

Wellness Newsletter

HELLO SPRING



April 2024

ISSUE #7

“Educate for Wellness, Knowledge for Life”

APRIL

STRESS AWARENESS MONTH



“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”

-William James

Why is it important?

Stress Awareness Month is an important time to pause and reflect on our mental and physical well-being. In our fast-paced world, stress has become a constant companion for people of all ages and backgrounds.

During this dedicated month, we're reminded to prioritize our mental health and pay attention to the signs and symptoms of stress. By increasing awareness, we gain a better understanding of how chronic stress can negatively impact our overall health, including increasing the risk of heart disease, depression, and anxiety.

Through education and support, Stress Awareness Month empowers individuals to adopt healthy coping mechanisms and seek out the resources they need to effectively manage stress.

By taking proactive steps to address stress, we can create communities that promote resilience, productivity, and overall wellness.

PRIORITIZE YOUR HEALTH



Take a walk



Workout

In this newsletter you will find:

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The Hazards of Stress on Your Health

In our fast-paced world, stress lurks around every corner, shaking its silent yet destructive power over our health and happiness. From weakened immune systems to heightened risk of chronic diseases, the hazards of unchecked stress are a ticking time bomb threatening our well-being.

Stress, often brushed off as an ordinary facet of life, can swiftly morph into a silent assailant, wreaking havoc on both your physical and mental well-being. Here's a closer examination of how stress impacts your health:

Physical Health Risks:

- Cardiovascular System: Chronic stress can significantly elevate blood pressure and heart rate, heightening the risk of heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes.
- Immune System: Prolonged stress weakens the immune system, rendering you more susceptible to infections and illnesses.
- Digestive System: Stress can induce digestive issues such as stomach ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and exacerbate conditions like acid reflux and gastritis.
- Musculoskeletal System: Tense muscles, headaches, and body aches are common manifestations of stress, contributing to conditions like tension headaches, migraines, and chronic pain syndromes.

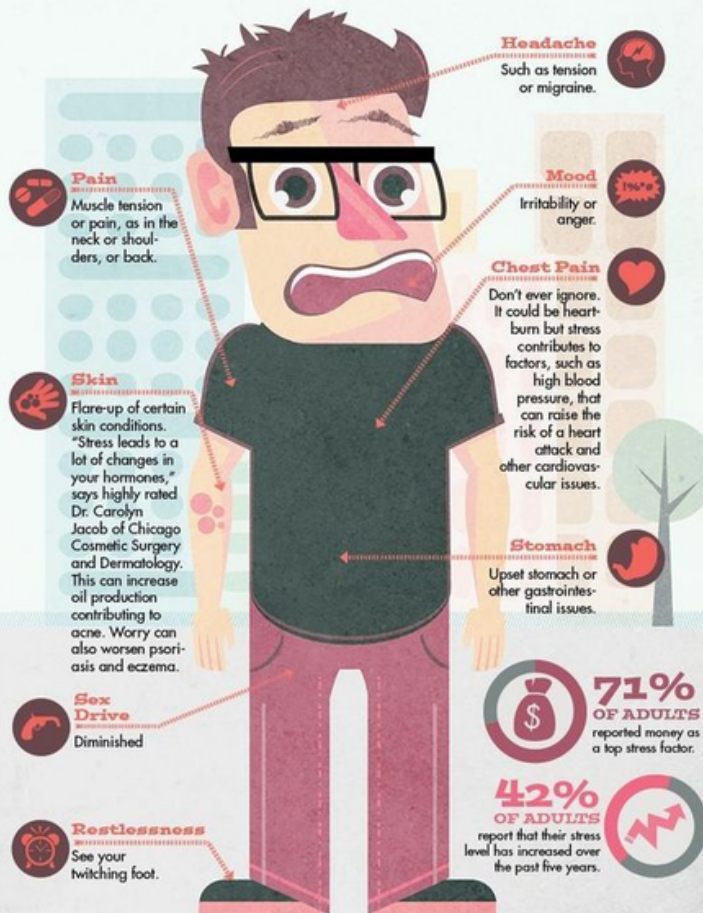
Mental Health Dangers:

- Anxiety and Depression: Chronic stress is closely tied to anxiety disorders and depression, often intensifying existing symptoms and complicating their management.
- Cognitive Decline: Prolonged stress impairs cognitive function, leading to difficulties with concentration, memory, and decision-making.
- Sleep Disturbances: Stress disrupts sleep patterns, resulting in insomnia, fragmented sleep, and poor sleep quality, further exacerbating stress levels and mental health issues.
- Substance Abuse: Individuals under significant stress may turn to substances like alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism, which can lead to substance abuse disorders and worsen mental health problems.

In summary, while stress is an inevitable aspect of life, recognizing its potential hazards is crucial for safeguarding both your physical and mental well-being. By acknowledging these risks, you can take proactive steps to mitigate their impact and foster a healthier lifestyle.

SIGNS OF STRESS: WHERE IT HURTS

STRESS CAN AFFECT body and brain — and behavior. But often the warning signs go unheeded, as momentary freakouts snowball into a life wracked by tension, and take a toll on health. Experts say staying vigilant about common signals and symptoms of unchecked stress serves as a first line of defense. Here's what to mind because you can't just shrug it off:



Other Ways Stress Can Affect You



Stress in the Next Generation



Manager Podcast

Supporting Prevention & Reversal of Burnout in the Workplace



Leaders and employees face multiple stressors and distractions each day at work. This podcast will identify how the workplace can be a source of burnout and become a healthy environment.

Click Here!



If you are a manager/supervisor I encourage you to listen to this podcast. This will give you an idea on how to better help your employees.

Employee Assistance Program Optum

If you are experiencing everyday stressors and need someone to speak with about your emotions. Please remember that we have our Employee Assistance Program (Optum) that is available 24/7 at no cost to you.

Here it was is available to you:

- Face-to-counseling counseling
- Financial coaching from experts
- Legal counseling and mediation services
- Digital self-care tools
- Virtual Visits

To learn more visit liveandworkwell.com
Use company access code: 11040

1-866-248-4104

**8 free sessions are
available per reason**



Stress Response - How does our body react to it

STRESS ON THE BODY

SHORT-TERM STRESS RESPONSE

- Increased Heart Rate
- Increased Blood Pressure
- Liver Converts Glycogen to Glucose and Releases it into the Blood
- Changes in Blood Flow (decreased digestive system activity)
- Increased Metabolic Rate

LONG-TERM STRESS RESPONSE

- Retention of Sodium and Water by Kidneys
- Increased Blood Volume and Blood Pressure
- Proteins and Fats Converted to Glucose for Energy
- Increased Blood Glucose
- Suppressed Immune System

HEALTHIER REACTIONS OR WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS INCLUDE:

- Meditating
- Practicing gratitude
- Going for a walk
- Listening to calming music
- Journaling
- Letting go of what is beyond our control

SOME TYPICAL UNHEALTHY REACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Overeating or undereating
- Sleeping too much
- Smoking, drinking too much or using drugs
- Watching endless hours of TV
- Lashing out at others
- Withdrawing or isolating

Stress refers to two things: the perception of danger and the body's automatic response to it. Two simple ways to manage stress are to first, change the way we think about the situation, so it is not perceived as stressful, then second, practice a healthy response to the stressor.

Many people feel a continuous struggle with stress and anxiety. All too often people turn to unhealthy behaviors in attempt to relieve the tension they feel. Becoming aware of how you typically respond to stress can help you make healthier choices.

JUST
breathe



Mini Meditation - Breathing Exercise



1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down.
2. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in through your nose, allowing your abdomen to expand as you inhale.
3. Hold your breath for a moment, then slowly exhale through your mouth, feeling your abdomen deflate.
4. Continue this pattern, focusing on the rhythm of your breath. Try to make your exhales longer than your inhales, as this can activate the body's relaxation response.
5. As you breathe, try to let go of any tension or worries with each exhale, allowing yourself to feel more calm and centered with each breath.

Practicing deep breathing for just a few minutes each day can help reduce stress and promote a sense of relaxation and well-being.

10 Ways to Cope with Stress



Recognizing stressful situations as they arise is crucial as it enables you to focus on managing your reactions effectively. Knowing when to pause, close your eyes, and take a deep breath as tension builds is essential.



1. Achieve Work-Life Balance

Avoid excessive work hours by intentionally scheduling time for leisure activities, whether alone or with loved ones.



2. Prioritize Regular Exercise

Engage in physical activity to balance your nervous system, enhance blood circulation, and reduce stress hormones. Even a brief 20-minute daily walk can have a significant impact.

3. Maintain a Healthy Diet and Limit Stimulants



Opt for nutritious meals, incorporating organic fruits and vegetables, while minimizing processed foods, sugar, and stimulants like caffeine and nicotine.

4. Foster Supportive Connections

Seek face-to-face interactions with empathetic individuals who can alleviate stress through active listening and emotional support.



5. Dedicate Time to Hobbies



Partake in activities that bring joy and relaxation, such as gardening, reading, or listening to music, to reduce stress and promote emotional well-being.

6. Embrace Relaxation Techniques

Practice meditation, or mindfulness to induce a state of calmness, counteracting the body's stress response. Utilize deep breathing exercises and visualization to promote relaxation.

7. Ensure Adequate Sleep



Prioritize seven to nine hours of sleep nightly, maintaining a consistent bedtime routine and creating a conducive sleep environment.

8. Cultivate Meaningful Connections

Nurture relationships with friends, family, or pets, as social interactions can significantly alleviate anxiety and stress levels.

9. Schedule Periodic Breaks or Vacations



Take time away from routine responsibilities to recharge and rejuvenate, leaving behind electronic devices for uninterrupted relaxation.



10. Seek Professional Support

If negative thoughts persist and hinder positive changes, consider consulting a counselor or therapist to address underlying issues and enhance overall well-being. Your health and happiness deserve attention and care.



Journaling for Stress Relief

Managing stress is crucial for our well-being. Journaling serves as a valuable tool for stress management, aiding in identifying stressors, processing emotions, and developing coping strategies. Let's delve into how journaling can be a therapeutic outlet for effectively dealing with stress.

Instructions:

Materials Needed

- Journal or notebook
- Pen or pencil
- Optional: colored pens, markers, stickers, or any other creative materials

1. Setting the Scene:

Begin by finding a quiet and comfortable space where you won't be interrupted. Take a few deep breaths to center yourself and prepare for the journaling session.

2. Reflecting on Stressors:

Open your journal and dedicate a page to listing down stressors in your life. These could be anything causing you anxiety, frustration, or tension. Reflect on various aspects of your life such as work, relationships, health, finances, etc. Write down each stressor as it comes to mind, without judgment.

3. Analyzing Stressors:

Once you've identified your stressors, take some time to analyze each one. Ask yourself:

- Why does this particular thing cause me stress?
- Is it something within my control or beyond it?
- How does it affect me physically, emotionally, and mentally?
- Are there any patterns or common triggers among my stressors?

4. Coping Strategies:

Next, brainstorm coping strategies for each stressor. Consider both short-term techniques for immediate relief and long-term solutions for addressing the root cause of stress. Some coping strategies may include:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Meditation or mindfulness practices
- Physical activity or exercise
- Setting boundaries or saying no
- Seeking support from friends, family, or a therapist
- Time management and prioritization
- Healthy lifestyle choices such as proper nutrition and adequate sleep

5. Creating a Stress Relief Plan:

Based on your analysis and coping strategies, formulate a stress relief plan. Outline specific actions you can take to manage stress more effectively in your daily life. Set realistic goals and commit to implementing your plan consistently.

6. Expressive Journaling:

Now, use the remaining pages of your journal to engage in expressive writing about your experiences with stress. Write freely about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to stress. You can also use creative techniques such as drawing, doodling, or collage-making to express yourself visually.

7. Reflect and Review:

At the end of your journaling session, take a moment to reflect on your insights and experiences. Review your stressors, coping strategies, and stress relief plan. Consider how journaling has helped you gain clarity and perspective on managing stress.

**CHANGE YOUR
THOUGHTS
AND YOU'LL CHANGE
YOUR WORLD**

Positive
THOUGHTS

Featured Recipe of the Month

CUCUMBER-CHICKEN GREEN GODDESS WRAP



Ingredients

- 1 ounce cream cheese, at room temperature
- ¼ medium avocado, mashed
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice or rice vinegar
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs such as parsley, dill and/or basil
- 1 (8 inch) whole-wheat tortilla
- ¼ cup shredded cooked chicken
- 2 tablespoons shredded carrot
- 6 thin slices cucumber
- ½ cup mixed salad greens

Directions

Stir cream cheese, avocado, lemon juice (or vinegar), salt and pepper together in a small bowl. Add herbs and stir until well blended. Spread the mixture evenly on tortilla. Top with chicken, carrot, cucumber and greens, then roll up like a burrito.

Ingredients

- 3 cups whole-milk plain Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup or honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cups sliced strawberries
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips

Directions

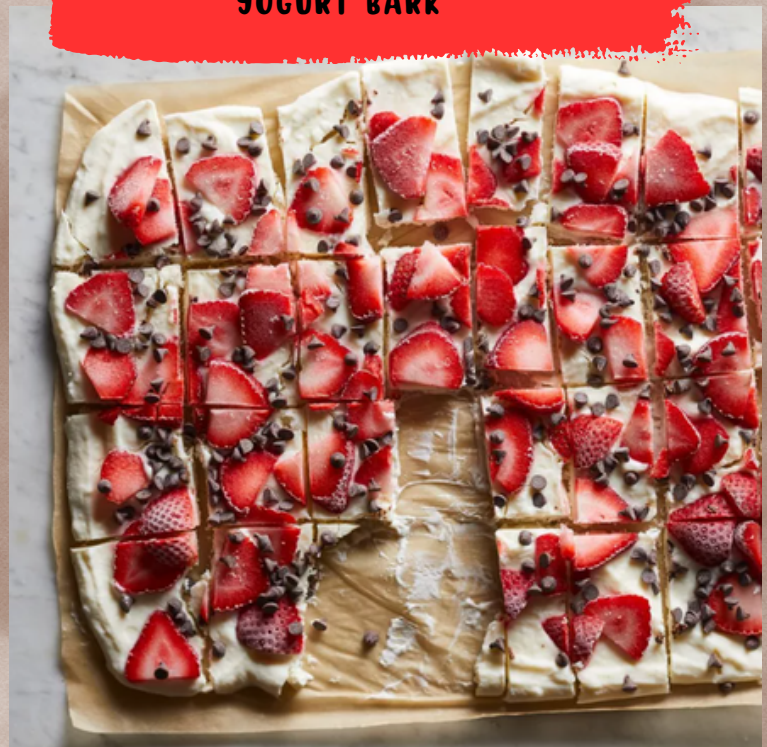
Step 1 -Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

Step 2 -Stir yogurt, maple syrup (or honey) and vanilla in a medium bowl. Spread on the prepared baking sheet into a 10-by-15-inch rectangle. Scatter the strawberries on top and sprinkle with chocolate chips.

Step 3 -Freeze until very firm, at least 3 hours. To serve, cut or break into 32 pieces.

Sweet Treat of the Month

STRAWBERRY-CHOCOLATE GREEK YOGURT BARK





Health Tip of the Month

Journal

There are lots of documented benefits to journaling including improved mental well-being and better organization of thoughts. If you're going through a crisis or just the daily challenges of life, journaling is an effective way to track symptoms and feelings to learn how to better explore your emotions.

Quote of the Month

"Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Optimism is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely."

-Roy T. Bennett



Attention!!!



Health and Wellness Fair

Thursday, April 25th 2024
11AM -1PM

Mezz & Santa Cruz Conference Rooms

Join us and don't miss out on the opportunity to explore all the Wellness vendors!

Come and indulge in a relaxing chair massage as part of our Wellness program.



Fitness Tip of the Month

Move More



- When you take a break, move to a different room or floor, and stretch versus sitting in place.

- If you sit at a desk, make it a habit to stand up or move every time you make or answer a phone call. March in place, or pace in a circle to keep moving. Stand up and walk around at least once an hour.

CONGRATULATIONS

Nancy Juarez

San Gabriel Pastoral Regional Office

Thank you for joining the wellness webinar!

