

# Healthy Exchange

HELPING YOUR COMPANY'S MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE — EMPLOYEES

## For Your Information

### BETTER SLEEP

If you find your mind racing while trying to go to sleep, keep a pad of paper next to your bed and jot down what's on your mind. If you find yourself unable to sleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed, go into another room and engage in a calming activity until you feel ready to sleep.

### HEADACHE PREVENTION

Concentrating on your computer screen for a long time can cause eyestrain which in turn can cause temporary head pain and fatigue. Take occasional "eye breaks" by looking away from your computer screen and into the distance. This will give your eyes relief.



### EASE FINANCIAL STRESS

Help get financial stress under control by curbing your spending. For most people, overspending and having too much debt is the cause of money problems – it is not because they are not making enough money. Learn basic money management skills. Commit to living within your means.



## Living a Healthier Lifestyle

### Healthier Ways to Manage Stress

According to the latest *Stress in America* survey conducted annually by the American Psychological Association, 75 percent of Americans reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress in the past month (24% extreme, 51% moderate) and nearly half reported that their stress has increased in the past year (42%). Additionally, the study respondents reported the following as a result of stress:

- 47% report lying awake at night due to stress
- 45% report experiencing irritability or anger
- 43% report being fatigued
- 40% report lack of interest, motivation or energy
- 34% report headaches
- 34% report feeling depressed or sad
- 32% report feeling as though they could cry
- 27% report upset stomach or indigestion as a result of stress



What about you? Are you aware of the stress in your life? Do you manage stress in healthy or unhealthy ways?

#### Stress dangers

Stress is the tension or pressure we feel as a result of the demands, hassles, frustrations and upsets of daily life. Some stress is positive. It causes our bodies to release stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, which rouse the body and brain to meet challenges. But at a certain point, when too much stress becomes constant and persists over an extended period of time, stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to your health.

Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. According to the American Institute of Stress, 75 to 90 percent of all health problems are related to stress. The most-recent medical science reports that too much stress can raise blood pressure, cause sleep disorders, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility, speed up the aging process, and rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety and depression. How well you manage the stress in your life is vitally important to your health, your mood, your relationships, your productivity and your quality of life.

#### Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

The health consequences of chronic stress are made worse when stress is managed poorly. The coping methods below, while common, may give temporary relief from stress, but cause more damage in the long run:

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# Preventing Binge Drinking In Teens And College Students

With teens and college students returning to school at the end of this summer, parents must be aware of the dangers of binge drinking. Binge drinking is generally defined as having five or more drinks of alcohol (male), or 4 or more drinks (female), in about two hours.

According to the most recent statistics from the Center of Disease Control, 26 percent of 9th through 12th graders reported binge drinking at least once during the past 30 days. The prevalence of binge drinking was nearly the same for females as males. On college campuses, the most recent Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study estimates that approximately 44 percent of college students are binge drinkers.



## What are the risks of binge drinking?

The dangers of binge drinking are far more serious than hangovers. These risks include: alcohol poisoning, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, unintentional injuries (e.g. motor vehicle accidents, falls, burns, drowning and hypothermia) and violence (homicide, suicide, domestic violence and sexual assault). In 2000, the *Journal of American College Health* reported that college students who frequently binge drink were 21 times more likely than non-binge drinkers to:

- Be hurt or injured
- Drive a car after drinking
- Engage in unprotected sex
- Engage in unplanned sexual activity

## What parents can do

Parenting experts recommend discussing alcohol and drinking with your child from a young age. A large body of research shows that, contrary to popular opinion, even during the teen years, parents have an enormous influence on their children's behaviors, values and decisions about drinking. One recent study reported that mother-teen conversations about alcohol and the consequences of drinking were helpful in preventing binge drinking in college freshman.

To help prevent binge drinking, parenting experts recommend that parents communicate about alcohol and the consequences of drinking and establish clear and firm family expectations about alcohol or other substance use. Search the internet or visit your local library or book store for resources with strategies for communicating to your child about alcohol, ways to spot warning signs of potential drinking problems and the necessary actions to help teens resist alcohol.

## Your EAP is here to help

If you think that you or one of your dependents may have a problem with alcohol or other drug use, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help you.

## Healthier Ways...

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**Emotional eating** – According to the *Stress in America* survey, 28 percent of Americans say they turn to food to help alleviate stress or help deal with problems. Comfort eaters report higher levels of stress than average and exhibit higher levels of all the most common symptoms of stress, including fatigue, lack of energy, nervousness, irritability, and trouble sleeping. Additionally, comfort eaters are twice as likely as the average American to be obese.

**Using alcohol** – Using alcohol to deal with stress is never a good idea. Using alcohol, like the use of any drug, can lead to problems of abuse or dependence. If you regularly use alcohol to relieve stress there is a risk that you will require more and more alcohol to get the stress-relieving effect you are seeking. Additionally, using alcohol doesn't help you think more clearly or problem-solve effectively to find solutions to the problem that is creating the stress in the first place.



**Smoking** – Just as with emotional eating and using alcohol above, smoking does not help solve your problem, it only hides it. The cause of your problem remains. And, the relief from smoking only lasts a short time. Soon your stress returns and you will feel the need to smoke another cigarette. Additionally, smoking actually causes more stress than it relieves. According to the American Heart Association, smoking is the single most alterable risk factor contributing to early death in the U.S.

If you practice any of these unhealthy behaviors, it is recommended that you cut back or eliminate these behaviors and adopt healthier strategies to manage stress.

## Healthy strategies for managing stress

Stress becomes a problem when the pressure from stress exceeds your ability to cope. If you are feeling overwhelmed by stress, you can start taking control of the stress in your life by following the suggestions below:

### 1. Ask yourself: What specific problems or conflicts are troubling me and how can I deal with each of these problems effectively?

Rather than focusing on how to cope with stress, answering this question will put you on course to prevent or eliminate much of your stress by helping you determine the root cause(s) of your stress. To lower the amount of stress in your life, become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions to stress. Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Determine how your body responds to stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset? If so, in what specific ways? Think about when, and why, you feel stressed. Devise ways to change, manage or avoid the problems that trigger your stress.

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## Healthier Ways...

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### 2. Identify the ways you “think” yourself to higher levels of stress.

Stress is a product of the mind and therefore something you can control. Stress isn't something that happens to you, but rather how you think about what is happening, or what has happened. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it worse? Are you overreacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you worry about things that are out of your control? Do you feel you have to be perfect all of the time? Simply put, stressful thoughts cause stress. Work at adopting more moderate views. Put stressful situations in perspective.

### 3. Increase your ability to withstand stress.

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical and emotional health.

● **Exercise regularly.** Make the commitment to exercise most days for at least 30 minutes. Nothing beats exercise as a way to dissipate stress, lift your energy and boost your mood. What types of exercise are best? Cardiovascular exercise (such as brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming or other aerobic activity), weight training and yoga have all been shown in studies to reduce tension and anxiety and improve your emotional state.

● **Learn how to relax.** Here's a stress-reducing technique that you can practice any time, any where, for immediate relief. Give your body and mind the break they need from stress by practicing slow, deep breathing. Here's what to do: Close your eyes and inhale slowly and deeply through your nose (approx. 7 seconds), then exhale slowly through your mouth (approx. 8 seconds). If you prefer, say “relax” or “calm” or another soothing word as you exhale. Do this for 5 minutes, 3 times a day. This technique of deep breathing will calm your brain, relax your body and help bring your heart rate and respiration back to normal. Yoga, meditation or listening to quiet music are other relaxation techniques that can help you reduce your everyday stress levels and build your resiliency to stress.

● **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** A strong support network is a powerful protection against stress. Stay connected to your family, friends and other supportive people in your life. Instead of keeping your feelings or frustrations bottled

# Helping A Friend Or Family Member In An Abusive Relationship

Watching a family member, friend or colleague going through an abusive relationship is difficult and frustrating. The National Domestic Violence Hotline advises the following for effectively helping a family member or friend who is being abused:



**Don't be afraid to let him or her know that you are concerned for their safety.** Help your friend or family member recognize the abuse. Tell him or her you see what is going on and that you want to help. Help them recognize that what is happening is not “normal” and that they deserve a healthy, non-violent relationship.

**Acknowledge that he or she is in a very difficult and scary situation.** Let your friend or family member know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure him or her that they are not alone and that there is help and support available.

**Be supportive.** Listen to your friend or family member. Remember that it may be difficult for him or her to talk about the abuse. Let him or her know that you are available to help whenever they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen to them.

**Be non-judgmental.** Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. He or she may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize his or her decisions or try to guilt them. He or she will need your support even more during those times.

**Encourage him or her to participate in activities outside of the relationship with friends or family.**

**Help him or her develop a safety plan.**

**Encourage him or her to talk to people who can provide help and guidance.** Find a local domestic violence agency that provides counseling or support groups. Offer to go with him or her to talk to family and friends. If he or she has to go to the police, court or a lawyer, offer to go along for moral support.

**Remember that you cannot “rescue” him or her.** Although it is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately the person getting hurt has to be the one to decide that they want to do something about it. It's important for you to support him or her and help them find a way to safety and peace.

**Get advice.** If you want to talk to someone to get advice about a particular situation, contact a local domestic violence program or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224. NDVH is a nonprofit organization that provides crisis intervention, information and referral to victims of domestic violence, perpetrators, friends and families.

up inside, talk about your problems or feelings with a close friend, family member, counselor or with the person(s) involved. Oftentimes, simply talking about your difficulties will help you start to feel better. Also, consider writing down your thoughts and feelings. Putting problems on paper can assist you in clarifying the situation and developing a new perspective.

● **Eat a healthy diet.** You are much more vulnerable to stress when you're hungry and lethargic than when you're well-nourished. Start your day right with breakfast and keep your energy up and your

mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day. Limit your consumption of caffeine and sugar. The temporary “highs” caffeine and sugar provide often end with a crash in mood and energy, making you more vulnerable to stress. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and sleep better.

● **Get enough sleep.** People who are chronically stressed almost always suffer from fatigue and people who are tired do not cope well with stress. When distressed

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people get more sleep, they feel better and are more resilient and adaptable in dealing with day-to-day events. Make adequate sleep a priority. Research suggests that most healthy adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

### Seek professional help

How do you know when it is time to seek professional help? According to the American Psychological Association, the following are indicators:

- You feel trapped, like there's nowhere to turn
- You worry excessively and can't concentrate
- The way you feel affects your sleep, your eating habits, your job, your relationships, your everyday life.

### Your EAP is here to help

If you're having difficulty coping with stress or anxiety, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help you.

Inova Employee Assistance (IEA) is a confidential service that is designed to assist you and your household members with a variety of personal problems that can negatively impact your job performance, or your personal life. We stand ready to serve you, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For additional information, or to access any of our services, contact Inova Employee Assistance at:

**800-346-0110 Telephone**  
**877-845-6465 TDD**  
[www.inova.org/eap](http://www.inova.org/eap)



# Creative Solutions

## For the Demands of Life and Work.

### Elder Care Resources Include:

- Adult day care centers
- Assisted living centers
- Nursing homes
- Transportation services
- Nutrition services
- Respite care
- Home care services
- Geriatric health and mental health

### Child Care Services Include:

- Nursery and/or preschools
- Emergency and back-up care programs
- Before-after school programs
- Care for mildly ill children
- Child care centers
- In-home care agencies
- Family day care and group homes
- Nanny/au pair agencies
- Summer camps

### Adoption Services

- U.S. adoption agencies
- International adoption agencies
- Adoption support groups

### Resources for Children with Special Needs

- ADD/ADHD
- Disability
- Autism

### Parental Services

- Birthing classes
- Support groups
- Exercise and nutrition
- Parent education

### Educational Resources

- Identify appropriate schools
- Navigate the application process
- Evaluate educational consultants
- Apply for grants, scholarships and financial aid

### Health and Wellness Resources

- Exercise program
- Holistic care
- Nutrition counselors
- Personal trainers
- Self-help programs

### Pet Services

- Veterinarians
- Boarding facilities
- Pet sitters
- Association and groups
- Groomers
- Obedience trainers

### Convenience Services

- Entertainment, recreation and sports venues
- Event and party planners
- Grocery shopping
- Housekeeping
- Lawn maintenance
- Real estate and relocation professionals

### For confidential assistance, contact:

**1-800-346-0110**  
[www.inova.org/eap](http://www.inova.org/eap)

**TDD# for the hearing impaired:**  
**1-877-845-6465 (TDD)**



**INOVA® EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE**