying as many

berries as you can, like strawberry, blueberry, raspberry, blackberry, and cranberry.

🍏 Try fruits with edible skin, like apple, pear, peach, plum, nectarine, apricot, and grape.

🥥 Don't forget exotic fruits like mango, melon, papaya, kiwi, banana, pineapple, orange, and grapefruit.

Try this exotic recipe on a hot summer day.

Tropical Fruit Shake

- ½ mango
- 2 tbsp. frozen piña colada mix (or 1/8 tsp. natural coconut extract)
- ½ banana, frozen
- 4 strawberries, frozen
- 6 ice cubes
- 1¼ cup water
- 1 heaping tbsp. high-quality protein powder (optional)
- 1 tsp. flax oil (optional)

In a blender, process all the ingredients until thoroughly mixed, and serve. ■

Ask the EAP

Q. Are Employee Assistance Program services available in the summer?

A. Yes. All Employee Assistance Program staff are 12-month employees, so we will be working through the summer. EAP services will be disrupted for a few days during our move, but otherwise we will be available to meet with MCPS staff Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., through the entire summer. ■

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



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
Debra_Tipton@fc.mcps.k12.md.us.

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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