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BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. OCTOBER NEWSLETTER



Mental Health Awareness Week October 2-8, 2016

Rethinking Mental Health

When we think of the phrase 'mental health,' we often picture the opposite of those two words — we picture the stigma of mental illness. As a society, we view mental health and mental illness as a dichotomy — placing them on two separate ends of a spectrum, assuming that we are either mentally healthy or mentally ill. But we can visualize a new association for this phrase by defining 'mental health' exactly how it sounds, as the health of our minds.

We all experience times of feeling really put together and healthy and times of feeling beaten down and mentally unhealthy. Mental health is truly a continuum—with fluidity and movement occurring on a daily basis. Therefore, focusing on our mental health is simply about setting an intention to move the notch on that proverbial continuum toward a healthier mind; to understand that no matter where we currently fall on this continuum — we all have room to become mentally healthier.

We ALL need a little help sometimes.

No one is completely immune to the inner workings of the mind. The experience of occasionally feeling mentally unhealthy is universal. Once we see this, we might be more willing to let someone in so we can navigate the harder times together. We may recognize that there is beauty in unity and understand that we are not alone in our experiences.

We could finally welcome the need for a mental break — or a mental health day to rejuvenate.

Just as we might see a doctor if we aren't feeling physically healthy — we recognize that we could see a therapist if we aren't feeling mentally healthy. Also, we could make some time for meditation, yoga, or another practice that promotes mental clarity, and provides relief from our thoughts. If we could remove the stigma surrounding mental health and show that yes, highs and lows are a part of life, good days and bad days make us human, and struggles and insecurities are okay, then maybe, just maybe, we will be more inclined to ask for help. Help at a time that could be life changing, maybe even life saving.

Times when we want to shut down and isolate are the times when we need to own up to our stuff and let it out, to free ourselves of the build up that occurs when our negative thoughts and emotions manifest. So choose to see mental health as an opportunity for mental wellness in yourself and in others, to recognize that as a continuum — it can shift from one day to the next. Choose to accept that all of us, no matter how put together we might seem, can devote more intentional energy to maintaining mental health and wellness, reaping the benefits of making peace with the ebb and flow of our mental states.

BY ALISSA LASTRES, [The Huffington Post](#)

If you have concerns regarding your mental wellness, your EAP is here to help.
Call your Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150.

How to be Happy

Tips for cultivating contentment at home and at work



Only a small percentage of the variation in people's reports of happiness can be explained by differences in their circumstances. It appears that the bulk of what determines happiness is due to personality and — more importantly — thoughts and behaviors that can be changed. So, yes, you can learn how to be happy — or at least happier.

People who are happy seem to intuitively know that their happiness is the sum of their life choices, and their lives are built on the following pillars:

- ▶ Devoting time to family and friends
- ▶ Appreciating what they have
- ▶ Maintaining an optimistic outlook
- ▶ Feeling a sense of purpose
- ▶ Living in the moment

If you've been looking for happiness, the good news is that your choices, thoughts and actions can influence your level of happiness. It's not as easy as flipping a switch, but you can turn up your happiness level. Here's how to get started on the path to creating a happier you.

Invest in relationships

Surround yourself with happy people. Being around people who are content impacts your own mood. And by being happy yourself, you give something back to those around you. Build up your emotional account with kind words and actions. Be careful and gracious with critique. Let people know that you appreciate what they do for you or even just that you're glad they're part of your life.

Express gratitude

Gratitude is more than saying thank you. It's a sense of wonder, appreciation and, yes, thankfulness for life. It's easy to go through life without recognizing your good

fortune. Often, it takes a serious illness or other tragic event to jolt people into appreciating the good things in their lives. Don't wait for something like that to happen to you. Let gratitude be the last thought before you go to sleep. Let gratitude also be your first thought when you wake up in the morning.

Cultivate optimism

Develop the habit of seeing the positive side of things. You needn't become overly optimistic— after all, bad things do happen. It would be silly to pretend otherwise. But you don't have to let the negatives color your whole outlook on life. Remember that what is right about you almost always trumps what is wrong. If you're not an optimistic person by nature, it may take time for you to change your pessimistic thinking. Start by recognizing negative thoughts as you have them. Then take a step back and ask yourself these key questions: Is the situation really as bad as I think? Is there another way to look at the situation? What can I learn from this experience that I can use in the future?

Find your purpose

People who strive to meet a goal or fulfill a mission — whether it's growing a garden, caring for children or finding one's spirituality — are happier than those who don't have such aspirations.

Having a goal provides a sense of purpose, bolsters self-esteem and brings people together. What your goal is doesn't matter as much as whether the process of working toward it is meaningful to you.

Ask yourself these questions to discover how you can find your purpose:

- ▶ What excites and energizes me?
- ▶ What are my proudest achievements?
- ▶ How do I want others to remember me?



Eating Better on a Budget

9 Tips to Help Stretch Your Food Dollars

Get the most for your food budget. There are many ways to save money on the foods that you eat. The three main steps are planning before you shop, purchasing the items at the best price, and preparing meals that stretch your food dollars.

1. Plan, plan, plan! Before you head to the grocery store, plan your meals for the week. Include meals like stews, casseroles, or stir-fries, which stretch expensive items into more portions. Check to see what foods you already have, and make a list for what you need to buy.
2. Get the best price. Check the local newspaper, online, and at the store for sales and coupons. Ask about a loyalty card for extra savings at stores where you shop. Look for specials or sales on meat and seafood—often the most expensive items on your list.
3. Compare and contrast. Locate the unit price on the shelf directly below the product. Use it to compare different brands and different sizes of the same brand to determine which is more economical.
4. Buy in bulk. It is almost always cheaper to buy foods in bulk. Smart choices are family packs of chicken, steak, or fish, and larger bags of potatoes and frozen vegetables. Before you shop, remember to check if you have enough freezer space.
5. Buy in season. Buying fruits and vegetables in season can lower the cost and add to the freshness! If you are not going to use them all right away, buy some that still need time to ripen.
6. Convenience costs—go back to the basics. Convenience foods like frozen dinners, pre-cut vegetables, and instant rice, oatmeal, or grits will cost you more than if you were to make them from scratch. Take the time to prepare your own and save!
7. Go easy on your wallet. Certain foods are typically low-cost options all year round. Try beans for a less expensive protein food. For vegetables, buy carrots, greens, or potatoes. As for fruits, apples and bananas are good choices.
8. Cook once, eat all week! Prepare a large batch of favorite recipes on your day off (double or triple the recipe). Freeze in individual containers. Use them throughout the week, and you won't have to spend money on take-out meals.
9. Get your creative juices flowing. Spice up your leftovers—use them in new ways. For example, try leftover chicken in a stir-fry, over a garden salad, or make chicken chili. Remember, throwing away food is throwing away your money!

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. (2011, December). from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

A healthy workplace is one where individuals feel valued and supported, provides a positive workspace, and shows respect for other aspects of a person's life. If you're uncertain as to whether your workplace is on the path to wellness, the signs below may provide some helpful tips:

- ▶ **Productive Atmosphere.** Offer a clean, functional and well-lit space. Promote good working relationships with all staff. Ensure employees feel respected, appreciated, incentivized, and rewarded. Signs of intimidation, bullying, sexual harassment, and fear should be absent.
- ▶ **Livable wage.** Providing a livable wage encourages a committed and sustained workforce.
- ▶ **Reasonable accommodation.** Employers and employees have to work collaboratively to identify reasonable accommodations (not special treatment) in the workplace for physical as well as mental disabilities. From changing physical work space and schedule to the use of interpreters or technologically adapted equipment, it can run the gamut.
- ▶ **Health, Wellness, & Environment.** Provide a comprehensive health insurance plan including smoking-cessation, weight-loss, and substance abuse programs.
- ▶ **Open Communication.** Keep the communication process transparent. Creating an environment of open communication contributes to a more energetic and productive workforce where all employees can feel invested in the company.
- ▶ **Employee Accountability.** It takes two to make a healthy workplace. Employees have to come with a "can-do" attitude and be willing to support each other as well as management.



- ▶ **Management Accountability.** Allow employees to provide work-related feedback to their supervisors. It can be anonymous to avoid the possibility of negative repercussions.
- ▶ **Work/Life Balance.** We now live in a world where technology is available to keep us connected to work around the clock. Work options such as flexible scheduling, hoteling or telecommuting could be implemented if applicable.
- ▶ **Clear & Positive Values.** Be transparent and definitive about what the organization stands for. People inside and outside of the company should have a good understanding of this.
- ▶ **Fitness.** Offer a gym membership, fitness class or even just an exercise space that encourages employees to become physically active and stay fit. If possible, incentivize employees to access such services.

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/workplace-wellness>

Apple Corn Muffins



Ingredients:

- ▶ 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ▶ 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
- ▶ 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- ▶ 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ▶ 1/4 teaspoon salt
- ▶ 3/4 cup fat-free milk
- ▶ 2 egg whites
- ▶ 1 apple, peeled and coarsely chopped
- ▶ 1/2 cup corn kernels

Nutrition:

Serving size: 1 muffin
 120 calories; 1 g fiber;
 4 g protein; 127 mg sodium
 < 1 g total fat; trace cholesterol

Instructions:

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners.
- ▶ In a large bowl, combine flour, cornmeal, brown sugar, baking powder and salt. Stir to blend evenly.
- ▶ In a separate bowl, combine milk and egg whites. Add chopped apple and corn kernels. Whisk to mix evenly and pour over the flour mixture. Stir gently until the dry ingredients are slightly moist. The batter will be lumpy.
- ▶ Fill prepared muffin cups 2/3 full and bake about 30 minutes. Tops of muffins should spring back to the touch when they're baked.