

NEW OPPORTUNITIES
Employee Assistance
Program

an affiliate of



HEALTHY

EXCHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WINTER 2021

For Your Information

LYING LESS LINKED TO BETTER HEALTH

Telling the truth when tempted to lie can significantly improve a person's mental and physical health, according to a "Science of Honesty" study presented at the American Psychological Association's 120th Annual Convention. According to the researchers, recent evidence indicates that Americans average about 11 lies per week. In the study, those who were instructed to stop telling major and minor lies for about 10 weeks experienced two fewer mental-health complaints and about one less physical complaint each week and reported that their close personal relationships had improved.

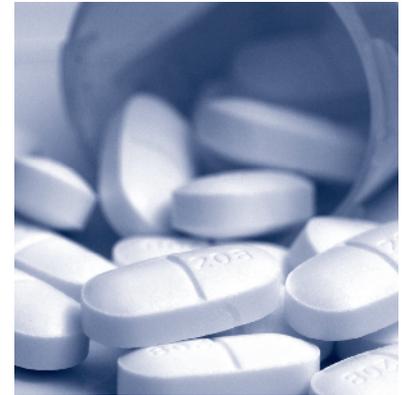


LACK OF SLEEP INCREASES CALORIE CONSUMPTION

A study from the University of Chicago reported that lack of sleep makes you want to eat more. The reason? Researchers believe that we crave high-calorie foods when we're tired because they offer up instant energy. In a second study, those in a sleep-deprived group consumed an average of 549 more calories than a control group. For those who are overweight and attempting to lose weight, health experts now recommend adequate sleep along with diet and exercise as essential for weight loss.

SAFE USE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Prescription Drug Abuse – Do You Or A Family Member Have A Problem?



Prescription drugs can promote healing and well-being if taken for the right reasons and if used properly, but some can be addictive and dangerous when misused. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 14 of the 20 most abused drugs in the U.S. are prescription drugs.

Many people become "unwitting" addicts. These are often individuals with no prior history of drug abuse, who begin using prescription drugs for a legitimate medical problem. Then, at some point they start increasing the dosage on their own because the drug makes them feel better. Gradually, the abuse becomes a real addiction.

There are also an alarming number of people who are abusing these types of drugs without a prescription to get high or change their mood. When prescription drugs are taken with other drugs or used recreationally, the consequences can be deadly. Drug overdose has now overtaken car accidents as the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. Fueling the surge in drug-related deaths are prescription pain and anxiety drugs. Among the most commonly abused are OxyContin, Vicodin, Xanax and Soma.

Which prescription drugs are most abused?

- **PAIN MEDICATIONS** – Used medically to treat moderate-to-severe-pain. Common drug names: Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, Demerol, Diluadid, morphine, fentanyl, codeine.
- **STIMULANTS** – Used medically to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), narcolepsy or short-term treatment of obesity. Common drug names: Ritalin, Concerta, Adderall, Focalin, Dexedrine.
- **TRANQUILIZERS OR SEDATIVES** – Used medically to treat anxiety, severe stress, panic attacks or sleep disorders. Common drug names: Mebaral, Nembutal, Valium, Xanax, Ambien, Sonata, Lunesta.

Warning signs of prescription drug dependency

Prescription drug abuse occurs when a person uses a prescription drug outside of the normally accepted standard for its use (i.e. not used for its intended purpose). When

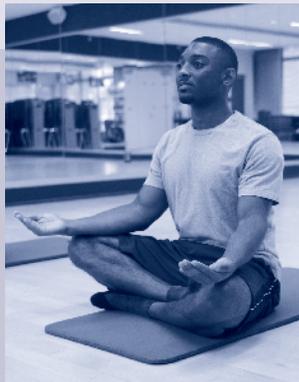
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Best Ways To Bust A Bad Mood

What's the best way to break out of a bad mood? According to renowned, mood expert Robert Thayer, Ph.D., moderate exercise, listening to music and social interaction are the top-three ways to bust a bad mood.

Move your body

A bad mood has two major components, says Thayer, feelings of tension and low energy. Exercise can boost your mood by relieving tension, raising energy and increasing optimism. You don't need to be super fit to enjoy the mood-lifting benefits of exercise. According to Thayer's research, even a brisk 10-minute walk immediately increases your energy and improves your mood.



Listen to music

Music is second only to exercise in raising energy and reducing tension, according to Thayer. Music activates the part of your brain that is hardwired for pleasure and has a powerful influence over your state of mind. Thayer feels that music is underused as a highly efficient method of lifting mood. Any music you like works.



Seek social interaction

Social interaction also scores big when it comes to changing a bad mood and reducing tension. According to Thayer, humans are social animals and social interaction influences our mood. Social interaction is especially effective for women, who overwhelmingly report calling or seeing a friend, or initiating social interaction as an effective way to improve their mood.

Other methods to lift your mood

- Take a 10 to 30 minute nap. You will feel low energy when you first arise from a nap, Thayer says, but that will soon dissipate and leave you feeling refreshed.
- Immerse yourself in activity that distracts you from your bad mood. Shopping, sports, chores, hobbies and reading are all seen as useful activities to change a bad mood.
- Treat yourself to something that makes you feel good. A homemade facial, a luxurious steamy shower, a back massage, a warm cup of tea or hot cocoa – even the tiniest treat may pick up your mood.
- Laugh. There's no possible way that you can laugh and stay in a bad mood.



Prescription Drug Abuse...

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misused or abused, prescription drugs can have very serious adverse health effects and can easily and unknowingly turn into a physical dependence. Do you know the warning signs of prescription drug dependency?

- 1. Increased usage** – Increase of one's dose over time, as a result of growing tolerant to the drug and needing more to get the same effect.
- 2. Ongoing use** – Continued use of the prescribed medication even after the medical condition it was meant to relieve has improved.
- 3. Going to great lengths to obtain the drug** – Secretive or deceitful behavior in order to obtain the drug. Using multiple doctors or pharmacies to cover up the amount and frequency of drug use. Spending large amounts of time driving great distances and visiting multiple doctors to obtain drugs.
- 4. Physical withdrawal symptoms** – Experiencing flu-like symptoms such as joint and muscle aches, night sweats and insomnia when doses are missed.
- 5. Change in personality** – Shifts in energy, mood and concentration as a result of everyday responsibilities becoming secondary to the need for the drug.
- 6. Change in daily habits or appearance** – Decline in personal hygiene; change in eating and sleeping habits, including significant weight loss; a constant cough, runny nose or having red, glazed eyes.
- 7. Social withdrawal** – Withdrawal from family, friends, co-workers or other social interaction.
- 8. Neglecting responsibilities** – Neglect of household chores, bills or other responsibilities; calling in sick to work or missing school more often.
- 9. Blackouts and forgetfulness** – Forgetting events that have taken place or appearing to suffer from frequent blackouts.
- 10. Defensiveness** – Most often a person abusing prescription medication will attempt to hide their use, become defensive when confronted, rationalize their use, and often deny that it is a problem. They might respond to simple requests or questions by lashing out.

Do you have a problem?

Upon realizing that they are "hooked" on a prescription drug, many people are reluctant to tell their doctor or are afraid their medication will be discontinued, so they do not seek the help they need. Admitting that you have a problem with drugs takes courage. Whether you have reached the "addiction" stage or not, recognizing and admitting that your abuse of prescription drugs is negatively impacting your life is the first step toward overcoming it. The next step is seeking professional help.

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Prescription Drug Abuse...

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The epidemic of teen prescription drug abuse

A recent University of Colorado study reported that adolescents today are abusing prescription pain medications like vicodin, valium and oxycontin at a rate that is 40 percent higher than previous generations. According to *The Partnership at Drugfree.org*:

- 1 in 6 teens has used a prescription medication in order to get high or change their mood
- Each day, 2,000 teens use a prescription drug to get high for the first time
- Two-thirds of teens who abuse pain relievers get them from family members or friends

Many teens think taking prescription medications are safe because they have legitimate uses, but taking them without a prescription to get high or “self-medicate” can be as dangerous – and addictive – as using illicit drugs.

What parents can do

1. Educate yourself about the prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines that kids are abusing.

2. Communicate with your kids:

- Discuss the subject with your teenagers. See what your kids know about peers using medications without a doctors’ prescription.
- Warn your teenagers that taking prescription medications without a doctors’ supervision can be just as dangerous and as potentially lethal as taking illicit drugs.
- Set clear expectations with your teenagers, letting them know that under no circumstances should they take any medications without your knowledge.

3. Safeguard medications at home and other places.

- Take an inventory of prescription and over-the-counter medications in your home. Pay attention to quantities.
- Keep medications out of reach – and out of easily accessible places like the medicine cabinet.

Note: If you suspect that your child is using or has a problem with drugs, it is important that you face the situation promptly and get whatever help is needed to stop your child’s

IMPROVE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

Why Do We Over-commit?

Are there too many things on your calendar each day to get done? If your answer is “yes,” you may be guilty of a common assumption made by many people, say researchers.

According to a study reported by the American Psychological Association, research reveals that people over-commit because we expect to have more time in the future than we have in the present. Of course, when tomorrow turns into today, we discover that we are too busy to do everything we promised. Keep this fact in mind. It will help you to better-plan your days and avoid unnecessary frustration.



3 ways to improve your productivity at work

How can you improve your productivity and get more things done each day? Here are three strategies that can help:

1. Schedule your time for work – Be consistent. Don’t do personal things when you are scheduled to work. Make a “To Do” list and prioritize your tasks. A list is most effective for those of us who need to consult a reference or see it in writing. When you have completed a task, cross it off your list. You’ll get a real sense of completion and satisfaction as you see your list getting shorter and shorter.

2. Do the most-difficult, time-consuming, least-favorite job first – It may sound crazy but you’ll be doing it when you have the most energy and motivation. If you tackle the toughest job first, the rest of your tasks will seem that much easier.

3. Don’t allow yourself to get interrupted by other people’s “emergencies” – How many times have you had your tasks and activities planned, so you could finally get caught up with your own work, and all day long other people keep coming to you with their last minute problems that only you can fix? You don’t want to say no, you want to be a team player, but you have stuff to get done too, right? Remember, that being a team player also means respecting others’ time and realizing that others have responsibilities too. If your co-workers can’t grasp this, you have to. Learn to say no in a polite but firm manner: “I would really like to assist you with that, and I know you have a deadline. Unfortunately, I have a project which I must complete for my boss today. If you can come back tomorrow or another time, or better yet, schedule some time with me so that it is on my calendar, I would be more than happy to help you.”

Your EAP is here to help

Remember, your EAP is always available to help you or your dependents with any personal, family or work-related concern. All EAP services are FREE and strictly CONFIDENTIAL. Why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help.

use. For professional counseling, referrals or additional assistance, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for help.

How to avoid prescription drug misuse or abuse

Follow these guidelines for using prescription medications safely:

1. Educate yourself about any prescribed or over-the-counter drug you may take, in particular the drugs that can be addictive. The most frequent offenders are pain and nerve medications, tranquilizers, diet pills and cold medicines. Before taking any

medication ask what is in the medication and what effects can be expected.

2. Keep your doctor informed about all medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications.

3. Be sure to use medication only as prescribed. If you have questions or concerns, contact your doctor.

4. Get a second opinion before going on a medication for any length of time. Long-term use for more than 27 consecutive days can be addictive (This does not

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apply to medications that simply provide what the body is deficient in, such as insulin, thyroid, and antidepressants).

5. Low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and feeling of isolation and detachment are the most common problems associated with drug dependency. Seek professional help or other resources to help you solve these problems, instead of covering up the symptoms with medication. Make yourself a priority and take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Your EAP is here to help

If you or a dependent needs help to overcome a problem with prescription drug abuse or addiction, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can assist you with CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals and information. EAP counselors are specially trained to help people get the right help for a problem with prescription medications or other drugs, and can help you determine the extent of your problem and what treatment is needed. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help. All EAP services are free and strictly confidential.

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES
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an affiliate of

**Stairways Behavioral
Health**

Please call for free,
confidential assistance

**(814) 456-0584
1-800-321-7988**

The information in this newsletter is for the purpose of information only and is not meant to replace consultation with your EAP professional, mental health professional or physician. Your EAP is a benefit provided for you by your company. We encourage you to call. No issue is too big or small.

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES
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As normal healthy adults, we all experience set-backs and difficulties from time to time. Most often, we are able to recover from them and resolve our problems ourselves. Sometimes professional assistance can help when problems have grown too complicated to manage alone and begin to affect our happiness, relationships, health and job performance. During these times, an employee assistance program can be very helpful.

As one of your employee benefits, you and your family can take advantage of free, professional and confidential help through Stairways' Employee Assistance Program (EAP). New Opportunities EAP is staffed with trained counselors dedicated to help with any type of personal problem including:

- **Job-related problems**
- **Workplace conflicts**
- **Marital/Family issues**
- **Parenting issues**
- **Emotional problems such as stress, grief, anxiety and depression**
- **Crisis situations**
- **Alcohol and other drug abuse**
- **Eldercare issues**
- **Communication and interpersonal problems**

You and your immediate family members are eligible to use this EAP service free of charge. Just call New Opportunities at **(814) 456-0584 or toll-free at 1-800-321-7988** to make an appointment. Appointments can be arranged to fit your schedule including evenings and weekends.

Remember, anything discussed with the counselor is strictly confidential. Information will not be released to your employer, family or anyone else unless you want it shared and sign a written consent form.

New Opportunities EAP provides an initial assessment of your situation and short term counseling as needed. Our counselors can also give you referrals to appropriate community resources. Contact New Opportunities EAP today to schedule an appointment.

WE ARE THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU NEED US!