

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

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Deer Oaks EAP Chat
Sessions now have audio!

January 2012
Chat Topic:
Financial Stress

Every month, you will have the opportunity to chat on-line with a trained counselor. These live chats are held from 12:15-12:45 PM & 6:00-6:30 PM CST.

Our Deer Oaks counselor now has the capability to conduct the live chat session in audio and all participants can respond via text.

Come Join Us!

January 2012

At A Glance

National Blood Donor Month
January 1—31st

Contact www.AABB.org for
more information

National Birth
Defects Prevention Month
January 1—31st

Contact www.nbdpn.org for
more information



Ease Anxiety

Anxiety disorders affect millions of people and are the most common mental illness in the United States. According to the Anxiety Disorders Association of America website, there are a number of effective therapies and exercises available to treat the symptoms of anxiety. Self-help exercises that you can practice to lessen the symptoms of your anxiety include guided meditation, breathing exercises and relaxation exercises.



Guided Meditations

Meditation is a practice that is highly praised by business executives, religious leaders, spiritual healers and everyday people. The difference between guided and unguided meditation is that guided meditation gives you a kind of script to follow while you meditate. You are given visual clues, encouragement and techniques to control your breathing and ease your stress. Guided meditations can help you cope with anxiety as the technique has been shown to reduce the heart rate, create a sense of calm and well-being, and promote a positive self-image. The resources section at the end of this article provides links to websites that offer guided meditations for you to use at your leisure. When doing a guided meditation, remember you only need about five to ten minutes. If you're suffering from anxiety, it is helpful to try a meditation before entering into a situation that you find stressful, such as being around large groups of people or being in a small area.



Breathing Exercises

According to the article "5 Simple Exercises for Managing Anxiety" by Therese J. Borchard, breathing from your diaphragm creates a sense of well-being and calm. For this reason, when you begin feeling anxious, focus on slowing down your breathing and pushing that air deeper into your lungs. This will ease your rising tension and help you bring yourself back to the present. HolisticOnline.com's article "Breathing Exercises" suggests you stand with your feet shoulder width apart and inhale slowly while raising your hands above your head. Exhale, and turn your hands up toward the sky. Inhale once more and slowly rotate your hands back toward the ground, and slowly lower your arms while feeling the air rush out from your nostrils. You can repeat this exercise in sets for more effectiveness, as the technique forces you to focus on your breathing and your body, keeping your attention away from your worries.

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Deer Oaks EAP Services, your Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks at:

1 (210) 614-2273 (210) 615-8880

eap@deeroaks.com

www.deeroaks.com

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Continued: Ease Anxiety



Relaxation Exercises

The MayoClinic.com article "Relaxation Techniques" presents a number of relaxation techniques you can use when you feel your anxiety levels rising. You should also consult your physician or a

mental health professional to give you additional tips and techniques, especially if you begin feeling uncomfortable or distressed while performing these techniques.

You can use visualization to reduce anxiety by imagining yourself in a serene environment. Visualization is a somewhat misleading term, because although you imagine what the place looks like, you also involve all of your senses and imagine what the place feels and smells like. For example, if your place of serenity is an open field looking out over a green valley, you'd not only see the valley but also smell the slightly sweet scent of clover in the air, and you'd feel the wind running softly against your skin. Initially, you may have difficulties making the "image" stick, but relaxation exercises take practice; the more you do them, the stronger they'll be. You can also try progressive muscle relaxation, in which you tense up groups of muscles (such as your upper arm muscles) and slowly relax them. You can do this throughout your whole body starting with your feet and ending with your face. (You may be surprised how much tension you carry in your face.) Progressive muscle relaxation can also help you fall asleep if anxiety makes it difficult for you to fall asleep.

By Ashley Brooks

EAP Spotlight

24/7 Access

You have access to a live person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year for telephonic support.



Resolve to Quit Smoking

Manufactured to be addictive, cigarettes and other tobacco products are often difficult to eliminate from your life once the addiction is established. But, the physical, social and financial reasons to quit are so many in number that few smokers haven't tried to quit at one point or another. It's possible to quit successfully with a few well-supported steps.

1. Create a plan and choose a quit date. If you are taking an antidepressant to help you quit, most doctors recommend that you take the medicine for two weeks before quitting.
2. Tell everyone you know that you are going to quit and on what day. This will give them fair warning if you don't seem yourself right after you quit, and it will encourage you to keep your word.
3. Gather as much support as you can. Try to convince your spouse or partner or a friend to quit with you. Join a support group online or find one in your area.
4. Remove all smoking paraphernalia on your quit day. Throw away any leftover cigarettes, ashtrays and lighters.
5. Keep yourself occupied at all times for the first few days. Go to restaurants where smoking is not allowed, play a sport, work on hobbies. Remember that the cravings will be frequent, but they do not last that long.
6. Celebrate quitting milestones. Promise yourself something new if you can go two days, a week, a month without smoking. Use the money you would have otherwise spent on cigarettes.
7. Focus your attention on quitting smoking, not maintaining your weight. Diet before or after you have quit, but not for the first three months. Allow yourself the few extra pounds. They are healthier than the cigarettes.

Contact Deer Oaks EAP for additional support to help you kick the smoking habit. We offer telephonic support, counseling, and access to numerous other resources.

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Make Your New Year's Resolution Attainable



Most people have good intentions when they make their New Year's resolutions. Keeping New Year's resolutions is often difficult for even the most well-intentioned individual. Follow a few simple steps to help you keep your New Year's resolutions this year.

1. Give careful consideration to your New Year's resolutions. Do not go with the first resolutions that come to mind. It might seem like a good idea to go with one of the common resolutions such as losing weight or paying off debt, however, those resolutions might not be the best choices for you. Think about what you truly want to achieve during the New Year.
2. Consider making smaller New Year's resolutions to help you achieve a larger goal. You are more likely to keep your New Year's resolutions if they are designed to be a step towards a larger dream or goal. For example, instead of making a resolution to lose 25 lbs. in the new year, make a resolution to lose a few extra pounds in the first few months of the new year.
3. Talk about your potential New Year's resolutions with family and/or friends. They can help you to pinpoint the most ideal resolutions for you. Talk to your loved ones who are the most open and honest with you. They are more likely to give you an objective opinion on which resolutions you are most likely to attain and to determine which resolutions would be most beneficial to you in the new year.
4. Choose a New Year's resolution that you feel that you can keep. If your New Year's resolution for the past 3 years has been to pay off your credit card and it has not yet happened, then that might not be the best resolution for you. Give serious thought to which goals you feel in your heart you can achieve rather than those resolutions that you have your heart set on achieving.
5. Verbalize your prospective New Year's resolution or resolutions to yourself and to friends. Saying your goals out loud will help you to set out on a path to achieving those goals. Letting others in on the secret of what resolutions you have chosen will help you want to achieve those resolutions.

Marissa Black; www.ehow.com



Matters of the Heart *Family History of Early Heart Attack*

Q: My father, 57, just had his second heart attack. I am 34 and a little overweight. What steps should I take to make sure my heart is OK? Should I ask my doctor for specific tests?

A: Parental history of coronary heart disease is indeed a risk factor. And if your parents had coronary heart disease before the age of 60, you are at a higher risk of developing arterial plaque buildup, which underlies most heart disease.

At age 34, it is important that you live a heart-healthy lifestyle and get screened for the risk factors of heart disease. This means getting your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol checked on a yearly basis. If there are abnormal results, your doctor may recommend more frequent monitoring.

In addition, make sure to be physically active, eat a heart-healthy diet, avoid tobacco products and secondary smoke, and maintain a healthy weight.

Because of your family history, your doctor may also order a simple noninvasive test, such as a carotid ultrasound or a heart scan, to look for early signs of heart disease or evidence of asymptomatic heart disease.

It is important to realize that despite your family history, you can decrease your chances of heart disease by leading a heart-healthy lifestyle and identifying and controlling as many of the standard risk factors as possible.

Jennifer H. Mieres, M.D., is director of nuclear cardiology and associate professor of clinical medicine at New York University. She's also a spokeswoman for the American Heart Association.

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Auto Care Means Fewer Repairs



A vehicle is the most important and expensive piece of machinery most people own. Excluding loan payments, it costs an average of \$9,519 to drive a car. Protecting your investment and keeping the cost of car ownership down can be easy if you perform regular maintenance and safety check-ups. On the other hand, waiting until problems arise can prove to be costly. In fact, maintenance and tires cost an average of about 5 ½ cents every mile you drive.

To keep your car running smoothly and safely, you should:

- **Check your tires.** Weather changes greatly affect your tires so they should be inspected each season. For example, a normal pressure during the summer months could become dangerously low in the winter time. Even if your city enjoys a mild climate year-round, many tires have slow leaks. Since front and rear tires wear at different rates, you will also want to have your tires rotated every 5,000 to 10,000 miles. The time may be worth the effort since the price of one new tire can be well over \$100.

- **Change your oil.** When oil gets old and dirty, it loses its ability to stick to engine surfaces, causing excess wear and tear on engine parts. Experts agree that you should change your oil and filter every 3,000 to 5,000 miles. This fast and inexpensive maintenance can save you thousands in engine repairs. During each oil change, ask the mechanic to also perform a belt and hose inspection.
- **Top off your fluids.** Most people notice when their windshield washer fluid is low; however there are many other fluids that your car needs to operate safely. Power steering fluid, brake fluid, engine coolant, and automatic transmission fluid should always be clean and full.
- **Maintain your brakes.** AAA recommends that you have your brakes inspected every 6,000 miles or at every other oil change. You should also have your breaks inspected if you begin to hear or feel scraping or grinding during braking. A little TLC can prevent you from needing a new ABS (Anti-lock Brake System) which can cost more than \$1,000.
- **Stock your emergency kit.** In case of a break-down, you should always keep emergency supplies in your car. At a minimum, your kit should include tools, flairs, jumper cables, a first aid kit, and a flashlight.

Most important, don't assume that just because the car is running that everything is fine. Keep your eyes open for fluid leaks and irregular smells or noises. Taking the time to make sure that your car is in top condition is the best way to protect your investment while keeping your travels safe.

Kim McGrigg, March 2, 2011

About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.