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Keeping Your Spirit Healthy



People talk about the importance of keeping their lives in balance. But when it comes down to it, few people really know how to achieve it.

"When you're stressed, taking steps to strengthen your personal integrity can bring you back to a sense of balance that restores a sense of inner peace and harmony," says Brian Luke Seaward, Ph.D., author of *Quiet Mind, Fearless Heart*. "The human spirit is composed of free-flowing energy. But unresolved anger, fear and other negative emotions can choke the spirit by creating stress."

According to Dr. Seaward, you can reduce stress by understanding the unique relationship that exists between less stress and more spirituality in your life.

"For many people, spirituality has been the missing link in strengthening the mind-body-spirit continuum that's the basis of a healthy life," he says. "People who have healthy minds and bodies but still feel stressed or uneasy haven't satisfied their spiritual hunger because it can't be satisfied by material things."

The following strategies can help you change or modify behaviors that increase stress and replace them with behaviors that promote harmony.

Keep everything in perspective

When you're stressed by a particular event, it's easy to lose perspective, particularly of how good your life is overall.

"When you find yourself focusing on the foreground of a problem or a crisis, take a step back and look at it in the context of the big picture of your life," says Dr. Seaward.

"Doing so helps you realize that in many areas of your life things are going well."

Establish healthy boundaries

Boundaries let other people know how far they can go before they infringe on your personal integrity. Setting clear boundaries



helps minimize misunderstandings between friends, family and coworkers.

Manage anger

Keep anger under control by changing your expectations. Many episodes of anger in day-to-day life are the result of unmet expectations. By lowering your expectations, especially about things you can't control, you can reduce angry and stressful responses. For instance, plan in advance to let go of things you know will drive you crazy, such as traffic delays.

Be thankful

Adopt an attitude of gratitude by directing your thoughts away from negative thought patterns that are common when you're stressed.

"When you're feeling as if nothing is going right, stop and make a list of all the things you're grateful for or take for granted," says Dr. Seaward. "Start with simple things, like being able to see and breathe. Then move on to personal things, such as family members and your job. Don't stop until you reach 100 items."

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Turn off the TV

Prolonged TV viewing increases stress because of violent or disturbing content and the constant visual stimulation.

Forgive others

Carrying the weight of a grudge becomes immobilizing over time. But when you forgive someone, you bring light into your heart and the whole world benefits.

☛ Seize the day

Choose one of your unmet personal goals and map out a strategy to make it happen. Fill in the specifics, identify the resources you need and come up with an estimated completion date.

"Human behavior is slow to change, but it can be done," says Dr. Seaward. "Start by selecting one strategy from those above and incorporate it into your life for several weeks. Then try another one for a while. Over time, you'll feel more whole and less stressed because you're consciously seeking balance in your life instead of imbalance."

Quitting Smoking



If you have tried to quit smoking, you know how hard it can be. That's because nicotine is a very addictive drug. Just seconds after you inhale tobacco smoke, nicotine travels to the brain, telling it to release chemicals to make you want to smoke more. Usually people try to quit several times before finally succeeding. The good news is that each time you try to quit, you will be stronger and closer to quitting for good.



Why You Should Quit Smoking

The reasons to keep trying to quit are stronger than ever. Smoking is responsible for large numbers of deaths from cancer, heart attacks, stroke, and lung disease. Low birth weight, premature delivery, respiratory distress syndrome, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) are linked to smoking during pregnancy. Up to 25 percent of all deaths from home fires are from fires that were started by smoking materials.

Lung cancer isn't the only cancer caused by smoking. Others include cancer of the larynx, esophagus, kidneys, pancreas, and stomach. By the way, smokeless (chewing) tobacco is not **less** hazardous to your health than cigarettes, it can cause cancer of the mouth.

Prepare Yourself To Quit

Given the overwhelming evidence that smoking is bad for your health, most smokers want to quit. If you are one of the 47 million people in the United States who smoke, the steps below may help you quit. Remember: Anyone can quit, regardless of age, health, or lifestyle.

If you want to stop smoking, start preparing for it today. Set a quit date and stick to it. If you slip, forgive yourself, then get right back to quitting. Your success will be greatly influenced by your desire and determination to quit smoking for good.

When you decide to quit smoking, remember that you may experience symptoms of withdrawal. For heavy smokers, withdrawal may include headaches, constipation, irritability, nervousness, trouble concentrating, or insomnia. Increased coughing may also occur as the cilia (tiny hairs that sweep away irritants from the air passages) in your lungs become active again.

Identifying Your Triggers

For about a week, smoke as you normally would, doing your usual activities. Be aware of every cigarette. Even if you think you know your triggers already, try writing them down in a journal. The results may surprise you. For every cigarette you have, write down the date, time, place, who you're with, why you smoked, and how you felt. When you have enough information to identify your triggers, you can stop journaling. Be honest. Answers may repeat. Review what you've written to form a plan for avoiding the habitual traps in your life.

Steps To Quit Smoking

- Set your goal. Pick a date on which to stop smoking. Plan to quit completely and for good.
- Take it one day at a time. Focus on making it through today without a cigarette, rather than on how you will go without one for the next week. If you do slip and light up, don't give up. Forgive yourself, and work on resisting the next cigarette.
- Find support. Tell as many as 10 friends that you are quitting. Then take advantage of **as** much encouragement and prodding as they can give you. Also check with your doctor for support. He or she may be able to prescribe a nicotine substitute to help you get through

withdrawal symptoms. Organizations such as the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society offer classes and support groups for people trying to quit smoking. Many employers and health care systems also offer help.

- Find a substitute. Avoid the temptation to smoke by finding other things to keep your mouth and hands busy. Try sugarless gum, hard candy, or flavored toothpicks. Or try activities such as woodworking, needlework, or playing with fidget toys.
- Be physically active to avoid weight gain. If you're afraid of gaining weight, keep in mind that the average weight gain after quitting smoking is less than 10 pounds. While you are quitting, eat a well-balanced diet and avoid excess calories in sugary or fatty foods, drink six to eight glasses of water a day, and stay physically active. By walking at least 30 minutes a day or doing some other activity, you will ward off excess pounds and ease some of the tension of tobacco withdrawal.
- Avoid smoking situations. Go places where smoking isn't allowed, such as the nonsmoking section of a restaurant or a movie theater. Take your work breaks with nonsmoking coworkers. After eating, take a walk or do the dishes instead of lighting up a cigarette. When you can't avoid a smoking situation, plan in advance for ways to curb your desire to smoke, such as having sugarless gum or a healthy snack nearby.
- Modify your daily routines or habits if they included smoking. For instance, if your coffee break once meant having a cup of coffee and a cigarette, try walking or reading a book instead.

Maintenance

You made the commitment to quit smoking, and like any other habit, it takes time for the new habit to become a part of you. If you get the urge to smoke, remember how tough it was in the beginning and promise not to put yourself through that again. Write down each temptation and how you coped with it in your journal. This will help you build strategies for coping each time the urge comes back. Think about the joys of being a nonsmoker: better health, clearer breathing, no hacking cough, and a refreshing new sense of smell and taste.

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A Safety Checklist for Parents



You can help keep your children safe by following these precautions.

General steps

- Encourage your children to wash their hands frequently throughout the day -- and always before eating.
- Keep their immunizations up to date.
- Be sure you know where they are, who they're with and what they're doing when out of your presence.
- Check the references of baby sitters or care givers carefully.



In the home

Thousands of children are treated or hospitalized each year because of accidental poisonings in their homes. Tips from the American Association of Poison Control Centers to make your home safer:

- Keep cleaning supplies, medicines, garden chemicals and toxic art supplies locked away or on a high shelf.
- Purchase over-the-counter and prescription medicines with childproof caps. Keep them on a high shelf or in a locked cabinet, not on your bedside table.
- Keep vitamins and minerals such as iron out of reach. They can be hazardous, even fatal, to children.
- Never use food containers to store nonfood substances.

In the car

More children are killed by car accidents than by any other cause. Keep your children safe by following these tips from the Nemours Foundation:

- Don't start your car until you and your children have properly buckled the seat belts.
- Use an infant car seat properly. Don't place one in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with an air bag on the passenger side. The safest location for a car seat is the middle of the rear seat.
- Secure a child in an approved infant car seat until the child is big enough to use a booster seat. A child should be in a booster seat until about age 8 and when he or she weighs 80 pounds. Then the child should be restrained by a regular seat belt.
- Never let children ride in the back of a pickup truck.

On the playing field

Ensure your children's safety by adhering to these safety guidelines from the Nemours Foundation:

- Insist your children wear a helmet when riding their bicycles. Helmets should carry a sticker from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or the Snell Memorial Foundation (Snell). Be sure your kids are familiar with the rules of the road before letting them ride without supervision.
- Insist they wear a helmet and wrist, elbow and knee guards when skateboarding or in-line skating. Keep them off streets with heavy traffic.
- Give them swimming lessons from a qualified instructor by age 4. Never let them swim alone or without adult supervision.
- Be sure their instructors are certified and trained in CPR and first aid.

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We're here for you as life happens ...

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything and realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, and legal issues, and, the EAP is free and confidential. To access your EAP services, call 1-800-343-3822.

