



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

April 2020

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



Stress Awareness
Month: Stress Amid
COVID-19

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Stress Amid COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in. Some people may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

HOW DO I MANAGE MY MENTAL HEALTH DURING THIS CHALLENGING TIME?

- **Engage your support network.** Just as you would during other major life changes, stay connected with family and trusted friends and let them know if you need extra support during this challenging time. That might include regular phone calls, check-ins, and related support.

- **Recognize warning signs & triggers.** Continue to monitor new or worsening symptoms you may be experiencing with your mental health or overall health and well-being. Do your best to keep stress levels low and engage in activities that help manage your stress during this disruptive time.
- **Continue treatment.** Despite changes in routine, it is extremely important to follow your treatment plan. If your symptoms change or you need reassurance during this difficult time, call your treating provider's office to see if they are offering virtual visits. BHS is covering telehealth through 5-31-2020. Be sure that medication refills are up to date. Cold and flu medications may interact with antidepressants and/or antipsychotics. Consult with your health care provider or pharmacist if you are using over the counter medications.
- **Responding to symptoms of COVID-19.** If you are feeling symptoms that may be associated with the COVID-19 virus, call your primary care provider first to talk about next steps in care. It is best to get directions from your primary care provider on what to do rather than going to an emergency room.

If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.



The Benefits of Mindfulness

It's a busy world. You fold the laundry while keeping one eye on the kids and another on the television. You plan your day while listening to the radio and commuting to work. In the rush to accomplish necessary tasks, you may find yourself losing your connection with the present moment—missing out on what you're doing and how you're feeling. Did you notice whether you felt well-rested this morning or that forsythia is in bloom along your route to work?

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment—and accepting it without judgment. Mindfulness is now being examined scientifically and has been found to be a key element in happiness.

The cultivation of mindfulness has roots in Buddhism, but most religions include some type of prayer or meditation technique that helps shift your thoughts away from your usual preoccupations toward an appreciation of the moment and a larger perspective on life.

Mindfulness improves well-being.

- Increasing your capacity for mindfulness supports many attitudes that contribute to a satisfied life.
- Being mindful makes it easier to savor the pleasures in life as they occur, helps you become fully engaged in activities and creates a greater capacity to deal with adverse events.
- By focusing on the here and now, many people who practice mindfulness find that they are less likely to get caught up in worries about the future or regrets over the past. They are also less preoccupied with concerns about success and self-esteem, and are better able to form deep connections with others.

Mindfulness improves physical health.

If greater well-being isn't enough of an incentive, scientists have discovered the benefits of mindfulness techniques help improve physical health in a number of ways. Mindfulness can

- Help relieve stress
- Treat heart disease
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce chronic pain
- Improve sleep
- Alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties

Mindfulness improves mental health.

In recent years, psychotherapists have turned to mindful meditation as an important element in the treatment of a number of problems, including:

- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Couples' conflicts
- Anxiety disorders
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder

Some experts believe that mindfulness works, in part, by helping people accept their experiences rather than react to them with aversion and avoidance.

It's become increasingly common for mindful meditation to be combined with *psychotherapy*, especially *cognitive behavioral therapy*. This development makes good sense, since both meditation and cognitive behavioral therapy share the common goal of helping people gain perspective on irrational, maladaptive, and self-defeating thoughts.



Change Your Life With SMART Goals

No matter how good you are at something, there is always room for improvement. Wanting something is one thing, but as millions of broken New Year's resolutions show every year, setting a goal is much easier than meeting that goal. A good goal is *SMART*: *specific, measurable, action-focused, realistic, and time-bound*.

- **A goal should be as specific as possible.** If your broad goal is to lose weight and you lose 2 ounces, you've technically met your goal. A good goal, on the other hand, would be to lose 10 pounds in the next 3 months.
- **Measurable goals are best,** because it's apparent if you're making progress toward meeting your goal.

- **Action-focused goals require an action on the part of the goal setter.** For fitness goals, a personal readiness device or a health application can be a great aid in reminding you of the actions you need to take.
- **Good goals are realistic.** A smart goal setter needs to make an honest assessment of how much improvement is possible in a given period of time and base the goal on that assessment. As the old adage goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Trying to do too much too quickly can be as detrimental as doing nothing.

Lastly, a SMART goal is time-bound. When setting a goal, you need a deadline to reach it.

EASY RECIPE: Crispy Chicken, Ham and Swiss Roll-Ups

- 1/2 cup Italian-seasoned breadcrumbs
- 8 (2-oz.) boneless, skinless chicken breast cutlets
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 (1-oz.) slices lower-sodium ham, halved
- 3 ounces pre-shredded Swiss cheese (about 3/4 cup)
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1. Place a rimmed baking sheet in oven, and preheat oven to 500°F. (Do not remove baking sheet while oven preheats.)
2. Place breadcrumbs in a shallow bowl. Brush cutlets with oil; dredge in breadcrumbs.
3. Top each cutlet with 1 piece of ham and 1 1/2 tablespoons cheese. Carefully roll cutlets, starting at the short end; secure with wooden picks.
4. Place roll-ups, seam side down, on preheated baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven 8 minutes. Increase heat to broil; broil until a meat thermometer inserted in thickest portion reads 165°F, 1 to 2 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley.

