

Frontline Employee | August 2020

Preparing to Go Back to School

Are you feeling anxious about ensuring a smooth transition for children going back to school? After their lengthy absence, you may need to be more deliberate. Start to introduce daily routines and earlier bedtimes in preparation for the big day. Start winding down screen use an hour before bedtime, and consider having family evening meals together at a specific time to create a familiar structure going forward. Try a midday quiet-time period for reading/drawing that also can help manage stress and reduce anxiety. See www.sleepeducation.org for recommended child sleep requirements.



Don't Mess with Melanoma



The hottest days of summer are upon us, so here's a quiz: What's the most common cause of cancer death for women age 25-30? Answer: melanoma. What about the second leading cause of cancer death in women 30-35? Answer: melanoma, again. Surprised? Melanoma does not discriminate by age, race, or gender. And it does not appear only on the skin. It can appear anywhere—even nails, eyes, or the mouth. Ninety percent of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultraviolet light, so protect yourself using SPF 30 (or higher) sun protection. Fact: Use of tanning beds by those under 30 years old will increase the lifetime risk of melanoma by 75%.

Managing "COVID Fatigue"

After months of social distancing, lockdowns, favorite businesses being shuttered, and a lot fewer places to go for recreation, meals, and entertainment, are you feeling "COVID fatigue"? The term was first coined in July, but the condition appears to be real. Feeling bottled up, intensely irritable, and frustrated are the symptoms, but it is also compounded by grief for the loss of a way of life you once knew and anxiety associated with not knowing when it will return. COVID fatigue may place you at risk for increased substance use, poor diet, mismanaging a health condition, poor exercise, domestic abuse, relationship disharmony, depression, and generally putting plans for your life on hold. Don't settle for the consequences of COVID fatigue. Take action with help from a professional counselor or other guidance that empowers you to take charge.



Alcoholics Anonymous and COVID-19



AA figured out how to carry its message of hope and recovery to alcoholics worldwide a long time ago, and the online portal it established could not be more timely in the era of COVID-19 social distancing. Over 1,000 meetings are a click away. To use the no-cost service, visit www.aa-intergroup.org/oiaa/meetings. You can search meetings worldwide by language, time, day, special need/disability, gender preferences, type of meeting, phone, video, and many other parameters.

Taking Charge and Facing the “New Normal”

Everyone knows dramatic changes have occurred in the way we live as a result of COVID-19. No one knows for certain what a “new normal” will look like in the future when the lockdowns and social isolation are over and the ultimate shifts in the world of work finally arrive. Perhaps normalcy will return, but one thing can be counted on: Coping with change requires actionable steps that work. Those steps can help you adapt to whatever happens next.



Reduce Screen Time and Be More Productive



One out of five adults averages over 40 hours a week online. Most average 24 hours. Who wouldn't agree that at this rate, it is easy for life to pass you by? Reduce screen time without losing productivity by first adding up the hours spent online for a week in order to gain awareness. (This first step alone will reduce time online!) Next, seek to eliminate distractions, including email clicks and hyperlinks to browsers and distracting URLs and social media, etc. Make it more difficult to reach these locations. Experiment with “no-phone” zones in your home—places where you commit to not using a phone. It won't be easy, but that's the point. Key to your success is finding a compelling, enjoyable activity—a useful and exciting one—to substitute for being online. This will create the long-term change you're looking for and will prevent a “cyber relapse.”

Coping with Change: The Steps

1) Accept that change creates stress. Design a personal stress management program that offers resilience and helps you cope with uncertainty, changes in the way you work, changes in the way you think (i.e., fear, worry, catastrophizing, etc.), and how these things affect your mood and your relationships. Reach out to sources of inspiration and professional counseling to accomplish this. 2) Don't go with the flow. Be proactive, and make choices to help you cope and respond at home and at work to maintain personal and job productivity. The analogy is preparing for a hurricane. Either you can wait by the radio and be told what to do, or you can take action steps to feel empowered and be in control of outcomes while listening to the weather radio at the same time. One approach will empower you, improve resilience, and give you a sense of control and direction in the ultimate outcome. 3) As you experience stressors associated with change, make decisions about how you will cope and maintain control in spite of them—stay on the “nonvictim side of the balance sheet.” Avoid being a victim of change, often signaled by looking around at what others are doing in order to decide what to do next. 4) Discuss and process these steps for remaining proactive with family, friends, and loved ones. Better ideas and solutions, a feeling of security, and staying positive generally result from these interactions. 5) Expect and anticipate your positive future despite what is happening. Don't allow the inability to predict or know what the future holds to lead you into catastrophic thinking and its immobilizing effect and undermine your life plans.



Stress Management Tip: Reframing



Reframing is a mental strategy to overcome the distress of negative or disappointing events. Reframing starts with a key question: What good thing can come from this undesirable event? The goal is to change the way you think about and view undesirable situations. For example, if you don't get the job or promotion, what good thing or positive outcome of not being chosen might now exist? Reframing works because it changes images in your mind, and these direct your feelings and sensations. Reframing builds personal resilience to disappointment, and it's a teachable skill. Reframing is used unconsciously by everyone, but purposely employed, it will get you out of pain faster. It is especially useful for children to learn the strategy.