



EFR EMPLOYEE &amp; FAMILY RESOURCES

# BE KIND TO YOUR HEART



## NEXT MONTH IS HEART HEALTH MONTH! PRIORITIZE YOUR HEART BY MINIMIZING STRESS.

Are you prone to stress? Discover healthy and easy relaxation and re-focusing activities to practice when it comes to managing the stress you experience at work.

No matter how much someone can enjoy their job, every workplace environment and set of duties can create stress. Add that to the ups and downs we experience in our personal lives, and that makes for ample potential to feel stressed.

When experienced over long periods of time, that stress can take a significant toll, manifesting into physical harm to our bodies.

Stress releases cortisol, a hormone that can be hard on the

heart when it's constantly being released. Too much cortisol can increase cholesterol, triglycerides, and blood pressure, all the common risk factors for heart disease.

While cortisol is our bodies' physiological response to stress, we also tend to emotionally respond with unhealthy coping mechanisms when we feel stressed out.

The following are common, though problematic, responses to stress. If any of these sound like you, there are plenty of ways to re-train that response to something that is kinder to your heart!

### 1. You use alcohol to relax.

Stress can lead you to over-consume alcohol. Chronic heavy

drinking is one of the leading causes of heart disease.

### Use your commute to rest.

Channel the downtime between work and home to re-energize. Take that time to slow down and re-focus on activities unrelated to work.

### 2. Your productivity is stalled.

When overwhelmed with projects or things to do, staying past the end of your shift each workday isn't always the best answer -- we are not wired to be productive every minute of every day.

### Make a To-Do list.

Avoid trying to address everything all at once, and hone in on your top

## HEALTHY RECIPES

Check out the American Heart Association's many budget- and heart-healthy [recipes!](#)



priorities each day. Feeling productive by completing tasks can naturally fight stress with good-feeling hormones, such as dopamine.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers free, telephonic **life coaching** sessions to help you develop soft skills that can benefit you both personally and professionally.

### 3. You don't get enough sleep.

It can be difficult to quiet your mind at bedtime when you've spent much of your day charging through work's stressors -- therefore, you stay up late trying to relax and unwind. This lack of sleep not only decreases productivity, but increases your risk for heart disease, too.

### Give yourself breaks.

Take a few minutes every now and then to take a break from work. This can help you overcome daytime

drowsiness, and give your mind a break from the stress at hand.

### 4. You've been feeling blue.

Work stress can lead to the "living for the weekend/ day off" mindset, making time spent in the workplace less engaging and meaningful.

### Try a mindfulness meditation.

Practicing mindfulness helps us slow down and re-focus, helping us find contentedness in the present and relieve stress.

Your EAP also offers free, **in-person counseling** with a masters-level counselor for depression/anxiety, relationships issues, grief, etc.



### 5. Your relationships are taking a hit.

Even if you have time for relationships outside of work, the stress, fatigue, and depression you experience from work may take a toll on them.

### Prioritize what you enjoy.

Sometimes it feels like work follows you home. To decompress, build in non-work activities to your weekly routine (or every day if you can!).

Stress is an everyday part of life. Be mindful of other healthy activities that can help eliminate stress, and begin to gradually leave behind unhealthy coping mechanisms.

*One healthy activity is using your free EAP resources! Available 24/7 and accessed by calling 800-327-4692, your EAP can help you manage life's challenges and stressors.*

## WELLNESS

### Think Outside the Gym



How many days a week are you getting your heart rate up and breaking a sweat? While sweating profusely is not necessary to enhance cardio health, getting your heart rate elevated and working beyond its typical resting zone is beneficial to all aspects of health and will make you glisten, at least a little.

There are many ways to increase your heart rate, and they're not limited to treadmills and tracks. If walking and running is your favorite way to get moving and stay moving, that's great. But if it's not, don't sweat; there are many more options available!

- Swimming or aqua aerobics are great for people with mobility or joint issues.
- High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is great for people with limited time or equipment.
- Biking is a great way for exercise and nature to come together and take you farther than your feet can by walking or jogging.
- Competitive sports like basketball, racquetball, and sand volleyball can be fun ways to work out with friends.

Whether you're thinking outside the gym or just haven't thought through all the options a gym has to offer, try something new and see the difference it makes!



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