

Employee Assistance Program

WELLNESS & SUPPORT

Self-Care Strategies

Things That Restore Me

(Examples: Being with friends, nature, music, reading, pets, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Weekly “Must-Do’s”

Pick 2 to 3 of the activities you named above and add them to your weekly schedule. Make a point to review your list each week and add new things as they come to you. Recommit each week to scheduling 2 to 3 activities for yourself—you can choose the same ones, but it can help to try something novel or that you’ve been wanting to do. Self-care takes planning and commitment, but the payoff is you more fulfilled and less stressed.

Exercise

Moving has huge benefits in reducing stress. Pick something physical you can do daily to offload the day’s challenges. It can be as simple as stretching at your desk, or as vigorous as running or Crossfit if you are in good health.

Check out the EAP website for some “deskercise” ideas at www.firstchoiceeap.com and enter username **whatcom** (all lowercase) and search **deskercise**. Talk with your doctor first before exercising if you have medical concerns.

Mindfulness

For an instant shift during a stressful moment, use all 5 senses, and describe something in detail: “The cup is red, cold, hard, smells like my morning coffee, etc.” Move on to something else in sight.

Try the radio station exercise. Sit quietly and just notice each sound in your space. Give yourself 5-10 minutes as an observer, tuning into each new sound or sensation in your body. This focused attention is a grounding technique to give your mind a rest from upsetting thoughts or emotions. If a distressing thought intrudes, just refocus and begin again.

4-7-8 Breathing

When we are under stress, we often breathe shallowly or even hold our breath without knowing we’re doing it. Conscious breathing has been recognized as effective way to decrease stress by increasing oxygen to the brain, which has a calming effect.

Try this while seated comfortably: inhale through your nose to the count of 4. Hold your breath for a count of 7 if you can, then exhale through your mouth for a count of 8. Try three to four breaths for a sense of serenity. Ask your doctor about this kind of breathing before you try it if you have respiratory conditions, or other medical concerns that might impact you comfortably trying this technique.

Mental Vacation

Imagining a favorite place you’ve been can offer a mini mental vacation during times of stress. While seated comfortably in a quiet place, close your eyes and picture as best you can somewhere you’d love to be. Be descriptive in your mind’s eye, imagine sounds and smells that might be there. Let yourself linger in this place for a little break from a stressful moment.

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