

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

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Deer Oaks EAP Chat
Sessions now have audio!

December 2011
Chat Topic:
Thinking Positively

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!

December 2011

At A Glance

**National Aplastic Anemia and
MDS Awareness Week
December 1st—7th**

Visit
www.aamds.org
for more information

**World Aids Day
December 1st**

Visit
www.worldaidsday.org
for more information



Exercise Your Brain

Your brain is a magnificent thinking organ. The human brain is able to adapt continuously based on your perception and actions. In fact, even in old age, your brain can grow new neurons. Mental stimulation improves your cognitive function and protects your brain against cognitive decline, which can result in age-related memory losses or motor skills. You can keep your brain healthy and fully functioning by incorporating brain stimulating exercises into your daily routine.



Sudoku

Sudoku puzzles are fun and addicting, as well as excellent exercise for the brain.

Sudoku is a numbers game, not a math game. The game is simple: place the numbers in squares and fill all the blank squares in the game with the correct numbers using your logic, reasoning and memory skills. The Sudoku grid is a 9-by-9 square in which every row of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order, every column of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order and every 3 by 3 subsection of the square must include all digits 1 through 9. No numbers should cross paths with each other. This cognitive game can be played by children and adults.

Chess

Chess is a fun and strategic game capable of keeping the brain sharp. Chess is a strategy game that has been played for many decades and is enjoyed by millions of people worldwide at every age and at every skill level. This thinking game is a highly effective way to keep your brain in shape and healthy, since it is built upon a system of reward and punishment. You must make moves with your pieces to take your opponents without losing them in turn. Attention is critical in chess and can teach you to maintain attention in long-term activities. A lack of attention can punish you and your pieces with a potential checkmate against you.

Scrabble

Scrabble is fantastic at getting your mind to think of good words with the pieces you have. This game is also a classic like chess and has been played by millions worldwide. This brain game's premise is each player receives letters

More Tips to Stimulate the Brain

- Try new activities that require memorization of complex steps
- Use your less dominant hand more often
- Practice Neurobics, a system developed as a way to use your five senses in new ways daily
- Try a video game that has been designed to help exercise your brain

randomly from a bag. The player must then create a word out of the letters given to him and what is on the board. The bigger or better the word, the more points. Players can build upon their dictionary and keep their brains thinking by playing Scrabble with you and your friends.



Crossword Puzzles

Crossword puzzles are a fun way to stimulate your cognitive thinking. These puzzles challenge your language and memory areas. Crossword puzzles are ideal since you can do them daily in the newspaper or online. You can even pick up a magazine full of different crossword puzzles focused on different genres. They also range in difficulty from easy to expert, which can allow you to continuously challenge yourself if you find your current puzzle too easy.

Jay Waltz, April 2011.
www.ehow.com

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 (866) 327-2400

eap@deeroaks.com

www.deeroaks.com

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Depression vs. Burnout



Depression and burnout are one-and-the-same in the minds of many. While the two have some symptoms in common, depression and burnout are two different conditions with different prognosis. Depression is a clinically-diagnosed mood disorder. Burnout is a stress-induced state. While they are separate conditions, individuals experiencing prolonged, unrelieved burnout, run the risk of developing depression.

Definition

Clinically diagnosed depression is a mood disorder in which an individual cannot experience pleasure. Depression sufferers experience intense sadness. In contrast, burnout is a state in which an individual has feelings of exhaustion often combined with doubts about personal ability and self-worth.

Symptoms

Depression is often characterized by hopelessness, fatigue, insomnia, disinterest, withdrawal and recurrent thoughts of death. Burnout has some similar symptoms, including fatigue and withdrawal, but is distinguished by feelings of failure, self-doubt and helplessness.

Factors

Clinically diagnosed depression can have a number of contributing factors, including chronic illness, genetic predisposition, and environmental elements. Burnout has been tied to overwhelming and extended stress, often resulting from job strain and other high-demand work and life situations.

Treatment

Individuals with clinically diagnosed depression are often treated with antidepressant medications and psychotherapy. Individuals experiencing burnout may often just need to make stress management and lifestyle changes to alleviate symptoms.

Prognosis

Clinically diagnosed depression usually occurs in episodes that can last anywhere from a few weeks to months. Depressed individuals may experience four or more episodes in their lifetime. Burnout, in contrast, ends when the individual implements positive lifestyle changes.

Christine Switzer



Matters of the Heart

Almost one in five adults has high triglycerides (a form of bad cholesterol). Help lower your unhealthy cholesterol numbers the natural way by eating the right foods and making the right choices. Here are some healthy swaps to get you started.

- **Instead of:** Sugar-frosted, honey-dipped, or chocolate cereal
Choose: 100-percent whole grain cereals, such as shredded wheat, Total, Kashi, or oatmeal; fat-free milk; and 1 tablespoon of chopped almonds
- **Instead of:** Cookies
Choose: One handful of unsalted nuts (about 10-12 nuts) with a cup of tea, fat-free milk, or water
- **Instead of:** Potato chips
Choose: 10 Soy Crisps crackers or carrots with 2-3 tablespoons hummus
- **Instead of:** Spaghetti and meatballs
Choose: Whole grain pasta primavera with broccoli, onions, carrots, and peas lightly sautéed with garlic and olive oil
- **Instead of:** Roast beef on rye with mayo
Choose: Turkey breast on whole grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard
- **Instead of:** Soda or fruit drinks
Choose: Flavored seltzers, diet sodas, fat-free milk or low-fat soymilk, tea

For more tips and information, please visit www.hearthealthyonline.com

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Make Relaxation a Habit



We live in stressful times. People are trying different relaxation techniques with increasing popularity to ease the stress of everyday life. Enjoy the benefits of de-stressing by practicing how to relax. Incorporate a few simple changes into your daily routine and create habits to relieve stress. Relaxation can reduce the levels of toxins that contribute to many major diseases. Read on to learn.

- *Practice relaxation techniques.* Breathing techniques relax the mind and body. Sit quietly in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and relax all of your muscles starting with your feet and slowly moving to each area until you reach your face. Slowly inhale and exhale deeply through your nose. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. Alternate between flexing and relaxing your muscles.
- *Listen to calming sounds every day.* Whether the sounds come from your satellite radio, CDs, iPod, MP3 player or from the sounds of your own musical instrument. Choose music or sounds that are relaxing and reduce stress. Use this method during your commute to and from work, at lunch time, in the office while working or at night to help unwind from the day's activities. Combine the music with breathing techniques to increase your relaxation.
- *Obtain visuals to encourage relaxation and positive affirmations.* Visit a relaxation website to download visually stimulating relaxation DVD's, music and scenery. Go to a bookstore and peruse the self-help section to find materials that teach and promote relaxation.
- *Purchase a massager for your neck, back, feet and shoulder.* Try portable massagers. Many are designed to apply pressure to a specific part of the body to stimulate relaxation. Incorporate breathing techniques to increase the relaxing effect.
- *Make an herbal or botanical wrap.* Use wraps in conjunction with aromatherapy. Purchase a yard of fabric, preferably fleece, cotton or a natural fiber. Cut it in a 24-by-20 inch rectangle. Sew or use fabric glue to adhere the sides. Leave one end open. Fill with dried beans or rice. Add an essential oil like lavender, chamomile or eucalyptus. Sew or glue the open end together. Use the wrap hot or cold. Wrap it around your neck and shoulders.
- *Select a cold or hot wrap.* Place the wrap in the refrigerator or microwave and put it on the part of the body that is tight or sore from tension. Combine the technique with deep breathing, aromatherapy, and massage oils to help penetrate deep into the muscles and provide soothing relief.
- *Use an aromatherapy shower gel, lotion or body butter to calm and relax.* Orange, lemon and peppermint are invigorating scents that naturally energize. Use calming scents like chamomile or lavender to relax and de-stress the body naturally.
- *Move your body.* Try physical exercises like yoga, dance or martial arts which teach controlled movements, breathing and relaxation.

http://www.ehow.com/how_2067770_make-relaxation-habit.html



EAP Spotlight Financial Services



Sticking to a budget can be even more difficult during the busy holiday season. Contact us for a free 30-minute consultation with a certified financial planner, who can help with a wide range of topics from debt management to retirement planning. Visit our website for budget templates, resources for combating identity theft, and much more!

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8 Free Ways to Thank the Party Host



The year may be winding down, but the parties are just getting started. Right now, your friends, family, and neighbors are probably busy planning their costume parties, Thanksgiving feasts, and holiday celebrations. And they would like the honor of your presence.

We all know that hosting a party can be costly, but it can also be expensive to be a partygoer. For example, many guests spend significant amounts of money on new clothing and childcare during the fall and winter months. Another expense that some consider necessary, but is often overlooked is the cost of gifts to thank your hosts.

Since budgets can become particularly tight during the holiday season, it's important to carefully watch the amount of money you spend on unplanned gifts. Thankfully, there are many ways to show your appreciation for being welcomed to a celebration without spending any money at all. Following are eight free ways to thank a party host:

1. **Re-gift.** Take a look around to see what you already have that the host might enjoy. For example, it is perfectly acceptable to re-gift an unopened bottle of wine.
2. **Bring food.** Many hosts welcome guests to bring a dish to share. Ask the host what they want or need beforehand so you don't duplicate efforts or clash with their theme.
3. **Help out.** Offer to help the host by bringing needed items like extra chairs or silverware. You could also offer to help other guests with their coats or tend the bar for a while so your host can mingle.
4. **Share talents.** Do you enjoy arranging flowers or putting playlists together? If so, offer to share your talent for the party. Busy hosts often forget to take photos, so consider volunteering as the event photographer.
5. **Corral the kids.** If the party is an adults-only affair, you can offer to hire a babysitter or two to watch kids at your home during the party. If kids are invited to the event, bring along a game or movie to help keep them entertained.
6. **Dog sit.** Unless the hosts have a properly trained pooch, their dog will likely be a party pest. Offer to put their pet in your yard during the party. Or even better, have their pet spend the night at your house.
7. **Clean up.** When a party's over, the hosts are left with wonderful memories and a big mess to clean up. Stay late to help take out the trash or do dishes. If you can't stay late, offer to come back in the morning to lend a hand.
8. **Write a note.** In addition to thanking your host when you leave, drop off a thank you note a few days later. It will be a nice reminder of the wonderful time you had together.

Next time you are invited to a party, take a little time to think about how you would like to thank the host. Your thoughtful gift will mean more to them than anything you could buy at the store.

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.