

MY first responder newsletter

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Stress Tips from the Field: The Magic of "Me-Time"

“Me-time” is that period you set aside for yourself to experience relaxation and personal fulfillment—stress management, exercise, meditation, or nothing at all. Me-time requires detaching from stressors and responsibilities so you can recharge. Don't let me-time happen by chance during a lull in your schedule. Instead, make it a regular part of your day or week. It can reduce stress, prevent burnout, and give you a boost, knowing that something enjoyable, fun, fulfilling, and uplifting—just for you—is soon at hand. This stress management technique is called “anticipatory coping” or “positive anticipation.” A near-future enjoyable activity becomes stress relief by giving you something to look forward to. This delivers emotional relief and motivation in the present to help you tolerate current stress more easily.

Sneak Exercises into Your Workday

At your desk, a chair, the stairs, and waiting time can be your best friends for sneaking exercise into your day. Here's how: 1) Take the stairs instead of the elevator to boost your heart rate and strengthen your legs. 2) Do periodic squats in front of your desk. 3) Strengthen your arms by doing “chair pushups.” 4) Set a timer for quick five-minute walks several times a day, which is also a great drowsiness zapper and focus improver. 5) Try a walking meeting vs. the conference room. These five exercises add up, won't interrupt your workflow, and may improve productivity.

Learn more at
<https://greenschoolsgreenfuture.org/excessive-internet-use-disrupts-key-parts-of-the-teen-age-brain>

Intervening in Parental Burnout

Just like workplace burnout, parental burnout is a state of chronic physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. However, its cause stems from the relentless demands of parenting. Mid-fall, when home, work, school, and community activities pull in all directions, it can feel nearly impossible to catch your breath. Parental burnout can manifest as feelings of emotional detachment from your children, going through daily routines on autopilot, increased irritability, or a sense of inadequacy, as if you're falling short of being the parent you want to be. You also might find it more difficult to join in your interactions with children. Talk to your FRAP about burnout and taking control of a downward spiral, and discover solutions you can use now and in the future.

Nix Procrastination with the Five-Minute Rule

The “five-minute rule” is a tool to help you stop procrastinating and act on a task that you have been postponing. The idea is to take just five minutes to start a task or make progress on a decision. By setting a small, manageable time limit, you reduce the overwhelming feeling that often comes with larger tasks or choices. In effect, you are breaking a deadlock with yourself. Once you start on the task, you might just continue past the five minutes. The five-minute rule can be used either for small decisions or for big ones that are prone to “decision neglect,” which is a more serious form of procrastination of things like starting a will or seeing a doctor for a serious symptom or a medical condition.

Diversity and Inclusion Tips: Recognize Your Unconscious Bias

Enhance your workplace environment by becoming aware of your "unconscious biases." These biases are automatic assumptions or judgments we make about others, often influenced by past experiences, stereotypes, or beliefs we've absorbed over time. Recognizing them can lead to a more inclusive and positive workplace. It can be difficult to recognize your own biases because they are often automatic and subconscious. However, there are four common workplace interactions where you're more likely to notice biased thoughts or actions as they happen: 1) When listening to a coworker, are you assigning less or more value to their input or comments based on differences? 2) When organizing a social gathering, are you avoiding including those who differ from what is dominant in your group—or if they are included, do you feel awkward and less genuine and authentic in your social interactions? 3) When giving feedback to a coworker or team member, do you offer more constructive praise or less constructive praise based on differences? 4) When working with others, do you form a team or workgroup with those who are more like you?

Guard Your Emotional Well-being as a Caregiver

If you're a caregiver for a loved one, physical exhaustion may be a concern, but are you overlooking the importance of your emotional well-being? Your primary focus is often on physical tasks like feeding, bathing, and medical care, which can create a sense of "caregiver tunnel vision," where the emotional toll on you is easily overlooked. To prevent burnout and maintain your health, reach out to your first responder assistance program for guidance on managing stress and staying at your best for those you love. Some symptoms of burnout you might experience include detachment, feeling indifferent or unable to emotionally connect, or feeling like you are just going through the motions of meeting the needs of your loved one. You may feel trapped, helpless, or overwhelmed by the demands of caregiving. These emotions are normal, but it's important to recognize them early. The key is to avoid reaching a point of emotional exhaustion where you lose the desire to care for your loved one—an unfortunate possible outcome of one of life's most challenging and rewarding roles. Seek support when you need it, and remember that taking care of yourself is also a way of taking care of your loved one.

Will Exercising More Add Years to Your Life?

Many people have wondered, "How much longer will I live by exercising the recommended weekly amount of time?" The 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends "adults do at least 150 minutes to 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes to 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity." A recent study examined the exercise practices of 116,000 adults, with participants answering survey questions 15 times over the course of 30 years. Results: You may reduce your risk of mortality due to any cause by 35%-42% if you engage in both vigorous- and moderate-intensity exercise combined, which would be 300-450 minutes per week. However, with the recommended 150-300 minutes of moderate exercise, mortality risk would be reduced by 22%-31%. Always seek guidance from your doctor prior to beginning an exercise program.

Source: www.ama-assn.org [search "massive study uncovers"]

Get More Rejuvenated on Your Vacation

Don't undermine your ability to rejuvenate and revitalize yourself when you go on vacation. View a vacation as a type of necessary therapy rather than strictly a recreational event, and as something that can improve your well-being, functioning, and quality of life. Avoid these pitfalls that reduce a vacation's positive impact: 1) Feeling guilty about being away and unable to relax unless you "check in." 2) Not planning a "bridge day" to ease back into the fray. (Use this time to take care of personal and family needs before jumping back into work.) 3) Not taking long enough vacations. To experience true detachment, you need more than an extended weekend. 4) Staying "plugged in" by routinely engaging with decisions back at the office. 5) Feeling anxious when leaving, because you did not plan well for being away and letting go.