

Solutions

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Stress Tips from the Field: The Magic of “Me-Time”

“Me-time” is that period you set aside to experience relaxation and personal fulfillment—stress management, exercise, meditation, or nothing. Me-time requires detaching from stressors and responsibilities so you can recharge. Don't let me-time happen by chance during a lull in your schedule. Instead, make it a regular part of your day or week. It can reduce stress, prevent burnout, and give you a boost, knowing that something enjoyable, fun, fulfilling, and uplifting—just for you—is soon at hand.

This stress management technique is called “anticipatory coping” or “positive anticipation.” A near-future enjoyable activity relieves stress by giving you something to look forward to. This delivers emotional relief and motivation in the present to help you tolerate current stress more efficiently.

Intervening in Parental Burnout

Like workplace burnout, parental burnout is a state of chronic physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. However, its cause stems from the relentless demands of parenting. Mid-fall, when home, work, school, and community activities pull in all directions, it can feel nearly impossible to catch your breath.

Parental burnout can manifest as emotional detachment from your children, going through daily routines on autopilot, increased irritability, or a sense of inadequacy, as if you're falling short of being the parent you want to be. You also might find joining in your interactions with children more challenging. Talk to your EAP about burnout and taking control of a downward spiral, and discover solutions you can use now and in the future.



Nix Procrastination with the Five-Minute Rule

The “five-minute rule” is a tool to help you stop procrastinating and act on a task that you have been postponing. The idea is to take just five minutes to start a task or make progress on a decision. Setting a small, manageable time limit reduces the overwhelming feeling that often comes with larger tasks or choices. In effect, you are breaking a deadlock with yourself. Once you start the task, you might continue past the five minutes. The five-minute rule can be used for small or big decisions prone to “decision neglect,” which is a more severe form of procrastination of things like starting a will or seeing a doctor for a severe symptom or a medical condition.

Diversity and Inclusion Tips: Recognize Your Unconscious Bias

Enhance your workplace environment by becoming aware of your “unconscious biases.” These biases are automatic assumptions or judgments about others, often influenced by past experiences, stereotypes, or beliefs we’ve absorbed over time. Recognizing them can lead to a more inclusive and positive workplace. It can be challenging to identify your own biases because they are often automatic and subconscious.

However, there are four everyday workplace interactions where you’re more likely to notice biased thoughts or actions as they happen:

- 1) When listening to a coworker, are you assigning less or more value to their input or comments based on differences?
- 2) When organizing a social gathering, are you avoiding including those who differ from what is dominant in your group—or if they are included, do you feel awkward and less genuine and authentic in your social interactions?
- 3) When giving feedback to a coworker or team member, do you offer more or less constructive praise based on differences?
- 4) When working with others, do you form a team or workgroup with those who are more like you?

Guard Your Emotional Well-being as a Caregiver

If you’re a caregiver for a loved one, physical exhaustion may be a concern, but are you overlooking the importance of your emotional well-being? Your primary focus is often on physical tasks like feeding, bathing, and medical care. This can create a sense of “caregiver tunnel vision,” where the emotional toll on you is easily overlooked.

To prevent burnout and maintain your health, contact your employee assistance program for guidance on managing stress and staying at your best for those you love. Some symptoms of burnout you might experience include detachment, feeling indifferent or unable to connect emotionally, or feeling like you are just going through the motions of meeting the needs of your loved one. You may feel trapped, helpless, or overwhelmed by the demands of caregiving. These emotions are normal, but it’s essential to recognize them early.

The key is to avoid reaching a point of emotional exhaustion where you lose the desire to care for your loved one—an unfortunate possible outcome of one of life’s most challenging and rewarding roles. Seek support when you need it, and remember that caring for yourself is also a way of caring for your loved one.

