

# Weekly Wellness Tip

## Managing Stress – Part II

Last week's wellness tip addressed managing stress through relaxation techniques, including deep breathing, meditation, visualization, and getting the left and the right sides of the brain to communicate. This week's tip addresses additional methods of managing stress. When you're under stress, it's important to take care of yourself. Set aside time for activities you enjoy. Also, make sure you get enough sleep and consider using the following methods to manage stress.

### Healthy eating

One good way to use nutrition as a stress management tool is to follow the "80/20" rule. If 80 percent of what you eat is healthy, with a nutritious, low-fat mix of vegetables, fruit, and grain products, you can allow yourself to eat what you want for the other 20 percent. Regardless of whether you follow that rule, it's important to eat in moderation, avoid foods with a lot of salt and sugar, limit caffeine and alcohol, and drink plenty of water. This can help you keep stress under control.

### Moderate exercise

Regular exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress and improve your mood. You can ease tension with vigorous activities like brisk walking, running, swimming, or cycling. Stretching exercises can help relieve tense muscles and improve your body's flexibility. Be sure to avoid overexertion as you are getting started. Ask your doctor what would be healthy for you. Look for a level of exercise that's safe, comfortable, and enjoyable, and that you'll be able to sustain over time.

### Positive thinking

Most of us are our own toughest critics. Positive thinking involves paying attention to the negative messages we often send ourselves, and then turning them around to be more positive. By replaying deep-rooted (and generally untrue) negative messages to ourselves, we reinforce them. Positive thinking replaces these internal messages with more positive (and truer) statements that make us feel better.

### Social support

Research shows that companionship – time spent with friends sharing thoughts and feelings – makes you feel better and has a significant effect on your health. Exercising with a friend, finding people who share a hobby, or getting back in touch with friends or family members can all help you build a healthy social support network. Those connections can form an important defense against stress.

### Expressing emotions

Writing about your feelings and emotions has been shown to be an effective way of releasing tension and relieving stress. Studies show that people who spend time writing about feelings and their reactions to traumatic events are less likely to feel anxious and depressed about them. If you're worried about something, try taking a few minutes to write down your thoughts. It can free your mind to move on to other things.

Source: LifeWorks

### Employee Assistance Program

All employees have access to our free, confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Phone calls are unlimited and can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Additionally, if an in-person referral is made through the EAP, the first three visits are covered at 100%. To access the EAP, call 888.887.4114 (UnitedHealthcare members) or 800.854.1446 (all employees).