

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

After the Spring Break: Taking a Break for Yourself

The kids are back at school, and your routine is returning to normal… as normal as it gets, anyway! Now's a good time to step back, regroup and take a step into spring, by taking some time for yourself. Here are some tips to help you do just that:

Revitalize! Stay healthy through proper nutrition and regular exercise. Over the break, you may have been involved in so many activities that mealtimes became a hot dog from a vendor on the corner or something from a drive-thru. Now's the time to return to regular, healthy eating and your neglected fitness routine… and set a good example for the kids, too.

Rebound! From a long winter where you may have neglected your health. Drink plenty of water (8-10 glasses a day are recommended); eat fresh, raw fruits and vegetables and grains and avoid those foods that contain additives or are nutritionally bankrupt. Also avoid sugar, salt, saturated fats, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. More intensive detoxification routines are available: read up on them, and if you're interested, pursue them in consultation with a skilled dietitian.

Re-energize! Resume a hobby you've neglected, or take up a new one. As Spring emerges and the days grow longer, our energy levels naturally rise—take advantage of this to start a new project, or resume an old one. Take a class or join a club: doing something for your own personal self-development leads to positive feelings of personal well-being.

Re-organize! Clean up the clutter. With the kids back in school, you might be able to find some time to put things back in their place. It's no surprise that a considerable amount of stress is generated—and time wasted—looking for things that have disappeared from their usual spots. "A place for everything… and everything in its place" is sage advice, and can help eliminate a key source of stress. When you're putting away your winter clothes and bringing out your spring wear, tuck a $5 bill in your pocket, or a toonie in the kids' mittens. By next winter, you'll have forgotten about it… and everyone will receive a lovely surprise.

Refresh! Take a mini-vacation. If you weren't able to go away at March break—or if you focused entirely on the kids—why not find some time to get away from it all, just you and your significant other? Even if it's only overnight, spending some quality time together helps you take a breather from all-consuming family obligations, and renew the bonds of your relationship. Book a sitter, and take advantage of a post-March break deal at a nearby resort or hotel with great spa or recreational facilities. Or at the very least, treat yourself to a nice dinner and movie—just the two of you.

Re-commit! Kick the habit. First it was Thanksgiving, then the holidays, then came broken New Year's resolutions and the February blahs. Whatever bad habit you wanted to stop, there was always a good excuse not to! But it's not too late… in fact, the timing might be just right. Want to stop smoking? Set a quit date and work towards it. Overeating? Spring's here and summer's coming—you still have time to shed a few pounds and look fabulous on the beach. Drinking causing you concern? Cut back, and replace alcohol with healthy activity (or the 8-10 glass of water you'll be drinking every day!)

Reach Out! For lost or neglected friendships—repair a relationship that has been neglected or suffered over time or distance. It's not always possible to reconcile, but reconnecting with someone with whom you were once close brings many rewards. A card or e-mail just to say "I'm thinking of you" can go a

long way towards keeping in touch; even better, schedule time for coffee or lunch. Next time you're thinking about calling, do more than think… actually pick up the phone. It doesn't take a lot of effort, just some attention.

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Reinvest! Get your finances in order. Income tax season is upon us and—painful though it sometimes is, it's also a great time to review your financial plan and pull things into shape. Financial troubles are one of the leading sources of stress. By scheduling a few extra minutes with your financial planner, you'll take financial control in the upcoming year and be reinvesting in your own peace-of-mind. You may even be able to save a few extra dollars for a real vacation… for next Spring break!

It’s easy to get caught up in the everyday demands your work and home life place on you. Remember to slow down and take some time to focus on yourself. These strategies are a great start to getting your life organized and back on track!