

TOUGHING IT OUT IN TOUGH TIMES

Real Life Solutions for Making It Through Uncertain Times

How Are You Dealing With Stress?

Although life is full of deadlines, frustrations and hassles from time-to-time, for many people stress is so commonplace it has become a way of life.

If you frequently find yourself feeling frazzled and overwhelmed, it's time to take action and bring your nervous system back into balance.

The Impact of Stress on the Body

More and more recent medical studies are finding that stress levels can influence physical well being. Since chronic stress tends to weaken the immune system, humans are at a greater risk for ailments such as:

- Acne
- Common cold
- Diabetes
- Flu
- Heart disease
- Weight loss or gain
- High cholesterol
- Ulcers

When to Seek Help

If you experience some or most of the symptoms listed below over a period of time, it may be time to seek help in managing your stress.

- Constantly overwhelmed
- Difficulty sleeping
- Easily fatigued
- Headaches and backaches
- Irritability
- Poor work performance
- Overly emotional
- Strained relationships

Where to Seek Help

If you find that stress is starting to impact your work or personal life, you may want to consider calling T.E.A.M., your EAP, to discuss various tools to help you decrease your stress level.

5 Instant Stress Busters

Look Forward to Something: Each morning think about one little, enjoyable thing you plan to do that day and one bigger event on the horizon.

Post Pictures of Your Happiest Moments: Tape up photos of special moments in your life in places you will see them throughout the day.

OMG Mondays: Balance out T.G.I.F. with Oh My God it's Monday! Schedule something fun each Monday, whether it be having date night with your partner or book club and start looking forward to the start of the week.

9:9:9 Rule: To help you gain perspective, the next time you are feeling stressed, take a moment to ask yourself the following questions: Will this matter 9 hours from now? Will this matter 9 days from now? Will this matter 9 years from now?

Dish Out a Compliment: Studies have found that the more personal connections you make, the better your body will be at fighting the effects of stress.



Total Employee Assistance Management

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The Holiday Blues

The holidays can often bring about the “holiday blues” for many people. Holiday stressors such as unrealistic expectations, inability to be with loved ones, too much commercialism, increased shopping demands, social gatherings, and family reunions may contribute to tension and sadness during the holiday season. Here are a few tips to help you make the holiday season less stressful and more enjoyable:

- **Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable.** Try to set realistic goals for yourself by keeping in mind what you can realistically do and not do. Make a list of all your activities and prioritize by importance.
- **Be aware of your alcohol intake.** Excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.
- **Start a new tradition.** As carrying on “traditions” is a hallmark of the holidays, it may add to your holiday blues if you are unable to carry out a tradition for some reason. If you recently lost a loved one or don’t have the financial means to carry out past traditions, keep in mind that you can start new traditions.
- **Set a spending budget and stick to it.** Enjoy activities that are free such as taking a walk around the neighborhood to enjoy the holiday lights, window shopping, caroling, attending a religious service, outdoor activities (e.g. sledding, ice skating, building a snowman, etc.) or attending a holiday program at a local school.
- **Take time for yourself.** Spend an evening listening to some quiet music or reading a good book.
- **Eat healthy and get plenty of exercise.** Most people have a tendency to overeat during the holidays. However, by making simple changes to your diet and exercising for 30 minutes a day, you can enjoy many special holiday foods without putting on the extra pounds. Eating healthier foods that are lower in fat and calories will allow you to fill your plate at a holiday party and not feel like you are being deprived.
- **Forgive:** Forgiveness is the salve that heals a broken spirit. This holiday season make a conscious choice to forgive those in your life, both present and past, that you feel have wronged you. Consider looking at examples of others such as Martin Luther King, Jr. who have moved mountains by learning to forgive.

Helping Others During the Holidays

Muhammad Ali, the former heavyweight champion of the world, described the importance of volunteering as, “Service to others is the payment you make for your space here on Earth.” This holiday season take some time away from your own troubles and give of your time helping others. Here are several national organizations that could benefit from your time.

Salvation Army
www.salvationarmyusa.org

Sharing & Caring Hands
www.sharingandcaringhands.org

Toys-for-Tots
www.toysfortots.org

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Workplace Survivor Syndrome: When You Are the One Left Behind

It's one thing to read about layoffs in your local paper; it's quite another to see a close colleague pack his kid's pictures into a heavy box and hobble for the door.

You've been spared – for now, at least. But being lucky never felt so bad. Miserable is how most downsizing survivors would describe it – grinding through massive daily workloads while waiting anxiously for the other shoe to drop.

The Fallout

What you're feeling is called "workplace survivor syndrome," a term coined by organizational psychologists to describe the emotional, psychological and physical effects of employees who remain in the midst of company downsizing.

Is it real? Multiple studies suggest that job cuts are just as hard on the people left behind as they are on those who've been downsized. Many organizations report depression, plummeting productivity and poor morale among surviving staff.

"But Aren't You Glad It Wasn't You"?

A 2008 study by Leadership IQ reported that "guilt" was one of the top three words used by layoff survivors to describe their feelings.

It's tough, there's no question about it. Here are some strategies to help you cope:

- Resist the temptation to "avenge" lost coworkers. What's done is done. Holding a grudge helps no one, least of all you.
- Cut yourself some slack. Do your best each day, but don't burden yourself with the expectation that it's up to you to single handedly save the company.
- Allow yourself time to grieve. The emotional trauma of saying goodbye to long time coworkers is very similar to losing a loved one.
- Ask for clarification on how job cuts were chosen. Understanding the reasoning behind each decision can help alleviate the guilt of being spared.
- Use your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Most offer a wide range of free or discounted services that can help you get through a rough time. Be sure to ask about programs and materials geared specifically toward coping with layoffs.

If you have found yourself unemployed, you may want to consider contacting your local WorkForce Center to learn about the variety of free job search resources that are available to you.
www.mnwfc.org

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STRESS BUSTING FOODS SHOPPING LIST

You keep fighting with your partner about money, you can't remember the last time you have taken a vacation and your child's teacher called today to let you know he is failing his math class. When you get home from work you are too exhausted to cook, so you order out for pizza.

When we are under stress we tend to engage in all sorts of unhealthy habits that further increase our stress levels. That pizza? Bad idea. If your anxiety is spiraling out of control, food should be your ally, not your enemy. With that in mind, here are five foods that will help relieve your stress instead of adding to it.

- ❑ **Almonds:** These nuts are packed with vitamin B2, vitamin E, magnesium and zinc. B vitamins and magnesium are involved in the production of serotonin, which helps regulate mood and relieves stress. Zinc has also been shown to fight some of the negative effects of stress, while vitamin E is an antioxidant that destroys the free radicals related to stress and heart disease.
- ❑ **Avocados:** One of the best ways to reduce high blood pressure, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, is to get enough potassium and just half an avocado offers 487 milligrams, more than you'll get from a medium-size banana.
- ❑ **Blueberries:** These little blue miracle workers are jam-packed with antioxidants and Vitamin C, which are potent stress busters. As an added bonus, blueberries are also a good source of fiber, which can help relieve the physical pain that can often accompany stress.
- ❑ **Broccoli:** Yet another food that is chock-full of stress relieving B vitamins, broccoli has the added value of containing folic acid, which helps relieve stress, anxiety, panic and depression.
- ❑ **Citrus Fruits:** Fruits like oranges and grapefruit are excellent sources of vitamin C, which is crucial in combating stress. In fact, prolonged periods of stress deplete levels of vitamin C in the adrenal glands, so it is important to consume foods rich in vitamin C when you are stressed.
- ❑ **Fish:** Most types of fish are filled with all important B vitamins, particularly the renowned stress fighters B6 and B12. In fact, B12 is one of the most important vitamins involved in the synthesis of "happy" brain chemical serotonin. Deficiency in B12 can likely lead to depression.
- ❑ **Milk:** In addition to those kung fu-fighting vitamins B2 and B12, milk also contains antioxidants that help destroy free radicals associated with stress.
- ❑ **Whole Grain Pasta or Rice:** While all carbs will give you a boost, stick to whole-grain bread, rice and pasta. Simple carbs like white bread and pastries will only give you a momentary boost followed by a crash and they will make you pack on the pounds. On the other hand, whole grains (complex carbs) are digested more slowly and will therefore keep you feeling full longer and conceivably happier for a longer period of time.

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Resources

Childcare

Child Care Subsidy Hotline 800.424.2246

The National Association of Child Care Resources is a federally funded agency that will assist you in finding all options for childcare payment assistance programs in your area.

Employment

Career One Stop www.careeronestop.org

Job Center of Wisconsin www.wisconsinjobcenter.org 888.258.9966

Job Service North Dakota www.jobsnd.org

MN WorkForce Center www.mnwfc.org 888.GET.JOBS

Financial

Debt Relief Hotline 800.453.1738

This agency will contact your creditors, reduce payments, interest and even principal amounts owed. Harassing phone calls will stop.

LSS Financial Counseling Services

www.cccs.org
888.577.2227

Mortgage Payment Assistance 800.750.8956

This agency will work with your mortgage company to arrange a plan to catch up on missed payments. This agency does *not* make loans or buy property.

Food

Fare for All www.fareforall.org 800.582.4291

Fare for All is a non-profit organization that provides quality foods at below retail prices in the tri-state area.

Holiday

Toys for Tots www.toysfortots.org

Medical

Healthcare Coverage Protection 866.444.3272

The Employee Benefits Security Administration can answer questions about how to protect your healthcare and retirement benefits should you lose your job.

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

www.pparx.org
888.477.2669

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance helps qualifying patients without prescription drug coverage get the medicines they need through the program that is right for them. Many will get their medications free or nearly free.

Mental Health

NAMI www.nami.org 888.473.0237

NAMI is focused on educating America about mental illness, and offering resources to those in need.

Utilities

Salvation Army HeatShare 800.842.7279

HeatShare provides emergency assistance with heating and utility bills on a year-round basis. Funds are used for natural gas, oil, propane, wood, electricity and emergency furnace repairs.

Note: This handout is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of professional advice or to direct medical treatment decisions. All patient care is the direct responsibility of the treating provider.

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