

Your EAP|Here4TN!

for you and your family

PARTNERS
FOR HEALTH
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM

Simple Steps Toward Emotional Wellness

Life is difficult. No one can deny that we face new challenges each day. But to be ready to respond to life's curves and move forward, we need good emotional health and wellness.

Being emotionally well means that you are able to positively respond to the challenges you face.

You can't avoid hardship and difficult situations. But learning to bounce back from tough times—to be resilient—is a key part of emotional wellness. Taking some simple, positive steps can help you get there.

- **Value and nurture your connections with others.** Stay close with friends and family. They can help you work through problems and see the brighter side of things.
- **Strive to maintain a positive attitude.** Challenge negative thoughts and reactions when they occur. With conscious daily effort, you can learn to be more positive in your outlook toward challenges.
- **Seek balance.** If you don't devote enough time to rest, recreation, and family time, and stress can build up and impact your health. It's important to take breaks and schedule time just for you.
- **Follow healthy habits.** Make sure to eat a balanced diet and get enough rest. Avoid using unhealthy substances such as alcohol, tobacco or drugs to cope with difficult emotions. Also, getting 30 minutes or so of exercise per day is a great way to ward off stress, depression and anxiety.
- **Tackle problems with a plan.** If you sometimes feel overwhelmed, step back from a problem, analyze it, and create a step-by-step plan to solve it.
- **Actively practice stress relief.** Learn a relaxation technique such as progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, tai chi, or meditation.
- **Remember to laugh.** Don't take things too seriously. Try to see the humor in life, and have a good, healthy laugh.
- **Pursue a fun, creative hobby.** It's important to have an enjoyable activity you can fall back on when you need a break. Most hobbies allow you to relax and unplug.
- **Be ready for change every day.** Change is a constant in life. Why not look at change as a way of keeping your life fresh and exciting?

It's a new year with lots of possibilities. But maybe you need some help to go in the right direction. Perhaps you'd like to set some new goals for yourself, while learning how to identify and deal with potential roadblocks. Maybe you need a better plan for stress management this year. Or you'd like to learn some new ways to handle difficult emotions.

Your ParTNers EAP is in place to help you with such life challenges. Through coaching, counseling and resources, the EAP can help you solve problems and move forward positively. You can reach our caring professional staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call us at **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486). Confidential counseling—provided face-to-face or by telephone to fit your schedule—is available at no cost to you and your family members.

Also, the www.HERE4TN.com website offers tools and resources to help you learn about improving your emotional wellness. On the site you can also search for a counseling professional in your area. Log on!



Get Back to Being Healthy

After the holidays it might seem hard to get back into a healthy routine. You may have eaten a few extra cookies or ignored your to-do list. But there are plenty of things you can do to get back to better health. While you'll want to make changes over time, focus on small, gradual steps at first. Don't overwhelm yourself with dramatic changes such as six-day-per-week workouts or going cold turkey on all your favorite foods. Or even trying to cross off all your to-do's in one day. Some tips:

- **Start with a can-do attitude.** If you tell yourself that you have the power to make positive changes—that you can do it—you'll be more likely to succeed. You'll have more willpower when, for example, you're tempted to make poor choices.
- **Develop and draw on a support system.** Share your goals with key people in your life. They may be able to help when you need encouragement. This can be anyone who's on your side: a friend or workout partner, your family, or a supportive coworker.
- **Try to be more active.** We can all benefit from moving more, so take every opportunity to do so. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Park a bit further away from work and the store. Schedule a daily ten-minute walk. Take brief breaks during the day to stretch and move. It all adds up to better health.
- **Focus on changing habits.** Identify things that have not been healthy choices for you. Examples could be drinking high calorie soft drinks, not getting enough sleep, or putting too much stress on yourself. Try to focus on small things you can change. Cut out one of the sugared sodas you drink, or try to go to sleep an hour earlier each night.
- **Finally, don't give up.** Changing a habit is a minute-by-minute process. It's all about small choices you make throughout the day. Be confident that you can do it, one step at a time.



Kick the Year off Right

Now that the calendar has rolled over to 2014, it's a good time to regroup and set out some fresh goals for the upcoming year. Some tips can include:

- **Be realistic in setting goals.** It's important to move forward, but don't shoot for goals so high that you'll give up. If you do get off track during the year, get back up and try again!
- **Be specific in your goals.** Use dates, times, amounts—any form of measurement that helps you set clear goal targets. For example, lose 5 pounds by July 1, work up to 40 pushups a day, or walk outside twice a week, etc.
- **Put your plan in writing.** Writing down your resolutions will help you 1) maintain a clear sense of what you're trying to accomplish, and 2) chart your progress.
- **Share your goals.** If you get stuck or need a boost in reaching your goals, talk with a friend or family member about it. You might get some new ideas.
- **Track your progress and reward yourself.** Mark even your smallest progress toward your goals. Take pride in your efforts!

Need help setting goals? Call us at 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486) at any time, day or night for assistance.

How exercise can improve your emotional wellness

According to research, exercise may improve mental health by helping the brain cope better with stress.

Research suggests that physically active people have lower rates of anxiety and depression than sedentary people. But little work has focused on why that should be. To determine how exercise might bring about its mental health benefits, some researchers are looking at possible links between exercise and brain chemicals associated with stress, anxiety, and depression.

So far there's little evidence for the popular theory that exercise causes a rush of endorphins. Rather, one line of research points to the less familiar neuromodulator norepinephrine, which may help the brain deal with stress more efficiently.



Since the late 1980's research with animals has found that exercise increases brain concentrations of norepinephrine in brain regions involved in the body's stress response.

Norepinephrine is particularly interesting to researchers because 50 percent of the brain's

supply is produced in the part of the brain that connects most of the brain regions and involves emotional and stress responses. The chemical is thought to play a major role in changing the action of other neurotransmitters that play a direct role in the stress response.

But some psychologists don't think it's a simple matter of more norepinephrine equals less stress and anxiety and therefore less depression. Instead, they think exercise impacts depression and anxiety by enhancing the body's ability to respond to stress.

Biologically, exercise seems to give the body a chance to practice dealing with stress. It forces the body's physiological systems. The cardiovascular system communicates with the renal system, which communicates with the muscular system. And all of these are controlled by the central and sympathetic nervous systems, which also must communicate with each other. This workout of the body's communication system may be the true value of exercise; the more sedentary we get, the less efficient our bodies in responding to stress.

Now That's An Idea!

Quick tips on how to change a bad habit!

Think before you act! People make thousands of decisions each day. Try to be more aware of what you are doing and eliminate the behavior you are trying to stop.

Stay focused. Being completely focused on the things you do will help you stay on track. You might want to change a small behavior and a great way to do this is focus on what it is you want to change about yourself.

Follow through. Be true to yourself and follow through with the goals you set. If you are trying to de-stress your life, think about the things that add stress and try to contain those things.

Make a change for you. If there is a bad habit you are trying to stop, make sure you are quitting for the right reasons. Do it for yourself.

Make a list. Keep yourself organized as best you can. Keeping yourself focused and organized will help you follow through and keep any commitments you made to yourself.

