



City of Boston
Employee Assistance Program
FrontLine Employee
www.cityofboston.gov/EAP

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Your Resource for Solutions

Reducing Stress During the Holidays

Holidays can be exciting, but reducing stress continues to remain a common concern for many people. Holiday decorations, nostalgia, memories, and commercialization can easily paint an unrealistic picture of what your family get-together and experience should look like. Caution! Holiday excitement and anticipation are healthy and renewing things, but if anxiety and pressure to perform and get everything “perfect” are taking the cheer out of your season, then here’s a tip: Use perfection and vision as guides for what you do, not as performance measures for how well you succeed in taking it all on.

Walk at 3 MPH!

Walking for exercise is getting plenty of research attention—right down to the recommended miles per hour! A recent study of people averaging 73 years of age showed a 50% decrease in cardiovascular disease for those who walked 3 mph versus those who walked only 2 mph. The group of 4,207 walkers were followed for ten years. Walking longer also produced similar results for those walking 7 blocks versus 5 blocks. “Even late in life, moderate physical activity such as walking is linked to lower incidence of cardiovascular disease,” commented the author, Luisa Soares-Miranda, Ph.D. “It appears that if one increases the total distance or the pace of walking, CVD risk is lowered.”

Source: <http://now.tufts.edu> (search: “walking faster”).

Surviving a RIF

A reduction in force (RIF) creates fear, disruption, and uncertainty. It’s natural to fear whether one will find another job, but if a RIF happens to you, your first step is to manage the stress, shock, and loss with self-care, like exercise, sleep, relaxation, good meals, and time with your loved ones. These steps are keys to a positive outcome. These steps also help you build resilience necessary to manage the stress of change. Taking charge in this way will better prepare you for discovering a new job or career.

Domestic Violence and Job Performance

Ninety-six percent of employed domestic abuse survivors say domestic violence affected the ability to do their job. If you are a victim of domestic violence, you may be inclined to minimize the abuse, hope for the best, or hold on to a definition of abuse that perhaps doesn’t include your situation. Experiencing little or no physical abuse may contribute to this “comparing out” of the definition. The key question: Does your partner exercise power over you and control your life, or have you *seriously* wondered whether you are in an abusive relationship? If so, talk to counselor, EAP, or the police, but take that very first step toward a happier life.

Source: <http://workfamily.sas.upenn.edu> (search “domestic violence fact sheet”).

Light Boxes Versus Counseling for Seasonal Affective Disorder

Millions of people suffer with seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a mood disorder associated with depression and related to seasonal variations of light. Discovered 35 years ago, the condition affects over 4% of the population in the United States and upwards to 20% of Canadians at some point in their lives. Only about 1.5% of Floridians experience the condition. Use of a light box (easily purchased online) to increase the amount of daily exposure to light has been a recommendation of the American Psychiatric Association for some time now, but don't rule out talking to a counselor. It works well too, and possibly better, according to the first ever comparative study of the two approaches. Researchers at the University of New Hampshire found that cognitive-behavioral therapy (a practical counseling approach to personal change) helped defuse and overcome negative thoughts that fuel depression. Counseling teaches problem-solving skills and different ways to think, and it can prepare you to act and respond to similar problems in the future. A light box does help about 70% of people overcome SAD, but if you don't get the relief you want, don't rule out some old-fashioned talk therapy.

Source: www.uvm.edu (search "talk outshines" and Mood Disorders Association of Ontario).

Avoid a Digital Kidnapping

Identify theft typically means stolen financial information, hassles battling credit agencies, or legal nightmares. But there is a different and scarier type of identity theft—digital kidnapping. Almost anything posted online can be exploited, and children's photos are not immune. Both medical and parenting organizations are cautioning parents to think twice about posting children's photos online. "Digital kidnapping" describes the phenomenon of stealing or copying photos of children found on social media and photo-cataloging sites (Facebook, Instagram, Photobucket, etc.), and then storing these photos and/or using them for illicit purposes. In one survey, nearly two thirds of parents reported being concerned that strangers would learn private information about their child or download photos of them, *but they still posted images*. Some perpetrators have been found to have stolen photos, claimed to be the parents, and then gave the children in the photos fictitious new names.

Learn more at www.parenting.com (search "digital kidnapping").

How to Stay Calm in a Crisis

Whether you witness a catastrophic event or discover that you must give an unprepared speech in the next 30 seconds, crises happen. And regardless of magnitude, the "recipe" for responding to any of them is the same. The first step is the most important—avoiding panic and emotional confusion by staying in the moment and focusing only on what is directly in front of you. This is easier said than done, because most crises instill immediate fear—fear of what's coming next. If you can detach quickly from this dynamic, you experience clearer solution-oriented thinking, even in the midst of utter confusion. The next steps—a decision about what action to take and taking that action—follow. You don't need Navy SEAL training to learn these skills. Your practice opportunities come with common events—a flat tire, an overdue bill, a burst pipe, a failed test, a cut finger, or a wedding band down the bathroom drain. Your success with these smaller events will prepare your reflexes for bigger ones yet to come.

Count Bites, Lose Weight

Is it too simple? New research found people who counted bites over a month's time lost roughly four pounds—just about what the CDC recommends for "healthy" weight loss. Those in the pilot test counted the number of bites they took each day and then committed to taking 20 to 30 percent fewer bites over the next four weeks. Participants who stuck with the task saw *results despite changing nothing else about their eating and exercising routine*. "This study confirms what we already knew: consuming less food makes a difference," said lead study author Josh West. "We're not advocating people starve themselves; what we're talking about is people eating less than they're currently eating."

Source: <http://home.byu.edu> (search "count bites").