



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

November 2024

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



Keep Calm and Enjoy the
Holiday Season

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Keep Calm and Enjoy the Holiday Season

The holidays are approaching, which means cooler weather, cozy sweaters and—for many of us—a rise in stress. “Will life become so hectic that I can't enjoy the holidays? How will I buy what I need to buy and not overspend again this year? How will I ever get everything done that I need to do? How many pounds will I gain this year? Will the family get along?” The list could go on and on, but all these questions, if left unaddressed, lead to stress. Rest, relax and reflect on the meaning of the season.

During the holidays, when stress can really take its toll, people tend to neglect doing those things that reduce stress. You may overindulge in food and drink, and leave such things as rest, relaxation and exercise out of your daily life. Make it a goal to change that this holiday season. Be realistic about the types and amounts of foods you choose. Avoid sugary and fat-laden snacks that may give you a quick boost but will be followed by a drop in energy.

Holiday stress is often caused by unrealistic expectations. Set some time aside for yourself to examine what you're really looking for during the holidays. Everyone can use a reminder to think about their own needs for this time of the year and not focus on what they've come to believe they should do. It is not your responsibility to be sure that everybody has a perfect holiday.

Some people look forward to the holidays all year, while others dread them. Don't worry, we've got you covered with tips to help you stay balanced:

- **Practice Positive Self-Talk** Boost your confidence with a powerful self-affirmation session.
- **Set Boundaries for Holiday Planning** Say “no” when you need to, and protect your time and energy.
- **Get Outside and Soak in the Season** Take a moment to get outside and enjoy the weather.
- **Check in with Your Emotions** Take time to assess how you're feeling.

Think about what is causing your stress, and make a plan to change the pressures you may be putting on yourself. By taking small steps to manage your stress, you can enjoy the best of the holiday season—without all of the anxiety.

If you are experiencing stress this holiday season, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is here to help. Access your benefits by calling 800-245-1150 or by visiting www.behavioralhealthsystems.com.



The Relationship Between Stress and Communication

Stress is a common part of everyone's life. Simply put, it is how our body reacts to something that is currently happening or has happened to us in the past. This reaction can cause physical and/or mental strain.

Communication Stress can easily manifest itself through communication. When someone is stressed, they may become frustrated or angry more easily. When emotions run high, a person can have a difficult time choosing the correct words.

Alternatively, when a person feels stressed, they might decide to withdraw from communication and become more reclusive. This withdrawal from friends and family can create a barrier between the person and the help and support they might need. Public speaking is also a cause of stress. This stressor can trigger a fight or flight response, leading to the person avoiding public speaking or interacting with crowds.

Identifying Causes of Stress It's important to understand the source of stress. It might not be easy to understand where it's actually coming from. It's not uncommon to have to cope with high levels of stress without knowing its source.

Not everyone has the same "stress triggers." While school or work tasks might cause some stress, stress might manifest itself in social situations for others. Once your specific triggers are identified, you can start assembling a plan to manage them.

Increase Communication Occasionally, there will be times in our lives when no one is able to help with our stress. Often, stress can be reduced with proper communication with others.

At work, communicate your stress with your boss. Discuss your responsibilities and expectations. While your work load may not lessen, the conversation might help find clarity and also create an awareness of your stress.

In relationships, communicating early is crucial to avoiding stress with friends, spouses and other loved ones. It's easier to express emotions and thoughts early, opposed to letting a situation escalate.

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Balanced Meal Planning Tips

A plan for healthy eating includes knowing how much food your body needs. And then eating that amount, no more and no less. Two measurements can help you do this: serving size and portion size.

Serving size A serving is the amount of a food or drink that people typically take in. You'll see the serving size on nutrition labels for packaged food. The label also tells you things like how many calories or grams of fat are in that serving of food. Fresh food, such as broccoli or meat, has a serving size too. Of course, fresh foods may not have labels, but you often can find out the serving size for these items on the internet.

Portion size A portion is the amount of a food that you choose to put on your plate or in your cup. For example, a serving size of broccoli is 1 cup. You may choose to dish out a portion size of more than 1 cup. The portion size that is best for you depends on how many calories and nutrients you need.

Variety, the spice of dinner Having a variety of foods on your plate gives you more options and can make for a healthier meal. A meal consisting of a large steak with mashed potatoes could total 1,500 calories and only come from two food groups. Instead, a smaller steak paired with brown rice, grilled vegetables, fruit, salad and skim milk could total around 700 calories.

Plate planning It all comes back to the plate. Every meal is an opportunity to give your body a wide range of nutrients. Eating a healthy variety of foods, over time and in the right amount for you, is one step towards disease-free living.

Filling your plate To get the most benefit for your body, fill your plate with foods that have a lot of nutrients. Go for grains that are less processed. Choose a wide range of vegetables and fruits. Fill a quarter of your plate with healthy protein like beans, soy, chicken or turkey without the skin.

RECIPE: Easy Caramel Apple Dump Cake • 5 Minute Prep Time • 45 Minute Cook Time

Ingredients • 40 ounces apple pie filling • 1/3 cup caramels diced into small bits (or Kraft caramel bits) • 1 box yellow or white cake mix • 2 sticks salted butter 16 ounces, melted

Instructions • Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. • Prepare a 9x13" cake pan or baking dish with cooking spray. • To the prepared dish, add apple pie filling. Sprinkle caramel bits over the top. • Next, layer dry cake mix over the top, smoothly with a spatula. • Finally, pour the melted butter over the top of the dry cake mix. Do not stir. • Bake for 45 minutes.

