



April

## Member Newsletter

### The best Rx for better health: Counter stress!

Living in a time of a global conflict and a lingering pandemic have increased uncertainty, adding to our personal stress—which, in turn, can build up and harm our health in countless ways. Chronic stress elevates cortisol, the so-called stress hormone that influences everything from moods, appetite, and sleep to our immune response and flare-ups of chronic conditions. Renewing your commitment to stress-busting activities may help keep you healthy in the following ways:



**Reduce belly fat.** Brisk walking and other fat-burning cardiovascular activities may help counter cortisol's link to increased accumulated abdominal fat, associated with heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic conditions.



**Clear up a foggy memory.** Taking a mindfulness break to focus on your breath in the present moment throughout the day may help suppress the cortisol output that affects brain neurotransmitters, helping to clear your head.



**Calm troubled skin.** Getting proper sleep, exercising, and using relaxation techniques could help quell acne breakouts, rashes, and flare-ups of eczema and other skin conditions. Elevated cortisol levels raises blood sugar, which can damage the collagen and elastin that helps keep the skin smooth and healthy.



**Soothe achiness and pain.** Taking a break with a combination of relaxation and exercise can help break the link between chronic stress and chronic pain. Whether pain is caused by stress affecting the muscles, brain chemicals, or both, this much is clear: stress and pain increase each other and set the stage for chronic pain and chronic stress.



**Help ward off catching a cold.** Practice stress management regularly. Here's why: Chronic stress can affect the cells' ability to regulate the inflammatory response to fight the cold virus early and quickly.



**90 percent of primary care doctor visits are stress-related.**  
Take steps to control stress to protect your health.



### Need help to turn things around?

Talk to your healthcare practitioner or a qualified counselor for support and guidance, no matter what you are facing.

## You're more resilient than you think!

Facing a new challenge can be daunting and raises fears that you will remain stuck in a particular situation with no way out. But a careful review of how you faced obstacles in the past can remind you that you are stronger and more capable of moving through changes than you think. These questions can prompt you to remember your resilience to overcome previous hard times that you can draw on anytime.

### Did you...

**...Seek out practical information?** For example, finding tips to tackle debt can boost confidence to take the first step, then the next, and so on.

**...Make lifestyle adaptations?** For example, did you set up a makeshift remote office, or change your hours or a job to accommodate a disrupted family and work schedule? Change the way you prepared meals? Being resourceful in adapting to changing circumstances clearly demonstrates the ability to bounce back from setbacks!

**...Switch your inner self-talk from “I can’t” or “I won’t” to “I can” and “I will?”** Choosing positive self-talk helps stoke confidence and your chances of success.

**...Call on supportive people?** Reaching out to friends or experts to help get through the loss of a job, grief, or other situation is a sign of strength. Surround yourself with people who will cheer you on, remind you of your true worth as an individual, and help you feel strong.

**Remember,** everyone has the potential for extraordinary resilience, regardless of their current life situation. And every time you respond with resilience, your resilience grows stronger, allowing you to learn to depend on it.

## Benefits of boundary-setting

Are you the go-to person for your loved ones when they need help? If so, you are probably well aware that this can be stressful and take up a lot of your time and energy! Learning when—and how—to say no is an important pillar of self-care and overall well-being.



### Consider these benefits of boundary setting:

**Helps you know your worth.** When you become the go-to person for friends and family members—and maybe even coworkers—sometimes people may intentionally or unintentionally take advantage of your kindness and willingness to help. If you feel that you are repeatedly being asked in this manner, “no” is the best response to prevent this from continuing.

**Allows you to focus on your well-being.** Will helping cause you stress, emotional distress or negatively affect your well-being? If so, this might be a situation where you should say “no” to prioritize your well-being.

**Keeps your priorities at the top of your list.** Consider the impacts of saying “yes.” How will this affect things that are on your priority list? By setting boundaries your priorities, will in fact remain a priority, rather than being shifted by someone else’s needs.

**Sets the other person up for success.** Maybe the person needing your help is so accustomed to your support that they ask you before considering their other options. When you decline to help, be prepared to offer solutions so that they can still get the support they need and help them problem-solve their own issues.



**Don't feel ashamed by taking care of yourself first.** After all, if you are not taking care of yourself, how can you be there for others?

**For more help,** talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a licensed counselor.

## Alcohol Awareness Month

Want to quit or reduce your alcohol use? The first step is to recognize signs of dependency, which can gradually lead to addiction. **Take this quiz** to see if your drinking habits are at risk. **If you are concerned, reach out to a qualified counselor who can help you with stress and other triggers, and form healthier coping habits.**