



EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the NJ Civil Service Commission's Employee Advisory Newsletter! EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance. **The EAS Employee Newsletter** contains useful articles and information for managing various well-being and work-life issues in order to create a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace.

Getting To Know Your Employee Advisory Service (EAS)

We invite you to learn more about the new services provided to you and your family through EAS by attending our bi-monthly webinar orientations. Register below for the next employee session.

When: Monday, March 18th
10:00 – 11:00 AM ET

Register:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6622052165440087810>

How to Handle Extremely Stressful Circumstances

This important session will discuss several strategies for handling the extremely stressful circumstances (trauma, loss, significant changes, etc.) that we experience at times in our personal or professional lives. These strategies will include managing our thinking and emotions, increasing our resilience, and making necessary adjustments.

When:
March 26th, 2019, 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET

Register:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5274628154347820546>

March 3-10 is National Sleep Awareness Week. March 15th is World Sleep Day. According to the National Sleep Foundation, adults (ages 26-64) need between 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Here are a few tips to help you develop healthier habits and reduce stress in order to get a better night's sleep.

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Feeling tired all the time? There are many things you can do to help you get a good night's sleep. Here are some ideas:

- Follow a regular sleep schedule. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day, even on weekends. Try to avoid napping in the late afternoon or evening, as it may keep you awake at night.
- Develop a bedtime routine. Take time to relax before bedtime each night. Some people watch television, read a book, listen to soothing music, or soak in a warm bath.
- Keep your bedroom dark, not too hot or too cold, and as quiet as possible.
- Have a comfortable mattress, a pillow you like, and enough blankets for the season.
- Exercise at regular times each day, but not within 3 hours of your bedtime.
- Make an effort to get outside in the sunlight each day.
- Be careful about when and how much you eat. Large meals close to bedtime may keep you awake, but a light snack in the evening can help you get a good night's sleep.
- Stay away from caffeine late in the day. Caffeine found in coffee, tea, soda, and hot chocolate can keep you awake.
- Drink fewer beverages in the evening. Waking up to go to the bathroom and turning on a bright light break up your sleep.
- Remember that alcohol won't help you sleep. Even small amounts make it harder to stay asleep.
- Use your bedroom only for sleeping. After turning off the light, give yourself about 20 minutes to fall asleep. If you're still awake and not drowsy, get out of bed. When you feel sleepy, go back to bed.

Safe Sleeping

Try to set up a safe and restful place to sleep. Make sure you have smoke alarms on each floor of your house or apartment and lock the outside doors before going to bed. Other ideas for a safe night's sleep are

- Keep a telephone with emergency phone numbers by your bed.
- Have a lamp within reach that turns on easily.
- Put a glass of water next to the bed in case you wake up thirsty.
- Use night lights in the bathroom and hall.
- Don't smoke, especially in bed.
- Remove area rugs so you won't trip if you get out of bed in the middle of the night.
- Don't fall asleep with a heating pad on, as it may burn you.
- Consider placing a carbon monoxide detector in your home.

Sweet Dreams

There are some tricks to help you fall asleep. You don't really have to count sheep, but you could try counting slowly to 100. Some people find that playing mental games makes them sleepy. For example, tell yourself its 5 minutes before you have to get up, and you're just trying to get a few extra winks. Other people find that relaxing their body puts them to sleep. You might start by telling yourself that your toes feel light as feathers and then work your way up the rest of the body saying the same words. You may drift off to sleep before getting to the top of your head.

If you feel tired and unable to do your activities for more than 2 or 3 weeks, you may have a sleep disorder. Talk to your doctor about changes you can make to get a better night's sleep.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health National Institute on Aging. (Updated 2015, December 22). A good night's sleep. Retrieved February 22, 2016, from <http://www.nia.nih.gov>



Tips for Coping with Extreme Stress

- Concentrate on caring for yourself.
- Talk about it with other people in similar situations. Compare reactions, reassure yourself that you are not alone in the way you are feeling.
- Talk about it with friends and relatives who care about you. It's normal to want to tell your story over and over.
- Keep your schedule as routine as possible, and don't overdo it.
- Allow time for hobbies, relaxing activities, being with friends, even if you don't quite feel like it.
- Participate in whatever physical fitness activities you normally enjoy.
- Utilize whatever spiritual resources are part of your normal lifestyle.
- Beware of any temptation to turn to alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and sweet foods. They may make you feel better momentarily, but can cause more problems in the long run. Concentrate instead on a healthy diet.
- If you can, postpone major life decisions until things have normalized.
- Don't hesitate to accept help from friends, coworkers, and others. If you can, offer help to others affected by the event.
- Sometimes good self-care and talking with friends are not enough. You may want to seek professional counseling through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This does not mean you are sick, but rather that a counselor may be able to help you get your recovery process on track.

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management. (1993, December). *Tips for coping with extreme stress*. In *A Manager's Handbook: Handling Traumatic Events (OWR-15)*. Retrieved January 11, 2019, from <https://www.opm.gov>

Understanding Stress and Building Resilience

What is stress?

People experience stress as they adjust to a continually changing environment. Stress has physical and emotional effects; it can create both positive and negative feelings. Positive stress can energize you and help you reach your peak performance. However, too much pressure turns into negative stress. Prolonged exposure to stress can be harmful to your physical and mental well-being. One of the first steps to managing stress is to understand what causes it.

Sources of Stress

There is a wide range of sources of stress. These include daily hassles, major life events, home, and work. What are the things in your life that cause you stress?

Stress factors at home may include relationships, money problems, children, sickness, and housework. Work stress factors include overload, relationships, pace of change, deadlines, and unrealistic workloads or demands.

Stress Management and Prevention

In addition to managing your response to stress, it is helpful to identify ways to prevent harmful levels of stress and build stress resilience. Look at root causes of stress and focus on building resilience to stress. It may be helpful to keep a stress log in order to identify the sources of stress in your life. Also identifying your signs of stress is important so that you are aware of your stress level before it is unmanageable.

Building Stress Resilience

Some ways to build stress resilience include exercising three to four times a week to reduce muscle tension; minimizing intake of sugar, caffeine, and other artificial stimulants; getting enough rest; and practicing at least one relaxation exercise.

Stress Signs

Know your stress signs. A second step to managing stress is to understand how you react to it. Which of the following signs of stress do you experience?

Common stress signs include:

Muscle tension	Tearfulness
Headaches	Depression
Indigestion	Boredom
Dry mouth	Apathy
Diarrhea or constipation	Changes in sleep patterns
Anxiety or excessive worry	Withdrawal
Difficulty concentrating	Accident proneness
Forgetfulness	Reduced sex drive
Irritability	Increase in use of drugs, smoking, or alcohol

Some of these signs may have causes other than stress. Check with your doctor if symptoms persist.

Stress Relievers

Stress relievers include listening to music, making time for fun, unplugging your phone, and waking up 15 minutes earlier in order to make morning mishaps less stressful.

Stress Strategies

Step 1: Awareness

In order to manage stress, it is helpful to understand what causes your stress and how you react to stress. Ask yourself these questions:

What are the sources of stress in my life?

What are my emotional and physical reactions to them?

What are my strengths in dealing with stress? (e.g., "I delegate well.")

What are my limitations in dealing with stress? (e.g., "I sometimes have difficulty saying no to work requests.")

Step 2: Plan

Develop a plan of action by asking yourself these questions:

What sources of stress can I eliminate or avoid?

What sources of stress are changeable?

What one change could I start with that would make the most difference in my life?

Who can I enlist in helping or supporting me with this change?

How can I include taking care of myself in my plan?

Step 3: Action

Put your plan into action:

- Choose one new strategy to add to or change about your current strategies for dealing with stress.
- Practice a relaxation technique (breathing is one of the most effective ways of reducing tension).
- Identify, from your own experience, proven methods of in managing your stress.
- Deal with the sources of stress that you can change (create a plan to eliminate, reduce, or avoid these sources).

Stress Tips

- Share your concerns—talk to someone.
- Do something you enjoy.
- Take a brisk walk.
- Exercise.
- Take a break.
- Get a change of scenery.
- Set aside time for yourself.

Relaxation Technique

- Find a comfortable place to sit, close your eyes, and begin to pay attention to your breathing.
- Take a deep breath in, and exhale slowly.
- Continue breathing deeply, and imagine a relaxing holiday spot.
- As you continue to breathe slowly, look around at the sights, imagine the sounds, the smells, and the like.
- See yourself relaxed in this place.
- As you bring your attention back to the room you are in, remember that you can visit this place again anytime.

Additional ideas to reduce or combat stress include counseling, yoga, meditation, hypnosis, biofeedback, relaxation CDs, massage, and medicine.

Action Planning

When putting your plan into action, it is important to set both short and long-term goals. Plan to make one change at a time and check that your goal is specific and measurable.

Source: Workplace Options. (Revised 2018). Understanding stress and building resilience. Raleigh, NC: Author.