



# THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

July  
18

## July Online Seminar

### *Eating Your Way to Wellness*

This session focuses on the USDA's MyPlate with tips and resources on how to eat your way to better and long-lasting health.

Available on-demand starting July 17th at [www.deeroakseap.com](http://www.deeroakseap.com)

## About Your EAP

### *Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.*

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline. Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.

## Financial Assist

If you have questions about a financial issue, speaking with a financial expert can help. Your EAP provides you with free consultations with financial experts on everything from credit and debt, to purchasing a home, or saving for retirement. We also offer a full selection of financial articles, tip sheets, financial calculators, and other online tools to help you get the answers you need.

Helpline: 866-327-2400  
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# Suicide: Risk Factors & Signs

## Common Questions and Answers About Suicide

### What are some of the risk factors for suicide?

Risk factors vary with age, gender, or ethnic group. They may occur in combination or change over time. Some important risk factors are:

- Depression and other mental disorders, substance-abuse disorder (often in combination with other mental disorders)
- Prior suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide
- Family violence including physical or sexual abuse
- Firearms in the home
- Incarceration
- Exposure to suicidal behavior of others, such as family members or peers

However, it is important to note that many people who have these risk factors, are not suicidal.

### What are signs to look for?

The following are some of the signs you might notice in yourself or a friend that may be reason for concern.

- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, depressed mood, poor self-esteem, or guilt
- Not wanting to participate in family or social activities
- Changes in sleeping and eating patterns: too much or too little
- Feelings of anger, rage, need for revenge
- Feeling exhausted most of the time
- Trouble with concentration, problems academically or socially in school
- Feeling listless, irritable
- Regular and frequent crying
- Not taking care of oneself
- Reckless, impulsive behaviors
- Frequent physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches

Seeking help is a sign of strength, if you are concerned, go with your instincts, get help!

### What can I do for myself or someone else?

If you are concerned, immediate action is very important. Suicide can be prevented and most people who feel suicidal demonstrate warning signs. Recognizing some of these warning signs is the first step in helping yourself or someone you care about.

If you need help for yourself or someone you care about, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, every day. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free service that is available to anyone. You may also want to visit their Web site at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

*Source: National Institute of Mental Health. (Reviewed 2013, March 4). Suicide: A major, preventable mental health problem. Retrieved March 4, 2013, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>*

# Take My Stress Please!

*A lighthearted approach can help people stand up to life's challenges.*

With the power to relieve stress, reduce anxiety and increase mental energy, laughter really is a darn good medicine. But we know that, right? Who hasn't tried to use humor to soften an adversary, calm an upset friend or break the ice at a big event? But looking at the funny side is more than a crisis tool. Stress expert Loretta LaRoche sees it as a daily way of life—to help us keep the perspective that “not everything is a Grey's Anatomy segment.” Behavioral Health Newsline explored her unique take on stress management in this Q&A.

## **Is there a difference between good stress and bad stress?**

Oh yes. You need stress. It helps you manage your life and propels you to be successful. It even designates what is dangerous and what is not. That's why we have a fight-or-flight response. Because if you're on the highway and a car goes into your lane, you better well have a stress response.

## **So when does good stress become bad stress? When does it cross that line?**

Think of the circus performer with the plates twirling on sticks. There comes a point when he's twirling too many plates and they start dropping. Or think of an instrument like a Stradivarius. When the strings are the right tension, it plays beautifully. But when they get too tight, you get a squeaky sound. So the human body responds the same way. When it starts to feel overloaded, it starts to give you signals. You start to get physical responses. You may get heart palpitations or headaches, backaches and gastrointestinal problems. In other words, nothing seems to make you feel good. You start to feel irritable, you overreact.

## **And this is where stress management comes in? How can we manage our stress, if we all need it?**

One has to really be aware of his or her bodily responses. I think the problem is that sometimes people have actually forgotten what it means to be well; having a feeling of wellness. It's where you don't have aches and pains, you're able to get through the day with a lot of energy and you're getting good sleep. When you start to get the other signals, you have to step aside and say to yourself: “It seems to me like I'm out of control.”

## **You believe humor is a major part of managing stress, but how can people who aren't as naturally funny as you bring humor into their lives?**

When I say humor, I mean that humor as a kind of umbrella to hold over yourself to live a lighthearted life. You don't have to be a comedian. It's about putting on a lighter lens to see life with more clarity, rather than through a dark lens, which leads to feeling like you're in a vampire movie. So forget the comedy or being funny. What you really want to do is to take your life more lightly, instead of seriously. Take your work seriously, take your life lightly.

## **Have you seen people do that successfully?**

Oh yes. I think you see it once someone recognizes that life is not a stress rehearsal. You have to recognize that you are not immortal. You are not going to be here forever. What do you want to do with the time that you have? Do you want to spend eight hours of every day complaining, moaning and gathering forces around you to feel like a victim? Or do you want to take that time and make your day more joyful, more flexible, easier on yourself and everyone around you?



**You tell people that too often we make everything into catastrophes, that a wet towel on the bed is not a mugging.**

Not everything is a Grey's Anatomy segment. If the WiFi goes down, you don't have to go and get an emergency room physician. And I think one of the best ways to deal with this is to take five things that you feel are the worst possible things that could ever happen to you or your family and use those to put other things that stress you out in perspective. Like number one, if you have a child and that child was abducted and you never saw him again, how would that relate to your computer crashing? Take five things that really would create a crisis, like if you found out you only had 6 months to live. Would you be that concerned about your e-mail not coming in?

**So how do people put that kind of perspective on things?**

Put that list of five things on your desk. And take a look at them periodically when you're getting stressed and say, "Wow, this really isn't as important as I think it is." Because I always say yesterday's tragedy turns into today's comedy. How many of us have laughed over some incident that we initially thought was just so incredibly dramatic.

**Why does life seem more stressful these days?**

The fact that technology is created and obliterated so quickly creates a lot of stress. I learn a program and then I'm told six months later we are replacing that with a different program. Never before in history have we discovered and rediscovered things so quickly. I don't want to sound like I don't think we should move forward—we are never going to go back to my grandmother's time. But I think we have to blend the two. In the studies on stress, one constant appears over and over again. And that is without support from friends or families or coworkers—social support—you will become ill and die sooner. And loneliness and depression are at an all-time high in this society.

**What does research tell us about stress?**

One of the major researchers was Hans Selye. He really discovered this sort of flight-or-fight response. He discovered that we have this response as a result of being over-stimulated in fearful situations. If you keep triggering that response throughout the day, maybe several hundred times a day, you are going to get yourself into a pickle. Because your body is going to become eroded by the toxicity of this response. This is when the body starts to break down. You get sick more often when your immune system is compromised by stress.

**Do you recommend meditation for calming down?**

Definitely. I tell people to spend 15-20 minutes a day just calming themselves, whether it is through meditation or even prayer. A lot of repetitive activities become meditative, like knitting or needlepoint. And exercise is a wonderful way to reduce stress. If you get into a kickboxing class or an aerobics class, the repetition plus the activity stops the mind in its tracks. It is very hard to skip rope and make yourself crazy about the fax machine.

**What are some good resources for stress management?**

Books by David Burns or Albert Ellis. Davis Burns' classic is "Feeling Good, the New Mood Therapy." He's done wonders for depressed or anxious people. People also might need some therapy. Go sit and talk to a party who is not involved in what you do. Because often what we do is we get people around us to validate our disturbing behavior. We say, "Don't you feel this way?" and they say, "Absolutely." And what we need is someone to say, "No, this is not how you are supposed to feel. This behavior is not serving you."

*Source: Nash, P. (Reviewed 2018). Take my stress please! Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*



# Pros & Cons of Meal Kits

You can't turn on the TV or flip through a magazine anymore without seeing an ad for a meal kit service. If you've ever Googled one, you're probably seeing ads in your social media feeds as well. The options are endless including Hello Fresh, Blue Apron, and Home Chef just to name a few. Even Martha Stewart is getting in on the meal kit action with her own Martha & Marley Spoon kits. But are they worth it? The pricing can be high and you still have to cook. There are some pros and cons of meal kits to consider before ordering your first box.

## PROS

**Ease of Preparation:** All of your meal ingredients come fully cleaned, prepped, labeled, and ready to use. There's very little work required to get your meal started. All you have to do is pull the packages you need for your recipe out of the fridge, open them up, and you're ready to start making dinner. For breakfast and lunch meals, many services provided ready-made foods.

**Portion Control:** Each meal is designed to serve a set number of people so you don't have more than you need, encouraging you to go back for seconds. But this also means, no leftovers for lunch the next day.

**Nutrition:** The meal kits are healthier than what you might grab at the drive-thru on the way home because all the ingredients are fresh and there are no additives or preservatives.

**Learn New Recipes:** You'll be introduced to new recipes that you might not have tried otherwise. You may even learn a few new cooking techniques by following the meal kit recipes.

**Special Diet Options:** Most meal kit services provide options for vegetarian and gluten-free diets.

## CONS

**Cost:** Meal kits average \$10-\$15 per person, per meal. Purchasing the groceries yourself and doing your own prep work is less expensive. If you usually eat out though, the cost of a meal kit dinner can be less expensive.

**Ingredients:** Not all meal kit services use high-quality ingredients like organic produce and organic and grass-fed meats. The ingredients are also perishable so you'll need to make your meals within a few days of delivery.

**Meal Size:** As we saw in the Pros list, portion control can be a pro, but if you are active and usually eat more than a single serving size, the portions may not be large enough to satisfy your hunger.

**Weekly Online Planning:** Most services allow you to choose your own meals, but you'll need to do this at least once a week or you'll need to pause your service if you don't want to receive meal kits that week. Otherwise, you'll be charged for your shipment and you'll receive meal kits for recipes the service chose for you and they may be meals you don't like.

**Excess Packaging:** All ingredients are packed and labeled individually, usually in a single size package that may be larger than needed. This produces a lot of packaging. Fortunately, it's usually recyclable, but there's still a significant amount to deal with.

There are both pros and cons of meal kits, only you can know what would work best for your household. Many services allow you a "trial" period to test the service at a discount. If you're considering using a meal kit service, try it out for a week or two before committing to make sure it's the best option for you.

If you're looking for more tips and suggestions for dining on a budget, check out our comprehensive guide to spending less on groceries.

*Article written by Emilie Burke. Emilie writes about overcoming debt, while balancing trying to eat healthy, stay fit, and have a little fun along the way. You can find more of her work at [BurkeDoes.com](http://BurkeDoes.com).*

*Retrieved June 14, 2018, from <http://www.moneymanagement.org>.*

