

National Observances

April

Stress Awareness Month
Workplace Conflict Awareness Month
National Cancer Control Month
National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Week of April 1-6

Testicular Cancer Awareness Week

Week of April 7-13

National Public Health Week
National Week of the Ocean

Week of April 14-20

National Minority Cancer Awareness Week
National Robotics Week

Week of April 21-27

National Volunteer Week
National Severe Storm Preparedness Week

Earth Day: April 22

What is the EAP?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** service that can assist you and your eligible family members with **ANY** personal concern, large or small.

Employees and family members can call Cascade 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We can help! Call Cascade to schedule an in-person appointment or get the resources you need. For more information, please call us at:

800.433.2320

www.cascadecenters.com



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Conquering Those Hard-to-Break Habits

If you want to lose weight, quit smoking, improve your diet or change practically any other bad habit, roll up your sleeves.

"Habit change is work," says Matthew A. Budd, M.D., retired assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and co-author of "You Are What You Say."

Why? Some habits that are the hardest to break are deeply embedded emotionally. Through food, for example, we learn how to soothe ourselves, beginning in infancy.

"At an early age, we learn that food, comfort and security are all connected," says Dr. Budd. "That's why some adults overeat when anxious."

Dig deep

To break stubborn bad habits such as overeating, "you need to get behind the emotion that's driving the behavior," says Dr. Budd.

What to do first: "Determine the recurring circumstances that drive you to food or any other substance," he advises. If you notice you head to the vending machine whenever your boss gives you a new project, think about what's causing the anxiety that's causing you to eat.

If it's fear of failure, ask for help from

someone else rather than seeking solace through food. Drink a glass of water or meditate and take a few deep breaths to shore up your confidence.

"Only when you address the emotions underlying the addictive or habitual behavior can you really begin to produce positive results," says Dr. Budd.

Create a game plan

Once you're aware of the emotions driving habitual behaviors and you've developed strategies to deal with particularly troublesome habits, you can develop a practical plan that can help you accomplish your goals, such as losing five pounds by your birthday or giving up smoking.

During this planning stage, trouble-shoot to design a doable behavior-change plan. If, for example, you want to give up high-fat takeout dinners but don't have time to cook, make sure you stock your kitchen with low-fat meals, prepared salads and fruits and vegetables each week so you'll have easy, healthy meals on hand.

Snap back after a slip

Once you've put your plan into action, beware. There will be times when you don't

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Keeping a Stress Journal

Journaling, as a stress management and self-exploration tool, is not the same as simply recording the happenings in one's life, like keeping a log. To be most helpful, one must write in detail about feelings and cognitions related to stressful events, as one would discuss topics in therapy.

Journaling allows people to clarify their thoughts and feelings, thereby gaining valuable self-knowledge. It's also a good problem-solving tool; oftentimes, one can hash out a problem and come up with solutions more easily on paper.

Journaling about traumatic events helps one process them by fully exploring and releasing the emotions involved, and by engaging both hemispheres of the brain in the process, allowing the experience to become fully integrated in one's mind.

Journaling decreases the symptoms of asthma, arthritis and other health conditions. It improves cognitive functioning and strengthens the immune system, preventing a host of illnesses.

Journaling is a great practice for overall stress reduction as well as self-knowledge and emotional healing.

By Elizabeth Scott, M.S.

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stick to it -- perhaps you'll eat too many dip-laden potato chips at a holiday party.

Don't despair. "To slip is to be human," says Dr. Budd. Instead of giving up on your plan and reverting to bad habits, use the suffering that's associated with the slip as a learning opportunity so you can avoid it in the future.

Ask yourself what caused the slip? Was it something practical -- such as going to the party too hungry, then standing by the potato chip bowl all night? Or was it something emotional, such as feeling stressed about a work project?

Once you've nailed what caused the slip, "let the slip go and forgive yourself," says Dr. Budd.

But before you resume your behavior-change plan, "see if it's in your heart to honestly recommit," he says. If so, strengthen your

strategy and fortify your resolve by seeking

emotional encouragement from a support group or a network of friends. The help they provide can be a powerful motivator.

"If you have other people watching your progress, you'll be less ready to break that commitment," says Dr. Budd. "But if it isn't in your heart to recommit, be honest about it because, otherwise, you'll just suffer more."

Timing is important when committing or recommitting to a behavior-change plan. "The ideal time to make a habit change is when your motivation is high and when your life is relatively predictable," says Dr. Budd.

A less-than-ideal time is when you're starting a new job, moving, switching careers or attending lots of social events. Your best bet: "Select a time that's a relative clearing in your life," says Dr. Budd.

10 Tips for Reducing Stress

1. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc. Then get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable mishaps will be less stressful.
2. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc.
3. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
4. Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart "at the worst possible moment".
5. Say "NO!" Saying no to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
6. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do *today*; whatever you want to do today, do it *now*.
7. Exercise. Do what works best for you.
8. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below a quarter full; keep a well-stocked "emergency shelf" of home staples; don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more, etc.
9. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your workweek is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your workweek is fast and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off.
10. Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.