

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Emotional Health: What Is It?

More than three-fourths of Americans who say stress interferes with their work say it carries over to their personal life, particularly men (83 percent vs. 72 percent for women). This is a significant number, particularly since stress in one physical, mental or emotional area will typically impact elsewhere.

Our emotional health is especially vulnerable when our lives tip out of balance—probably because it's the first area that we stop paying attention to. Emotional health refers to the feelings and moods we have—sadness, happiness, worry, excitement, frustration and fulfillment, for example. Although we often overlook its importance, emotional health is essential for our overall health. Let's take a look at some of the things you can do to keep it in top shape.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Just like good physical health, emotional well-being is much more than just the absence of problems. When you start to pay attention to it, you are taking the first valuable steps towards a more fulfilling and successful life. Here are some tips to help you get started:

Start with good physical health.

- Your physical well-being is the basic foundation of your emotional and mental health.
- Have regular physical check-ups—what appears to be an emotional disorder may be the result of a physical problem. For example, chronic lethargy and depression may be due to a thyroid disorder.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise will help you feel more relaxed during the day and will help you sleep better at night.
- Exercise doesn't always have to be "structured"—a day spent gardening or an evening at the bowling alley with friends will both provide important benefits.

Eat the right foods

- Follow a balanced, nutritious diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat meat or fish.
- Avoid eating too many high-sugar foods, salty foods and greasy or fatty foods.
- Reduce or eliminate smoking and alcohol. Avoid drugs.
- Some foods have a strong effect on your moods and can disrupt the body's smooth functioning. These include coffee and pop, which are high in caffeine—a stimulant that produces anxiety. Take in moderation only.

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Take control of your life.

- If you can't change a situation, change and control the way you deal with it.
- Our attitudes and response to the events and goals in life will ultimately determine the outcome.
- Look upon your losses as a means of enriching your life experience and as a learning opportunity.
- It's a cliché, but clichés are based on truth—every problem is an opportunity in disguise.
- Changing one aspect of your life, even when the change is difficult, can sometimes lead to more positive overall outlook.

Keep busy—but not too busy.

- Staying active is one of the ways to keep depression at bay.
- Many people find that they tend to be happier when they are engrossed in their work.
- Try to enjoy the day, plan for the future and set goals.

Relax—and have fun.

- Relaxation, whether through meditation, yoga or simply through enjoyable recreation, is a vital tool to help manage our emotional well-being.
- Be socially involved—friends can help in times of mental and physical distress.
- Friends make it easier to have fun.
- Having fun can actually generate the energy we need to take on life's challenges.
- Playtime is important for all of us. It helps to stimulate creativity and balances our life.
- Think about ways you can play: reading, watching movies, being creative, playing games or sports or keeping up with hobbies.

By following these tips, you'll be better equipped to handle life's inevitable challenges, build strong relationships, and lead productive, fulfilling lives.