



Dartmouth College
Faculty & Employee Assistance Program
603-646-1165

HEALTHY

EXCHANGE

Dedicated to providing quality confidential assistance to employees and or their families who may be experiencing difficulties that impact their lives

SUMMER 2010

For Your Information

BETTER SLEEP

If you find your mind racing while trying to go to sleep, keep a pad of paper next to your bed and jot down what's on your mind. If you find yourself unable to sleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed, go into another room and engage in a calming activity until you feel ready to sleep.

HEADACHE PREVENTION

Concentrating on your computer screen for a long time can cause eyestrain which in turn can cause temporary head pain and fatigue. Take occasional "eye breaks" by looking away from your computer screen and into the distance. This will give your eyes relief.



EASE FINANCIAL STRESS

Help get financial stress under control by curbing your spending. For most people, overspending and having too much debt is the cause of money problems – it is not because they are not making enough money. Learn basic money management skills. Commit to living within your means.



Living a Healthier Lifestyle

Healthier Ways to Manage Stress

According to the latest *Stress in America* survey conducted annually by the American Psychological Association, 75 percent of Americans reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress in the past month (24% extreme, 51% moderate) and nearly half reported that their stress has increased in the past year (42%). Additionally, the study respondents reported the following as a result of stress:

- 47% report lying awake at night due to stress
- 45% report experiencing irritability or anger
- 43% report being fatigued
- 40% report lack of interest, motivation or energy
- 34% report headaches
- 34% report feeling depressed or sad
- 32% report feeling as though they could cry
- 27% report upset stomach or indigestion as a result of stress



What about you? Are you aware of the stress in your life? Do you manage stress in healthy or unhealthy ways?

Stress dangers

Stress is the tension or pressure we feel as a result of the demands, hassles, frustrations and upsets of daily life. Some stress is positive. It causes our bodies to release stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, which rouse the body and brain to meet challenges. But at a certain point, when too much stress becomes constant and persists over an extended period of time, stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to your health.

Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. According to the American Institute of Stress, 75 to 90 percent of all health problems are related to stress. How well you manage the stress in your life is vitally important to your health, your mood, your relationships, your productivity and your quality of life.

Healthy strategies for managing stress

Stress becomes a problem when the pressure from stress exceeds your ability to cope. If you are feeling overwhelmed by stress, you can start taking control of the stress in your life by following the suggestions below:

- 1. Ask yourself: What specific problems or conflicts are troubling me and how can I deal with each of these problems effectively?**

Rather than focusing on how to cope with stress, answering this question will put you on course to prevent or eliminate much of your stress by helping you determine the root cause(s) of your stress. To lower the amount of stress in your life, become aware of your

Healthier Ways...

Continued from front page

stressors and your emotional and physical reactions to stress. Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Determine how your body responds to stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset? If so, in what specific ways? Think about when, and why, you feel stressed. Devise ways to change, manage or avoid the problems that trigger your stress.

2. Identify the ways you "think" yourself to higher levels of stress.

Stress is a product of the mind and therefore something you can control. Stress isn't something that happens to you, but rather how you think about what is happening, or what has happened. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it worse? Are you overreacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you worry about things that are out of your control? Do you feel you have to be perfect all of the time? Simply put, stressful thoughts cause stress. Work at adopting more moderate views. Put stressful situations in perspective.

3. Increase your ability to withstand stress

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical and emotional health:

- Avoid using alcohol, caffeine or nicotine as a means of alleviating stress.
- Exercise regularly to dissipate stress energy and lift your mood.
- Unleash tension or worry by sharing your feelings with a close friend, family member or counselor.
- Practice relaxation daily. Try deep breathing, yoga, meditation, imagery, listening to quiet music, being in nature, or prayer.
- Get at least 7 hours of sleep nightly.
- Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals. Reduce consumption of refined sugars, which cause frequent fluctuation in blood glucose levels, increasing your stress.

Getting Help

If you're having difficulty coping with stress, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. A professional EAP counselor can help you address the cause(s) of your distress and help you learn effective ways to deal with stress. Why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help you.

Helping A Friend Or Family Member In An Abusive Relationship

Watching a family member, friend or colleague going through an abusive relationship is difficult and frustrating. The National Domestic Violence Hotline advises the following for effectively helping a family member or friend who is being abused:



Don't be afraid to let him or her know that you are concerned for their safety. Help your friend or family member recognize the abuse. Tell him or her you see what is going on and that you want to help. Help them recognize that what is happening is not "normal" and that they deserve a healthy, non-violent relationship.

Acknowledge that he or she is in a very difficult and scary situation. Let your friend or family member know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure him or her that they are not alone and that there is help and support available.

Be supportive. Listen to your friend or family member. Remember that it may be difficult for him or her to talk about the abuse. Let him or her know that you are available to help whenever they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen to them.

Be non-judgmental. Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. He or she may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize his or her decisions or try to guilt them. He or she will need your support even more during those times.

Help him or her develop a safety plan.

Encourage him or her to talk to people who can provide help and guidance. Find a local domestic violence agency that provides counseling or support groups. Offer to go with him or her to talk to family and friends. If he or she has to go to the police, court or a lawyer, offer to go along for moral support.

Remember that you cannot "rescue" him or her. Although it is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately the person getting hurt has to be the one to decide that they want to do something about it. It's important for you to support him or her and help them find a way to safety and peace.

Get advice. If you want to talk to someone to get advice about a particular situation, contact a local domestic violence program or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224. NDVH is a nonprofit organization that provides crisis intervention, information and referral to victims of domestic violence, perpetrators, friends and families.



Faculty & Employee Assistance Program Services

Provided by Dartmouth College for you and your family members

The Faculty Employee Assistance Program (F/EAP) is a free, confidential, professional counseling service for members of the Dartmouth College faculty and staff and their families. The FEAP may be used to address work-related or personal conflicts, including relationship or family problems, substance abuse, stress, and legal or financial concerns. We also provide consultation services for supervisors and departments, as well as maintain a resource directory.

For FREE confidential counseling and consultation call: 603-646-1165

E-Mail: FEAP@Dartmouth.EDU

Web: www.dartmouth.edu/~eap