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Your EAP news

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

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10 tips for a healthy holiday season

'Tis the season to make health and safety a priority! Here are simple steps to help you stay healthy and joyful throughout the holidays:

- 1. It's not only the holidays** — it's also flu season. Help prevent the spread of germs by washing your hands often and using soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. And make sure everyone 6 months and older gets a flu shot every year.
- 2. Schedule exams and screenings.** Make the new year the year you stay on track with your health.
- 3. Manage stress.** Remember, you don't have to overload yourself with holiday events. Put limits on what you can do and how much you can spend. And give yourself a gift of relaxation by getting plenty of sleep.
- 4. Don't take a vacation from your healthy lifestyle.** Always get your fruits and vegetables, limit your portion sizes and choose foods low in fat, salt and sugar. Also, be active for at least 2½ hours a week, and help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.
- 5. Choose not to drink and drive,** and help others do the same. Call a ride service if you're toasting the holidays.
- 6. Stay dry and warm.** Break out the hats, gloves and waterproof boots.
- 7. Make it a smoke-free holiday.** Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke. And encourage loved ones who smoke to kick the habit for the new year. They can't hear it often enough.
- 8. Buckle up every time,** no matter how short the trip — and make sure passengers do the same.
- 9. Practice fire safety.** Most home fires happen during the winter months, so don't leave fireplaces burning, space heaters running, food cooking on stoves, or candles left alone.
- 10. Prepare food safely.** Wash hands and surfaces often, avoid cross-contamination, cook foods to proper temperatures and refrigerate foods as soon as you're done eating.

Strength against stress: building resilience in a changing world

You've heard the saying, "The only thing constant is change" — but sometimes, all that change can be stressful. The good news: You can overcome those stresses by building up your resilience.

Step 1: Know if stress is affecting you.

The first step to managing stress is to recognize that it's affecting you. Try to understand how you react to stress. Do you have any of these common reactions to stress?

- Anxiety or excessive worry
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Depression
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Indigestion
- Dry mouth
- Irritability
- Crying
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- An increased desire to use drugs, tobacco or alcohol

Once you recognize these symptoms, you can figure out whether or not they're caused by stress. Keep in mind that some of these symptoms may be brought on by issues other than stress. Check with your doctor if symptoms last.

Step 2: Identify your sources of stress.

The next step to building resilience is to understand what is causing stress. Ask yourself, what are the things in your life that make you stressed? Are you concerned about changes in the home like a health condition, parenting challenges, money issues or relationship problems? Is your stress coming from changes at your job, like too much work, new tasks or management, new deadlines or unrealistic expectations?

Write a list of the things that are causing you stress, and then, you can take steps to overcome them.

Step 3: Building resilience.

Once you realize you have signs of stress, how can you overcome that? There are several actions you can take to build your resilience and bounce back in the face of challenge.

Connect with others. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you can strengthen your resilience. Reach out to loved ones, support groups, counselors, faith-based groups and other resources, like Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Realize that you can overcome problems. Try looking beyond what's going on now to put challenges in perspective. Will this event change everything? If so, how will it change? And what do you need to do as a result? Feel empowered and you can take on anything.

Accept that change is a part of life. Whether it's a change in a relationship, a new job or a new challenge in life, recognize the benefits of change. And accept those things you can't change. That way, you can focus on solutions.

Set realistic goals for positive change. Find a few areas that can help you become healthier and happier overall, and work toward them. Taking 10,000 steps a day, eating five servings of fruits and vegetables daily — these are things you can do, even if other things seem out of your control.

Take decisive actions. Look at those parts of the situation you do have control over, and take steps to deal with them.

Ask yourself how this will make you a better person. Change can help us discover new things about ourselves. Give yourself credit for dealing with so much challenge. Recognize the strength you've gained.

Stay optimistic. Great things will happen in your life. Celebrate every day!

Practice stress management techniques. If you feel stressed, take steps to deal with it:

- Take a brisk walk.
- Work out.
- Get a change of scenery.
- Practice deep breathing techniques.
- Meditate.
- Practice yoga.
- Listen to music.
- Turn off your phone.
- Get some rest, eat well and take care of you!

American Psychological Association, *The Road to Resilience* (Accessed August 2018): apa.org.



Energy savers for your wallet and your health

You want your family to stay healthy and comfortable. An energy-efficient home plays a role in that. By having a home that uses energy wisely, you'll not only save money, you'll also help support a healthier planet and a happier home. Follow these easy, low- or no-cost tips for saving energy:

- Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's drying cycle.
- When you're not in a room, turn off the lights, TV, computer and monitor.
- Plug home electronics into power strips, and turn the power strips off when the equipment is not being used (TVs and DVDs in standby mode still use several watts of power).
- Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120°F.
- Use low-flow showerheads and limit your shower time.

- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes — and reuse towels and other items as much as you can.
- Air-dry clothes.
- Make sure windows and storm windows are closed when you're heating or cooling your home.
- Use light bulbs, home appliances, electronics and other products that have the ENERGY STAR® label on them. They make a huge difference.

Another health benefit of being energy efficient: Saving money can lower stress!

U.S. Department of Energy, *Energy saver: Tips on saving money and energy in your home* (October 2017): https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/10/f37/Energy_Saver_Guide-2017-en.pdf.





Aging well

You can't help getting older — but how well you age often depends on how well you treat yourself. Even people in their 90s can benefit from healthy activities. So follow these tips to grow older in good health:

1. **Move!** With your doctor's help, set up an exercise routine. Strength training with weights, walking and swimming can help improve balance and overall health for people of all ages.
2. **Keep your mind moving, too.** Read, learn a new language, do puzzles, play games or sing songs. An active mind is a healthy mind.
3. **Eat a well-balanced diet.** Think of food as medicine. It has tremendous healing powers!
4. **Connect with others.** Spend time with family and friends, and reach out often.
5. **Stay positive!** A bright outlook on life can make every day amazing.

Workplace Options. *Aging successfully.* (Reviewed 2017). Raleigh, NC: Author. workplaceoptions.com.



Important: This document is intended for general information only. It does not provide the reader with specific direction, advice, or recommendations. You may wish to contact an appropriate professional for questions concerning your particular situation.

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