

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

July 2010
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Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program



July 21st 2010

Chat Topic:

Coping With Financial Stress

Every month you'll have the opportunity to chat online with a trained counselor. These live chats are held from 12:15-12:45 PM & 6:00PM to 6:30PM CST.

July 2010

At A Glance

Sun Safety Week
7-13

www.homesafetycouncil.org/homesafetymonth

National Headache Awareness Week
6 - 12

www.headaches.org/national_headache_awareness_week_2010

National Men's Health Week
14-22

www.menshealthmonth.org/week/

Source: 2010 National Health Observances, National Health Information Center, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.



Fireworks Safety Tips

If fireworks are legal where you live and you decide to set them off on your own, be sure to follow these important safety tips:

- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Read and follow all warnings and instructions.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves, and flammable materials.
- Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Keep a bucket of water in case of a malfunction or fire.

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Laugh, Do your Heart a Favor



At last, doctors have a prescription that you'll like, and the price is right. It's a big laugh, and it's free.

Laughter can be strong medicine say researchers at Stanford University. Even the physical act is good for you. It increases blood flow and contracts abdominal muscles.

The most significant evidence of laughter's power comes from a study of heart attack patients. Half watched comedy shows for 30 minutes every day, the other half didn't. After a year, the laughers had one-fifth the number of repeat heart attacks that the control group had.

Doctors at the University of California, Irvine, say watching a humorous video decreases levels of two key stress hormones that can cause irregular heart rhythms. Heart disease patients are often given beta-blocking drugs that specifically block these hormones. The doctors say laughter does the same thing and is a lot more fun. In other studies, laughter has been shown to help children and adults handle painful medical procedures. So, the next time you feel a giggle coming, let it all out and just enjoy the moment.



Deer Oaks EAP Services, our Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact

866.327.2400

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Soak Up the Sun, *Avoid the Burn*

Sunburn is a risk we all face when spending time outdoors. Painful reddening of the skin is the result of exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays (UVR). In severe cases blistering of the skin can occur. A long-term consequence of repeated sunburn is the development of skin melanoma or skin cancer, which can be deadly. Every sunburn increases the risk of developing skin cancer later on in life. Protection from sun exposure is important all year around, not just during the summer months or at the beach. Of course, prevention is the best cure. The hours of 10 AM to 4 PM (or even later in the evening in Texas) are peak for direct sunlight in the summer. Wearing light-colored clothing, wide brimmed hats, sunglasses (with UVA/UVB protection), and sunscreen are simple, but highly effective steps in preventing overexposure to the sun.

Use of Sunscreen

There are some important things to keep in mind when choosing and using sunscreen.

Choose a broad-spectrum product that protects against both UVA and UVB rays, with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. For everyday skin care, SPF 15 may be adequate, but for longer periods in the sun, SPF 30 or higher is recommended.

Make sure your sunscreen is not too old. Over time ingredients in sunscreen can become unstable making the sunscreen ineffective. It is a good idea to buy new sunscreen once a year.

Make sure the sunscreen is waterproof. Waterproof sunscreen is not just for water activities; sweating necessitates waterproof sunscreen.

Make sure to put the sunscreen on at least half an hour before going outdoors. Put plenty on, and repeat application every few hours. Don't forget about lip protection. Many lip products now have SPF 15 components.

Treating Sunburn

If you do suffer a sunburn this summer, treatment options will depend on the severity.

Severe sunburns (blister formations), should be treated by a medical professional. **Milder** cases can be treated with lotions containing aloe and/or hydrocortisone. Since sunburn is an inflammatory response, anti-inflammatory

medications like ibuprofen can help relieve the swelling and soreness. Cool (not cold) water can provide some immediate relief, but be careful not to dry out the skin, as this will cause more damage and pain. Stay out of the sun until your skin has had a chance to heal.

Here are some more tips on relieving symptoms of a painful sunburn: 1) Take a cool bath with 2 ounces of baking soda per tub; don't put soap on the sunburn. 2) Apply aloe containing lotions to cool the skin. 3) Apply 1% hydrocortisone cream (over-the-counter product). 4) Avoid ointments or greasy substances (i.e. butter, petroleum jelly), which can block the sweat glands and keep heat from escaping. 5) Avoid first-aid anesthetic products containing benzocaine, which can cause irritation. 6) Anti-inflammatory medications can help relieve pain; check with your health care provider first for drug interactions if you are taking other medications. 7) Blistering skin indicates more serious sunburn; do not cover the blisters, but do call your doctor for advice.

Heatstroke, Heat Exhaustion, & Heat Cramps

Heat-related illnesses range from mild to severe and are the result of high environmental temperatures and the body's inadequate/inappropriate response to heat-regulation. Exposure to hot and humid temperature without appropriate heat loss from the body may lead to heatstroke, heat exhaustion, or heat cramps. These heat-related disorders can occur in a matter of hours, or may take as long as one to two weeks to manifest. In both situations, exposure to heat and/or high humidity can cause excessive sweating, dehydration, and electrolyte imbalances. Age, obesity, use of alcohol, and some medications increase susceptibility.

Heatstroke results from inadequacy or failure of heat loss mechanisms, resulting in dangerously high fevers. **Heat Exhaustion** is a result of excessive fluid and electrolyte loss due to sweating. **Heat Cramps** are exercise-induced cramps of the muscle due to excessive fluid intake without adequate sodium replacement.

Source: 1) <http://www.cdc.gov/ChooseYouCover/qanda.htm> 2) <http://www.aad.org> 3) DeSimone E. Prevention of sun-induced skin disorders. In: Berardi R, McDermott J, et al., eds. *Handbook of Nonprescription Drugs*. Washington D.C.: American Pharmacists Association, 2004:929-953.

Matters of the Heart



Common Misconceptions About Sunburn

You will be able to tell when you have "had enough sun." Actually, the reaction to the sun can take anywhere from 3 to 6 hours after exposure, and may worsen for up to 24 hours.

People with darker skin tones do not have to worry about sunburn.

While it is true that those with lighter complexions are affected more frequently and severely, people with darker complexions can still burn given enough exposure.

Tanning is safe.

Tanning is the result of less intense or a shorter duration of exposure to ultraviolet rays. The increase in pigmentation is the skin's way of trying to provide protection against further ultraviolet rays damage.

Cloud cover and gray skies, which block the sun, will also block ultraviolet rays.

Ultraviolet rays can still penetrate cloud cover and cause harmful effects.

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For Better Health, Memory, Outlook: *Write*



Maybe you never liked writing in school and don't want to start now. Or maybe you do a lot of writing at work and don't want to do more of it at home. What if you knew that writing would improve your health, give you a better memory, and improve your outlook on life? Researchers at North Carolina State University say it will.

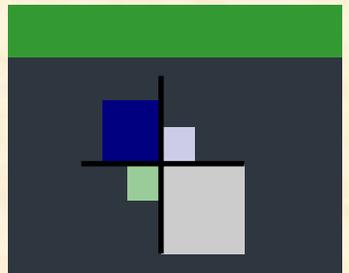
Writing about difficult experiences and turning points can make it easier to access your memories. The doctors found that those who wrote about major events had big gains in their working memories, much bigger than those who wrote about trivial events.

Psychologists at the University of Texas at Austin, studied people who wrote about an assigned topic for 15 minutes on four consecutive days. Later that year, those who wrote about emotional topics had far fewer doctors' visits. Those with asthma or arthritis had fewer symptoms if they kept a journal about stressful life experiences. Here's how to start:



- ✍ Decide that no single writing session is particularly important; not as important as writing regularly.
- ✍ Writing fiction is OK too, because you will convert your life experiences into stories that help you make sense of them. Read about your topic so you can add details to your story.
- ✍ Be honest. Look at life the way it really is. It might feel risky, but you aren't really risking anything in writing.
- ✍ Don't worry much about style, form, punctuation, or grammar- just write.
- ✍ Visualize your ideal leader, someone who would appreciate your story even if you never show it to him or her.

✍ Write about something that is or was important to you. Try not to get involved in trivial matters. Why not write even if only for a few minutes each day? You have nothing to lose and could have a happier, healthier life to gain.



Do you have a particular issue that you'd like to see highlighted?

Email us your suggestions and it may be a feature article in our upcoming newsletters.

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Ways to save on the cost of your pet



Sixty-two percent of households, roughly 71.4 million homes, own a pet according to the [2009/2010 National APPA Pet Owners Survey](#). While the majority of U.S. households get to experience the joys of pet ownership, they must also work the expense of owning a pet into their budgets.

If you already own a pet, or are considering adopting a pet into your family, you can benefit from the following tips from [Money Management International](#) (MMI) to cut back on the expense.



Research the type of pet you want. When selecting the right pet for your lifestyle and your budget, research is important. Certain types and breeds of pets are pricier than others. Take into consideration the cost of food, grooming costs, and whether the particular breed has any potential health concerns that may cost you at the veterinarian's office.

Adopt from a shelter. Adopting an animal from a shelter can be rewarding for you and your wallet. Often, shelter animals have a much smaller price tag than an animal from a breeder. Shelters will often spay or neuter the animal, as well as give any needed vaccines for a fraction of the price a veterinarian would charge.

Groom at home. If your pet requires frequent grooming, consider purchasing some starter supplies and taking on the challenge. Grooming your pet helps you and your animal bond, plus, you forgo money spent at the groomer. One golden retriever owner calculated a [savings of \\$623 per year](#) by grooming at home rather than taking his pup to a professional.



Get the right kind of food. Just like with people food, striking the right balance between nutrition and price can be tricky. The cheapest pet food may contain unhealthy fillers, resulting in more trips to the vet over the pet's lifetime. The highest quality pet food, however, is also a poor choice if you cannot afford it. The perfect food for your pet is one that balances your pet's health and your financial well-being.

Pet ownership does not have to be a huge strain on your finances. Implementing a few money-savvy strategies into your budget can help pet ownership be a rewarding experience.

About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.

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