Thinking Well

Stress Less

You've probably heard countless ways to manage stress: exercise, get enough sleep, talk to a friend, meditate, write things down – the list goes on. But according to Huffington Post blogger Jon Wortmann, before you can even think about managing your stress, there are three things you must do first.

Notice stress
This seems obvious, but sometimes we're so busy or distracted we completely miss our body's signs that we're feeling stressed. Have you been getting a lot of headaches or stomachaches? Does it feel like you're having a panic attack? Has your appetite or sleep schedule changed? Your brain may be telling you something needs your attention. Instead of shaking off or ignoring these signs, consider if they're connected to stress.

Admit you're stressed
This doesn't mean you can't handle what's on your plate. Once you admit you feel stressed, you can begin to focus on what's most important at that moment. Making these kinds of choices can tell your brain to turn down the alarm as you work to get things under control.

Focus on one thing you want to think or feel
If you find yourself in an immediately stressful situation (heart is racing; palms are sweating), focus on the emotion you want to be feeling. Imagine yourself in your favorite location, eating your favorite food, next to someone you care about, or anything that can help you feel calmer quickly. Being able to recall these calming memories in a time of stress can help you work through it and focus instead on what needs to get done.

Focus on the emotion you want to be feeling.

Source: huffingtonpost.com
Healthy Relationships

Looking Inward

Often when we find ourselves unhappy in a relationship, we look at the other person as the problem. Psychologist and author Dr. Sherrie Campbell cautions us to look to ourselves before we look outwardly. She says you should first examine your own role, as you may be contributing to the problem more than you think. Dr. Campbell shares a few tips to help you look inward.

Resist complaining
Instead of resorting to this childlike behavior, have a serious discussion with the other person. Start with how you want things to be rather than expressing dissatisfaction or starting a conversation from a negative place.

Stop defending
Listen to the other person without interrupting and correcting them. If you’re too busy defending yourself without listening, you’ll be closing yourself off to the information the other person is trying to tell you. This makes it hard to connect and understand the other person.

Understand and state your needs
Think about what you really need from the other person in the situation. This is different from what you may want. What is it that’s keeping things from moving forward in a positive direction?

Know your weaknesses
Perhaps you are quick to judge, or maybe you have a short temper. Knowing the areas you need to work on within yourself can help when you run into problems in a relationship. Think about how these weaknesses may be interfering in your relationship, and what you can do to work on them.

Source: huffingtonpost.com

Peak Performance

Maximize Your Lunch Break

How do you spend your lunch break? Do you quickly eat your sandwich while staring at the screen of your phone? Do you devour a salad at your desk while typing? Or do you skip lunch altogether because you have too much to do? Sometimes working hard means we forgo our lunch break in order to get more done. However, we all need energy from calories in our food for our minds to function at their best. Taking a midday break allows you to refuel and re-energize, often making you even more productive when you return. Forbes writer Jacquelyn Smith consulted workplace and career experts and compiled a list of things all workers should do during their lunch break to make the most of their time.

- Take a deep breath to start your break to help you relax and let go of any stress.
- Stopping for two minutes to eat at your desk doesn’t count as a real break. A true recovery break means you aren’t working, so try not to check your email or talk about work during lunch.
- Get up and walk to another room to eat or get outside for some fresh air and a quick walk. The movement can help you clear your mind and energize your body.
- Think of your break as time in your day to enjoy yourself. This could be enjoying your favorite healthy foods or enjoying the company of your friends or co-workers.

Recovering at lunch can make you a healthier, happier and more productive person.

Source: forbes.com
The Art of Money Conversations: EAP Can Help

Talking about money with your partner requires the same skills as having productive conversations about other emotional family topics such as raising kids, dealing with in-laws, and balancing home and work life. Sometimes the tension around money issues leads couples to erupt in frustration and anger. Worse yet, couples may avoid having discussions until there is a serious financial crisis such as overdue payments, home loss or bankruptcy.

Couples can learn how to have productive conversations about difficult issues, including money. Try some of the ideas below.

1. Be willing to surface your concerns in a calm, non-accusatory manner. Speak about your feelings, not what you see your partner doing wrong. If you lead with an accusation, you will rarely get what you want. Try saying something like this, “I’m worried that we are going so deeply in debt. Can we discuss our finances together and see if we can come up with a plan to manage our money better?” Instead of, “You are so selfish and irresponsible. You just go out and buy whatever you want. You don’t care about me!”

2. As a couple, take some time to explore each other’s money history. What was it like when each of you was growing up? What did you learn from your parents’ methods of handling money? Be willing to listen carefully as your partner shares their story. Be willing to share your own feelings about your history and beliefs. This will increase your compassion for your partner’s current situation. Once compassion enters, couples tend to be better mutual problem solvers. For example, you could say, “I’m worried about the level of debt we’re carrying right now. It was so traumatic when my parents and I were evicted from our house. It happened because they got over-extended and couldn’t pay their bills. What was it like for you as a kid?”

3. Try to be clear about what you do want, not what you don’t want. Couples in counseling will frequently tell a counselor, “I don’t want my partner to do “x” anymore; make them stop!” The problem here is that you cannot make someone else change. The only person you have a hope of changing is yourself – and even then, that’s pretty hard. Focus on what you want and consider what changes you can make to increase the odds of that happening. Here’s an example, “I want us to make important financial decisions together. I want both of us to have some guilt-free spending money each month. If we did that, I would be less likely to be grumpy with you about money.”

4. Find goals you both can agree on. Couples rarely sit down to discuss their individual and common goals about money. When you can get clear about your common purposes, you have a better chance of achieving a successful financial relationship. Some possible goals could be paying for the children’s college, being promoted to a higher-paying County job, taking a financial planning class together, retiring at age 60, or taking a long-dreamed-of cruise.

If you would like a safe place to talk about how money, or other sensitive issues, affects you and/or your relationship, call the EAP at 408-241-7772 to schedule a confidential counseling appointment. EAP counselors do not provide specific financial advice; they can help you and your partner talk about the sensitive topic of money in a more positive way. Don’t go through it alone.

Check this out!

EAP has a new informational video. Go to the EAP website at sccceap.org and click on the EAP video to see a 5-minute clip about our services.

Questions? Call EAP at 408-241-7772.
Coach Approach

Distracted Driving

Are you guilty of distracted driving? Most of us are. We use the time in the car to eat, talk on the phone, text, or engage with our passengers. But these activities all require attention that should be devoted to driving, jeopardizing our safety. Avoiding distractions while driving requires a mind-shift that starts before you get behind the wheel.

What’s at stake if you don’t avoid these distractions while driving? It’s probably more than avoiding a missed call or an unanswered text. Perhaps it’s being there for your family or friends.

Your cell phone is one of the biggest distractions and temptations in the car. Take a moment and think about why you use it while driving. Part of avoiding distractions is having a plan in place for these situations. Try this visualization exercise:

You’re driving and just heard the ping of a text message. Where is your phone? Is it next to you where it’s easy to reach, or is it hidden away somewhere that’s harder to get to? Rehearse in your mind what you would do in this situation rather than answer your phone. Maybe you pull over. Maybe someone else in the car can look and respond for you. Or maybe you just train yourself that it can wait. Practice this enough and there will be less temptation when you’re actually behind the wheel because you’ll already know how you’re going to respond.

Think about what a catastrophic accident would mean for your life and for everyone else involved. What would you lose? Now ask yourself if using your phone is really worth the risk. Chances are it’s not.

Source: distraction.gov