**What’s on Your Mind?**

Do you ever feel like your mind is going in a million directions at once? Information overload can lead to stress, negativity, and disorganization.

Try these steps to declutter your mind:

- **Challenge yourself but not too much.** When a task is too easy, you are likely to get bored. When it’s too hard, you may become frustrated and discouraged. Seek the Goldilocks zone of just-right difficulty.

- **Tame your emotional tiger.** Recognize your feelings, then take steps to manage them. Try deep breathing, challenging your negative thoughts, and problem solving vs. just plain worrying.

- **Stay focused.** You may not experience the zone (the ability to focus) until 20 minutes into a task, so set distractions aside and stick with the activity long enough to hit your stride.

- **Break it up.** Every hour or so, take 10 to 15 minutes to stretch, move, or do something different.

Review these steps as needed when you start a new project.

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**Too Much Sitting**

According to recent research, you are probably engaged in one of the most potentially damaging health behaviors affecting Americans—sitting. Staying parked in your seat for extended periods raises the risk of many serious conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. It also contributes to chronic problems such as back pain, arthritis, and varicose veins. The fix? Move more throughout the day.

- **Fidgeting.** Studies show that people who can’t sit still—who tap their fingers, jiggle their feet, stretch their arms, and squirm in their seats, for example—have lower mortality rates than those who sit still. Change positions and move your body in your chair periodically.

- **Getting up.** One study found that blood flow to leg arteries was reduced by more than half after six hours of sitting, but just 10 minutes of walking brought it back to normal. Stand up and walk around for at least a few minutes out of every hour—more frequently if possible.

- **Moving while you work.** Walk while you talk on the phone and stand up as you sort papers or update your calendar. Set your phone alarm or Outlook calendar to remind you to get up and stretch once an hour.

It’s important to get regular exercise. The CDC recommends 150 minutes weekly of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking. Add movement to your day whenever you can and make it a habit to just stand up.

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*Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (May 2019) TH Top Health*  
*Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2020) TP Top Performance.*
Collaboration at Work

Work brings together all kinds of people and personalities. And it’s that combination of ideas, backgrounds, ages, opinions, and skills that brings creativity and innovation to projects. When people connect and work well together, they also tend to enjoy their work more. They become more upbeat and productive. Of course, working together smoothly often calls for patience and a generous spirit of collaboration, especially when working remotely.

A good collaborator at work:
- Stays open-minded and non-judgmental when faced with different opinions.
- Treats everyone equally and respects differences.
- Takes responsibility for missteps and corrects them.
- Knows how to disagree and manage conflict constructively.
- Listens well to understand others.

To build your collaboration skills:
⇒ Concentrate on what’s being said, and what’s not said, so you can ask relevant questions and exchange ideas confidently.
⇒ Soften your critique. Focus on the flaws of a concept or end product, not on the person supplying it.
⇒ Make sure your coworkers can depend on you.
⇒ Encourage coworkers to slow down or take a break to avoid conflict.
⇒ Support your coworkers, acknowledge their efforts and celebrate their achievements.

When people recognize why their work matters within a group, they tend to work with more enthusiasm and cooperation.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2020) TP Top Performance.

Success Tips for Life and Work

Manage your time. Group errands together instead of making several trips. Do one cleaning task or one load of laundry per day rather than saving it all until your day off. At work, add time estimates to each task on your to-do list and stick to them.

Accept imperfection. Ask yourself: Is a clean house more important than time with my family? Is missing out on sleep worth putting your work productivity and safety at risk? Recognize that you may have unrealistic expectations. Set reachable goals.

Sleep more. Don’t let fatigue cause you to miss family events or slow down productivity. Exhaustion means you aren’t at your best for anyone. Make getting enough sleep priority No. 1 and better balance will follow.

Protect your leisure time. Avoid filling all your off-work hours. Leave some of them for fun, family, friends and relaxation. Reach out for support. Be honest about how work affects you, and tell people when you are tired, need to sleep, or need to reschedule or cancel commitments.

Ask for help. You may be surprised by the support network you have. Talking with a counselor, minister, mentor or trusted friend can help when you are overwhelmed. Banish guilt. Taking care of yourself means saying “no” sometimes. If that allows you to approach life and work with more energy, then there’s no reason for guilt.

Source: Balancing Shiftwork and Family (Brochure). Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (2013)
Developing Patience

Some people seem born patient. Others feel impatient several times a day. You may sense it building before you express it. Once spoken, it can have negative consequences for the people in your life.

**Learn to recognize your personal signs of escalating impatience:** frustration, muscle tension, clenching teeth, anxiety, irritability, rushing, and shallow breathing. They signal it’s time to step back and change your reaction.

**Stop the cycle.** Reacting to situations with anger and frustration may provide emotional instant gratification that is ultimately self-defeating. Accept those feelings for what they are, but practice responding in more positive ways.

**Tune up self-talk.** Impatience often results from the negative loop playing inside your head, which tells you “I don’t like this,” or “This isn’t going my way.” Slow down and tune into your inner voice during moments when you’re impatient. Then find a way to manage that discomfort more successfully, as you keep in mind the end goal.

**Take a break.** When you’re feeling agitated, try to move away, mentally or physically. Take a walk, do relaxation stretches, call a friend, or spend time in quiet reflection. Once you are calm, return to the situation with a fresh outlook.

**You can improve your emotional outlook by building good health:** Regular exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep. You will have more patience when you are well rested and feeling your best.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2020) TP Top Performance.

*“Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.” — Aristotle*

Working from Home

Where would you fall on the spectrum of enjoying working from home or being back at the office? Maybe you go back and forth depending on your mood or what your responsibilities are at home on any given day. If you would like to find a little more joy working remotely, check out the article on Ideas.Ted.com titled *9 Things You Can Do to Make Working From Home More Joyful* by Ingrid Fetell Lee (April 15, 2020). You may find some helpful tips that inspire you to liven up your working from home experience.
Use EAP for Acute Stress

EAP Coordinators do more than help employees solve problems. They also possess good listening and empathy skills and provide emotional support that offers relief from the anguish an employee may be feeling caused by a life crisis, difficult time, or even grim personal circumstances. Don’t dismiss asking UAlbany EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson for help, even if you believe that “EAP can do nothing to help me in this situation.” Don’t live in fear, lose sleep, become physically ill, or experience a constant sense of foreboding doom by “going it alone.” Instead, partner with the EAP for support that can help you through a difficult period.

The mission of UAlbany EAP is to provide services to support a healthy, productive workforce. Available to all employees is the voluntary, confidential Information, Assessment, and Referral Service provided by UAlbany EAP Coordinator, Brenda Seckerson. Take advantage of this confidential assistance available to you as an employee benefit.

While no in-person appointments are available due to the current COVID-19 related concerns, virtual appointments for confidential Information, Assessment and Referral Services with EAP are still available by phone and email.

Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
518-442-5483
bseckerson@albany.edu
EAP Website: http://www.albany.edu/eap

**NOTICE:** Starting June 1, 2020, my work schedule will be Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8 am—4 pm. If you need to speak with someone immediately for confidential referral information on days when I am not available, please contact the NYS EAP office at 518-486-9769. If it is not an emergency, I will respond to your request as soon as I return.

If you are experiencing domestic violence...NYS launched a new texting program and confidential service to help New Yorkers experiencing domestic violence. Abuse victims are often closely watched by their abuser, making these tools needed. You are not alone and you do not have to stay in a dangerous situation.

Text 844-997-2121 or visit www.opdv.ny.gov to confidentially chat with a professional at any time of day or night.

**New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline:**
1-800-942-6906 https://opdv.ny.gov/help/you-are-not-alone.html
Do Less, Sleep More

The all-nighter, once the purview of high school and college students, has migrated to the workplace. In fact, you may have heard coworkers bragging about how little sleep they get or how late they stay up working on personal or professional projects. Are you skimping on sleep to get more done? To achieve more and increase productivity, the best strategy for most people is going to bed early.

Reviewing the habits of highly productive people shows they share some characteristics:

- They don’t pull all-nighters. In fact, many go to bed quite early and rise early as well.
- They don’t sacrifice sleep to get more accomplished.
- They don’t sleep with electronics or mobile devices.
- Many don’t need an alarm clock to wake up.

Certainly, lack of sleep lowers productivity. The National Sleep Foundation says most adults require 7 to 9 hours to be at their best. Its 2019 Sleep in America poll revealed that disciplined sleepers (75% of those surveyed) were almost 3.5 times more likely to say they felt well-rested on a typical weekday than those with poor sleep habits (22%).

To get more done, don’t fight your fatigue and lose valuable rest. You won’t work at your top capacity, and you’ll accumulate a sleep debt that drains your energy in the days ahead. Instead, turn out the light, log off, unplug, and turn in. You’ll get more done tomorrow with plenty of rest behind you.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (May 2020) TP Top Performance.

All About Food Cravings

Do you often long for salty potato chips or sweet chocolate? People tend to crave non-nutritious foods that are high in salt, sugar, or fat (or a combination). Can cravings be explained? Some researchers have hypothesized that we want foods that contain nutrients our body lacks, but science has not fully supported this. Instead, cravings are likely the result of a blend of factors including:

- High stress
- Lack of sleep, which can affect hormone levels
- Forbidding oneself from eating certain foods
- Associations (such as craving popcorn during a movie)
- Hormonal changes
- Emotions—such as sadness, which may lead to emotional eating
- Thirst or dehydration

To combat cravings, start by eating meals that contain enough protein to make you feel full. Studies show that adequate protein (about 20 to 30 grams per meal) can decrease cravings by up to 60%. Also, make sure to stay well hydrated by drinking water all day long. If cravings pop up when you’re sleep deprived or stressed, try incorporating better lifestyle habits, such as turning off devices an hour before bedtime. Deprivation doesn’t work for many people, who prefer to enjoy a small portion of what they crave. Does this sound like you? If so, enjoy your favorite food mindfully. That means you eat a reasonable portion to satisfy the craving, and savor every delicious bite with all of your senses.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2019) TH Top Health
Resources to Help You and Your Family Through the COVID-19 Experience

What follows is the list of resources EAP has collected over these last few weeks to support you and your family’s health and well-being. The most recent resources collected are at the top of the list in each category.

Working From Home:
- “8 Tips for Staying Productive While Working From Home” by Kelsey Libert
- “5 Tips for Staying Productive and Mentally Healthy While You’re Working From Home

Financial Well-Being:
- Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Rochester: https://www.cccsofrochester.org/
- Consumer Finance Information: Protecting your Finances During the Coronavirus Pandemic https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/
- SEFCU Financial Relief Programs: https://www.sefcu.com/financial-relief-programs
- Food Pantries for the Capital Region: http://www.thefoodpantries.org/covid-19-food-access-information-.html

Stress Management, Physical Fitness, and Mental Health:
- Free Webinar Series For Parents of Teens, and for Young Adults - The New-York Presbyterian Youth Anxiety Center is offering a free webinar series for teens, young adults, and another for their parents to share strategies for resilience in challenging times. https://www.nyp.org/youthanxiety/important-notice
- Free online bedtime floor yoga session on YouTube presented by professionally certified Kripalu yoga instructor Judi England.
- Deskercise! 20 Ways To Get Moving While You Work: https://www.nchpad.org/fppics/deskercise%20poster_updated.pdf
- Physical Activity for People with Disability: https://www.cdc.gov/features/fitness-disabilities/index.html
- Physical Activities Around New York – Hiking: https://wellnys.goer.ny.gov/Physical_Activity/hiking.cfm
- Free meditation and mindfulness resource for all New York State residents provided by Headspace: www.headspace.com/ny

NOTE: If you have trouble with a link, please copy the resource name and do a search.
Resources to Help You and Your Family Through the COVID-19 Experience (con’t)

Stress Management, Physical Fitness, and Mental Health (con’t):

- This Pandemic of Grief by Center for Loss | Mar 18, 2020 | Article by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
- Covid-19: Fear Zone, Learning Zone, Growth Zone | Check Your Mental Zone Now
- Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook: A Tool to Help You Build Resilience During Difficult Times - This resource provide tips, tools, strategies, and food-for-thought about how to address any anxiety you might be experiencing during these uncertain times.
- New York State Office of Addiction Services and Support: [https://oasas.ny.gov/](https://oasas.ny.gov/)
- Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [https://www.albany.edu/eap/images/SAMHSA_Coping_With_Stress_Infectious_Disease_Outbreak.pdf](https://www.albany.edu/eap/images/SAMHSA_Coping_With_Stress_Infectious_Disease_Outbreak.pdf)
- The Ohio State University has a campaign called JustBreathe which focuses on breathing techniques. This web page guides you in syncing your breathing for relaxation and stress reduction. [https://yp4h.osu.edu/justbreathe](https://yp4h.osu.edu/justbreathe)
- Dr. Andrew Weil’s website has breathing techniques that can help to increase a sense of calm. [https://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/stress-anxiety/breathing-three-exercises/](https://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/stress-anxiety/breathing-three-exercises/)
- Oprah Winfrey and Deepak Chopra ‘s 21 Day Meditation Challenge: Finding Hope in Uncertain Times - Free
- DeStressMonday.org: DeStress Monday is an initiative of The Monday Campaigns, a nonprofit public health initiative associated with Columbia, Johns Hopkins and Syracuse Universities. It helps people put a positive start on each week, while reducing stress throughout the week. [https://www.destressmonday.org/](https://www.destressmonday.org/)
- YMCAs have posted on YouTube video fitness classes to do from the comfort of your home. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOGt_ipCeP_xQhhCMCrut_A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOGt_ipCeP_xQhhCMCrut_A)
Resources to Help You and Your Family Through COVID-19 Experience (con’t)

Resources/Activities for Children and Parents/Caregivers:


- Child care and information for families: Brightside Up, local child care resource and referral agency, is available to assist you with child care issues that arise due to the COVID 19 crisis. Contact them online at [www.brightsideup.org](http://www.brightsideup.org) or by calling one of their Family Educators at 518-426-7181. [https://mailchi.mp/brightsideup/covid19?mc_cid=480585beb5&mc_eid=193439068f](https://mailchi.mp/brightsideup/covid19?mc_cid=480585beb5&mc_eid=193439068f)

- New York State Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies by County: [https://www.albany.edu/eap/images/NYS_Child_Care_Resource_and_Referral_Agencies(1).pdf](https://www.albany.edu/eap/images/NYS_Child_Care_Resource_and_Referral_Agencies(1).pdf)

- Parent Teacher Association (PTA): Coronavirus Family Resources [https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/coronavirus-information](https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/coronavirus-information)

- Scholastic Inc. [https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/coronavirus.html](https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/coronavirus.html)


- Cincinnati Zoo "Home Safari Facebook Live" [http://cincinnatizoo.org/home-safari-resources/](http://cincinnatizoo.org/home-safari-resources/)


- Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History Virtual Tour (And check out other national museums' virtual tours!) [https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour](https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour)

COVID-19 Support: New York State Office of Mental Health: If you are overwhelmed, the NYS COVID-19 Emotional Support Line is staffed by specially trained volunteers who can help. 1-844-863-9314 [https://omh.ny.gov/](https://omh.ny.gov/)

Health Insurance Quick Links

Should you or a family member need access to your health insurance benefits related to COVID-19, here are the quick links that outline the coverage and assistance you can get from your plan.

NYSHIP Empire Plan: [https://www.empireblue.com/nys/](https://www.empireblue.com/nys/)


MVP: [https://www.mvphealthcare.com/covid19 1-833-693-7669](https://www.mvphealthcare.com/covid19)

Empire Blue Cross: [https://www.empireblue.com/coronavirus/individual-and-family/](https://www.empireblue.com/coronavirus/individual-and-family/)
Preparing for a Staycation

COVID-19 has forced many of us to cancel travel plans for vacation and to experience a staycation at home instead. Consider taking steps to make that first day back to your home office from your staycation a less stressful one.

Here’s how to maintain some of that relaxed feeling back at work.

- **Plan a day to get settled.** Return from your staycation a day before you’re due back at work, so you can get organized and perhaps check your messages so you know what lies ahead.
- **Set realistic goals.** Realize that everything probably won’t be finished and tied up neatly before you leave. Complete what you can, and delegate or reschedule the rest whenever possible.
- **Get coverage.** Identify people who can do important tasks while you’re away. Prepare them for what they’ll be doing and leave detailed instructions.
- **Plan your first day back.** Avoid scheduling video or conference calls for your first post-vacation day if you can. Make a to-do list of priority tasks to address.
- **Clean your area.** Finally, tidy up your home office, even if it’s just the dining room table, so you’ll be greeted after vacation with a fresh space that’s ready for work.

What Have You Discovered During COVID-19?

*Reflections by Brenda Seckerson, Your EAP Coordinator*

As I reflect on the conversations I’ve had over these last 10 weeks since we have had our routines and lives altered due to COVID-19, I’m struck by the discoveries that many individuals have made. Granted, there have been feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration to contend with. But the flipside has been some positive revelations that have the possibility of leading to important changes that will support health and well-being. Here are a few I’ve noted.

**Sleep**—The removal of long commutes has allowed some individuals to experience more sufficient sleep. With this comes the recognition of how important sleep is to feeling energetic and healthier overall. Perhaps this will lead to upgrading the priority of sleep when this is all over.

**Living more simply**—Staying at home, less hectic schedules, less time out running errands that may or may not really be necessary in the first place, spending less money, finding new ways of entertaining ourselves and our children that are low-tech (board games, puzzles, walks, crafts)—all of these behaviors seem to be helping people recognize the difference between needs versus wants.

**Letting go**—The uncertainty of these times has prompted many to focus on what is within our control and what is not. Letting go has literally played out in doing a lot of cleaning out of basements, garages, etc., and letting go of “stuff” that is no longer needed. **Re-organizing and re-prioritizing** various aspects of life are also part of this letting go process.

What discoveries have you made during COVID-19 that you will want to carry over into what will become our new normal, so to speak? I hope you’re finding some silver linings during this unique hiatus that will enhance your well-being.
Is Past Trauma Still Affecting You?

Can past traumatic events affect your health today, even if you hardly ever think about them anymore? You may have “moved past” those memories of abuse, assault, or involvement in a disaster you experienced years ago, but if perceived as fearful enough—and you may not recall just how much—a type of invisible assault on the brain may have occurred involving stress responses of the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex. Effects can persist for years, contribute to nightmares, help explain your jumpiness, or perhaps why you’re easily startled, or struggle with vulnerability in relationships. Seven to eight percent of people will experience post-traumatic stress disorder at some point in their lives. For support, contact UAlbany EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson to help assess the situation regarding past trauma and the possibility of PTSD. She can connect you with the right help. bseckerson@albany.edu 442-5483 To learn more about PTSD, go to the Mayo Clinic website.

Healing Relationships With Honest Conversations

When family and couple communication problems are left unaddressed, they get worse. Habits of impatience, interrupting, refusing to listen, and poor empathy—they can all create resentment. Think of resentment as museum pieces of unaddressed dysfunctions in relationships. Got any? Stop the day-in-and-day-out anguish. Talk to a professional counselor or your UAlbany EAP Coordinator for a referral to a resource that can help. You’ll learn to practice “honest conversations.” These are communication tools to produce more satisfying relationships and help overcome resentment. They’re not easy. However, they will help you get back what you want—positive relationships with authentic connections minus all the tension you suffer with now. Honest conversations have a positive feel to them, not an edgy approach. They use values of honesty, unconditional listening, and the exploration of new ways to bring you closer to those you care about.

Source for Articles: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.

WellNYS Everyday June Challenge

Want a way to help you stay focused on your healthy behaviors during 2020? Participate in the WellNYS Everyday Monthly Challenges sponsored by New York State EAP. This self-paced program completed on an honor system provides you with a different challenge at the beginning of each month. Tracking your progress makes it easier to meet your goals. June’s challenge is “get outdoors more often.” Invite a colleague or family member to join you in the monthly wellness challenge fun! In addition to the monthly challenges program, WellNYS Everyday also offers a wellness “Daily To-Do” which can be emailed to you. NOTE: You don’t have to participate in the monthly challenges to receive the Daily To-Do email. To learn more and to register to participate, go to: https://wellnys.goer.ny.gov/.
Successful Retirement Planning

Enjoying financial security during retirement takes investment planning and action. To succeed, you must build enough savings and investments to supplement other sources of income (such as Social Security). Social Security is no longer enough to cover expenses in later years, and retirement planning has changed dramatically. For example, most employers offer voluntary retirement plans instead of pensions.

Below are a few steps to follow to make sure you save enough:

- Start early and continuously save at least the amount required to obtain the full matching contribution in a tax-sheltered employer-sponsored plan. Remember: Compound interest is your friend. The earlier you begin saving, the better off you will be. Also, increase your savings as your income rises.
- Diversify your portfolio through mutual plans and limit company stock to no more than 10%. Accept enough risk to meet your retirement needs.
- Contribute to ROTH IRAs to supplement your employer-sponsored plan.
- Hands off your retirement. Do not borrow against it; do not withdraw from it. When changing jobs, roll over the funds into the new employer’s plan or a rollover IRA.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (March 2020) TD Top Dollar

Got Debts? You Can Still Save Money

Building an emergency fund is as important as paying off debt, and it’s possibly more important. You know what your debts are, but you can’t predict an emergency, such as a sudden need for health care. However, you can save money while paying off debts.

- **First, work within a budget.** Understanding your income and expenses will allow you to set aside a specific amount of money each month for debt and savings. Also, by decreasing unnecessary spending, you increase the amount of money you use to pay off debts and savings. Even on a tight budget, a small amount adds up over time. Depending on your family’s size, skipping a meal out each week could result in saving an extra $160 per month.
- **Determine your monthly debt/savings amounts.** If you have $500 a month to allocate to debt and savings, place a percentage towards each, say 80% towards debt and 20% towards an emergency fund.
- **If you don’t have any money saved,** start at a 70/30 split until you have at least $1,500 in an emergency fund. Then you could move to an 80/20 split.
- **Treat saving as a bill.** Consider having the amount transferred automatically from your checking account or paycheck. Pay your account every month or every two weeks.
- **Save your change in a jar.** Spare change adds up a lot faster than you think. Is the utility bill less than you expected this month? Save the difference.

Creating a financial cushion for unexpected emergencies prevents you from falling further into debt and gives you greater peace of mind.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (Sept. 2018 and May 2020) TD Top Dollar
Reminder: New Tax Deadline is July 15

The following notice is placed on the UnitedWay website regarding the free tax preparation that has annually been available.

In accordance with the Executive Order issued by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, the CA$H Coalition of the Greater Capital Region is suspending in-person tax preparation services at all VITA sites until further notice.

The IRS and New York State have extended the tax filing deadlines to July 15. With the additional time to file, we will make every effort to accommodate our clients who depend on this service. Please contact your local VITA site or call 2-1-1 for more updates. http://www.cashgreatercapitalregion.org/

Additional Tax Preparation Resources:

- People and families who use a Simple Form may be eligible to use this free service: www.MyFreeTaxes.com
- Or, go to the NYS Tax & Finance website to see if you qualify for a FREE tax return this year: https://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/efile/default.htm
- Questions about preparing your taxes? Connect with the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service at www.irs.gov/advocate.

Food Shopping Online

If you haven’t gone grocery shopping on the web, here’s a quick primer. You can use an online-only store and have the groceries shipped to your house, or you can order from a local brick-and-mortar grocery’s website for curbside delivery or pick your order up at the physical store.

- If you tend to buy impulsively, shopping from your smart device may remove some of the temptation. You can more easily stick to your list and spend less time or money wandering aisles and filling your cart with items you don’t need. You won’t be tempted by the aromas coming from the bakery. You’ll also save on gas and avoid traffic.
- Shopping online also lets you take advantage of menu planners, and your account will keep a record of your past purchases. Also, look for coupons for deals on groceries and delivery.
- Ask friends and family for recommendations, and try out a few services. Some stores will deliver your first order for free. Keep in mind that for delivery and in-store pickup, someone else will be choosing your produce. If that’s a particular concern, you may want to shop for fruits and vegetables yourself.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (September 2018) TD Top Dollar
For Your Health...

Clear Your Mind

What’s on your mind? Worries? Distractions? Learn to dismiss the chatter in your head so you’re free to think, solve problems, and get more done in less time. You might even feel less stressed at the end of the day.

Try these techniques:

- **Move your body.** Take five minutes to walk (preferably outside), climb stairs, or stretch out stiff muscles. Getting your blood pumping and your body moving can help settle your thoughts.

- **Visualize.** Stop what you’re doing and see yourself successfully completing today’s tasks. Visualize the task by mentally reviewing the steps you need to get there.

- **Practice deep breathing.** As you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, put your hand on your stomach. Your hand should move in and out. Make your exhale long and peaceful. A few slow breaths can clear the cobwebs and silence your inner chatter.

- **Change your location.** Another venue can give you respite from familiar distractions. Move to a different room or area within a room or even take your laptop outside (if possible).

- **Reach out for support.** If too many worries are causing anxiety and impeding your ability to be productive, reach out to EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson for support.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (May 2020) TP Top Performance.

There is no WiFi in the forest,

but I promise you’ll find a better connection.

~ Unknown

Photo: Brenda Seckerson
Oh, My Aching Back

The back is an amazing construction, but it needs you to keep it strong. You can reduce your risk of back pain with these lifestyle changes.

**Exercise.** Low-impact activities such as walking and swimming help strengthen the back muscles. However, people with low back pain often find some forms of exercise too painful. Check with your health care provider.

**Adopt daily stretching.** It can reduce painful low back stiffness from everyday activities.

**Maintain a healthy weight** to keep stress and strain off your back.

**Build strength.** To have a strong back, the front and sides of your body need to be strong and flexible. Exercises such as yoga and Pilates that strengthen your core muscles (those around the trunk and pelvis) can help prevent back injury and strain. Your health care provider can advise you about specific strengthening exercises based on your back condition.

**When to seek help:** Back pain that continues for more than a few days or that keeps you from regular activities needs medical attention. Physical therapy and interventions are available to help resolve, manage, and even prevent back pain, so you can get back to top performance sooner.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2020) TP Top Performance.

The ABCs of Device Ergonomics

The average American spends about 3 hours and 43 minutes daily looking at mobile devices, according to an eMarketer study. Neck injuries are also growing, according to an eMarketer report, “U.S. Time Spent With Mobile 2019.”

**To prevent these types of injuries, follow this advice:**

- Take breaks every 20 minutes from typing. If you plan to use a tablet for longer durations, use a separate keyboard and use a tablet stand to avoid neck strain.
- Write fewer and shorter messages. Use dictation when possible. Or use apps for voice recognition, abbreviation expansion, or word completion to reduce key input associated with texting.
- Use hands-free devices to eliminate awkward and static postures when you have to be on the phone a long time (meetings or conference calls).
- Maintain neutral wrists and alternate hands when holding mobile devices.
- Keep your head in a neutral position and keep your elbows relaxed below your shoulders.
- Perform hand exercises. A variety of printable pdf resources can be found online.
- Alternate using fingers and thumbs when typing to reduce the chance of repetitive injuries to the thumb.
- Change positions often (sit, stand, or walk) to keep muscles strong and limber.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2020) TS Top Safety
STRETCHING ON THE JOB

Cat-Cow Stretch
1. Start on hands and knees. Keep knees directly under hips and hands directly under shoulders.
2. Inhale and look up while letting stomach soften toward the ground while arching back as if forming the letter U, and letting buttocks lift toward the ceiling.
3. Then exhale while letting head and buttocks round toward the floor so that spine humps and stomach is concave.
4. Repeat inhaling and exhaling with slow, controlled movements.

Front of Forearm Stretch
1. Relax shoulders. With elbow bent, bend wrist, keeping palm face up.
2. Hold the hand gently. Gently straighten elbow, stretch fingers back and down.

Hip Stretch
1. Stand straight on 1 leg.
2. Pull other knee up toward chest with both hands.
3. Stay in an upright position.

Body Weight Squat
1. Set feet shoulder width apart, toes slightly turned out. Pull in lower abs, and keep eyes forward. Keep hands at sides with palms facing inward.
2. Push buttocks back. Lower hips and body toward the floor, while slowly bending at knees and dropping hips. Keep heels flat on the floor. Keep head aligned with spine and look forward.
3. Pause for a moment. Then push back up to the starting position.
4. Repeat for desired number of reps.

Front Thigh Stretch
1. Place 1 hand, palm flat, against a wall for support.
2. Stand on opposite leg.
3. Keeping knees side by side, use other arm to bring heel of opposite leg towards buttock.
4. Keep back as straight as possible.

Long Calf Stretch
1. Lean into a wall with both palms pressed flat against the wall.
2. Stand with 1 foot in front of the other, shoulder width apart.
3. Lean onto bent front leg, with heels on the ground.
4. Keep back knee straight. Slowly lunge forward until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf.

Triceps Stretch
1. Sitting on a chair or standing, keep back straight and reach toward the ceiling.
2. Place 1 hand down back and keep palm flat.
3. With other hand, gently pull elbow in towards the head to stretch.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. Printed with Permission.
Stay Healthy During COVID-19

CDPHP is offering FREE access to the Brook smartphone app for CDPHP members and non-members alike.

Brook is your Personal Health companion, helping you find your healthy zone in the flow of your everyday life.

When you need quick, in-the-moment help to maintain your well-being, Brook is a useful tool for health-related questions. You can receive support from health experts seven days a week on topics such as:

- Boosting your immune system
- Stress management
- Staying active at home
- Simple, healthy home cooking
- Concerns about sleep
- Managing blood sugar and blood pressure

Brook is not a replacement for primary care. Members will be referred to appropriate health resources to address medical issues. Free access will be available through at least June 30, 2020 but could go beyond that date because this service will be offered at no cost for the duration of the pandemic. The Brook service will continue to be a no-cost benefit to most CDPHP members beyond the pandemic but is not available with every plan type. Please refer to your member contract or call member services at the number on your ID card to see if you have this program with your plan. Must be 18 or older to use Brook.
Mediterranean Vegetable Wraps with Tahini-Lemon Dip

Ingredients:
4 sheets rice paper (for wraps)
½ cup hummus
½ cup kale, shredded
½ cup carrots, shredded
½ cup cucumber, cut into matchsticks
3 tbsp fresh mint
Pinch ground cumin
1 tbsp sesame seeds

Dip:
1 tbsp tahini (sesame seed paste)
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 tsp Greek yogurt
Pinch salt

Method:
1. Soak rice paper so it is pliable, per package directions. Let excess water drip off.
2. Place rice paper on plate. Spread 1 tbsp of hummus in center of rice paper. Top hummus with a quarter of the kale, carrots, cucumber, mint, cumin and sesame seeds.
3. To wrap, lift 1 side of rice paper and pull it over fillings. Fold the 2 sides over fillings. Continue rolling to seal seam. Repeat with remaining rice paper and fillings.
4. Prepare dip by stirring together tahini, lemon juice, yogurt and salt. Serve wraps with dip.

Makes 4 rolls. Per serving (2 rolls): 227 calories | 8g protein | 10g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 4g mono fat | 4g poly fat | 53g carbohydrate | 1g sugar | 5g fiber | 406mg sodium

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (May 2020) Smart Moves

“Remember to take care of yourself. You can’t pour tea from an empty cup.”
~ Unknown
Compliments of Personal Best Publications

Everyday Fit
For Real-Life Functions
Key to a healthy, independent future is staying physically able to perform everyday activities.
The goal: To improve your core strength, balance and overall mobility, and reduce injury risk as you age — as opposed to training for a sport or marathon. Functional exercises help with everyday actions, such as lifting, reaching, twisting and climbing.

Antidote to Overload
Smartphones, tablets, apps for every need, digital calendars and virtual meetings: There are few lives untouched by technology and, if you’re like most people, you depend on it every day. Technology can improve your life — or overwhelm it.
Imagine the activities you would have time for with the phone put away. Unplugging will be as natural as riding a bike.
Compliments of Personal Best Publications

MAKE A GREAT PLATE.
This classic combination will be a crowd-pleaser.

Peanut Butter and Banana Breakfast Cups

**INGREDIENTS**
- 3 cups rolled oats
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 eggs, whisked
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 1/4 cup peanut butter
- 1/4 cup pure maple syrup

**DIRECTIONS**
Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 12-cup muffin tin with liners. In large bowl, add oats, baking powder, whisked eggs, milk, banana, peanut butter and maple syrup. Stir until combined well. Spoon mixture into muffin cups. Bake 30 minutes. Allow to cool. Freeze leftovers.

Makes 12 servings. Each: 168 calories • 7g protein • 6g total fat • 23g carb
9g sugar • 3g fiber • 110mg sodium • 1g saturated fat • 3g mono fat • 2g poly fat

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MAKE A GREAT PLATE.
Fruit is the star of this sweet, colorful salad.

Fruit Salad with Ginger and Mint

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 peaches or nectarines, pitted and diced
- 2 apples, seeded and diced
- 1 cup blueberries or strawberries
- 1 tsp chopped fresh mint
- 2 tbsp chopped candied ginger
- 1/4 cup lemon juice

**DIRECTIONS**
In a large bowl, combine peaches, apples, blueberries, mint, ginger and lemon juice. Stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate before serving.

Makes 4 servings. Each: 110 calories • 1g protein • 0g total fat • 20g carb • 10g sugar • 4g fiber • 5mg sodium

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Disclaimer: Material presented in this newsletter is intended for educational or informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified health professional.

EAP-sponsored events and services are open to UAlbany & Research Foundation faculty, staff, family members, UAS employees, retirees and GSEU members.

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