

Relax and Recharge

In today's culture, most would agree that stress is a normal part of our daily lives. However, what is the "normal" amount of stress we should experience? How do we know when it is too much?

You can start with becoming more aware of the symptoms of stress: poor concentration, irritability, restlessness, appetite changes, fatigue, forgetfulness, aggression, sarcasm, heartburn and upset stomach, headaches, back or neck pain. While you may not always be able to control your stressors, you can actually manage how you cope with some simple stress management practices.

Managing stress is all about taking charge of your environment, your schedule, your emotions, your thoughts and how you deal with problems. Consider all aspects of finding balance in your life. Life is not necessarily about how much you do, but how much you enjoy what you are doing. Calendars can be a great place to start. If you are trying to fill every minute of every day, you may be creating your own stress. It's ok to say "no." Make self-care a priority and you will have better health and well being to enjoy life and care for others.

It is usually easier to make a change that you feel confident about and are motivated to embrace. Take a few minutes to determine what steps you can take to become more stress resilient (adapt/recover after a stressful event) and try implementing these simple tips to relax and recharge.

TAKE A 20-MINUTE TIME OUT FOR YOU

In this busy world, you may think 20 minutes would never fit into your day. "TAKING 20" doesn't have to be done all at once. You may want to split up the time, taking four 5-minute breaks or two 10-minute breaks. Do something **you** enjoy for 20 minutes, read the newspaper funnies or a good cooking article, go shopping or simply just sit and be still for a few minutes. You may be surprised by how much more you will accomplish during the day, by just taking 20 minutes to relax.

Here are some other fun and relaxing things you and your whole family can do to de-stress:

- Go for a walk
- Listen to music, read or meditate
- Call or email a friend
- Try yoga or tai-chi
- Take a long soothing bath
- Get a massage or experience aromatherapy
- Enjoy a warm cup of tea
- Keep a journal
- Enjoy a movie
- Engage in a hobby
- Spend time with a pet
- Volunteer

STAY SOCIALLY CONNECTED TO OTHERS

Spend time with people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from negative effects of stress. Connect with others, such as:

- Spending time with friends, family or coworkers
- Learning to celebrate small successes
- Participating in new activities of self-development
- Mentoring a child, older adult or someone re-entering the workplace
- Helping someone by lending a helping hand
- Finding a faith-based community program
- Trying a social network (i.e. *Facebook*, chat rooms or blogs)

Take an active approach and start today! Develop your plan to cope with stress with these convenient and accessible wellness resources that can help you reach your goals.

Stress Management Resources for Members

- **Call Blues On CallSM at 1-888-BLUE(2583)-428 anytime 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for confidential support from a specially-trained Health Coach.** Our Health Coaches have access to a variety of resources to assist you, including health guides, educational materials and videos. Or, call Member Services on the back of your health insurance ID card to learn about Member wellness services.
- **Enroll in an online wellness program.** Get a personalized plan for stress management by going to your Member website at www.highmarkblueshield.com. Follow the instructions to log in and click on the “Your Health” tab. Select the link “Improve Your Health” to enroll in **Online Wellness Programs**, such as **HealthMedia[®] Relax[®]**, a confidential self-help online program that provides 24/7 access to coping strategies and tools to effectively deal with stress factors at work and at home. Or, search the **Health Topics** tab of your Member website for an extensive online library of resources.
- **Take advantage of Wellness Member Discounts.** Save up to 50% on non-covered wellness products and services, such as exercise clubs, massages, acupuncture, travel and more, from leading national companies. Log on to your Member website, select the “Your Coverage” tab and go to “Member Discounts.”
- **Ask about wellness programs offered at your worksite.** Contact your company’s wellness coordinator to learn about stress management and other health and wellness programs offered at your workplace.