



# Healthy workplace Your monthly Anthem wellness newsletter

## Stress Management and Emotional Health

According to the National Alliance on Mental Health, one in four adults; or approximately 61.5 million Americans will experience mental illness in a given year. Mood disorders such as depression are the third most common cause of hospitalization in the U.S. for adults ages 18 to 44, and one of the leading causes of disability, missed work, broken relationships and more.

## Understanding Depression

The World Health Organization states mental *health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.* Depression can affect a person of any age, race or social standing, and is often misunderstood to be sadness, or a down mood that you can just snap out of. This isn't the case. Job loss, divorce or the death of a loved one can cause grief and sadness that lifts over time. Depression is a medical condition with both physical and emotional symptoms that can occur even when things are going well, and if left untreated, can last for months or even years

## Am I Suffering from Depression?

The symptoms of depression are different for everyone. Most people don't just "snap out" of depression. Talk to your doctor if you're experiencing any of the following signs for long periods of time:

- A sad, anxious or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Loss of interest in activities you used to like, including sex
- Fatigue, low energy or being slowed down
- Trouble remembering or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, like insomnia, waking up too early or oversleeping
- Overeating and weight gain
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness or irritability
- Physical problems that don't respond to treatment, like headaches, stomach aches and chronic pain

## How Can I Help Someone I Know with Depression?

A depressed person often feels overwhelmed, hopeless and apathetic which can make it difficult for them to seek out help. Tell your loved one to speak with a doctor about what they are feeling. A depressed person needs your support; be kind but firm, and offer understanding, patience and encouragement. Listen carefully when you talk with your loved one, and try to get them to spend time with other people. Don't push too hard, but suggest activities they used to like. If they express negative feelings, point out what's positive and offer hope. If they speak of suicide, report this to their therapist or doctor.

### 'Tis the Season for Stress

It's that time of year- holiday shopping, decorating, parties, baking, entertaining, and cooking. Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and impact your health. Being realistic, planning ahead, and seeking support can help ward off holiday stress and depression.

### Stress is your Response to Danger

You know the feeling – sweaty palms, racing heartbeat, an upset stomach. This is stress, and it's how your body responds to physical dangers. Stress is the body's reaction to physical or emotional demands. The hormones that are released are used to help people face physical threats but since we don't fight saber-toothed tigers anymore, the hormones aren't as helpful as they once were.

*When you **become** grateful for small pleasures, your outlook changes and **opportunities** seem to open up everywhere in your life.*

## Tame Your Stress

If you can't get rid of the things that cause the stress, then you'll have to find more power to deal with it. Here are some activities that can help:

- **Get out and exercise**- Consider walking, jogging, biking or anything else that gets you active.
- **Laugh out loud**- Laughing lightens your mental load and does good things for your body.
- **Connect socially** - Keep in touch with people who give you emotional support, including family, friends or community organizations.
- **Practice yoga**- Yoga uses both physical and mental moves to create peace of body helping you relax and manage stress. Try yoga on your own or find a class in your area.
- **Get more rest**- Sleep is when your brain and body recharge. Get the right amount and you'll improve your mood and energy level.
- **Help others**- A growing body of evidence shows that people with a tendency toward depression can help themselves by helping others which introduces positivity into their day-to-day lives. This helps them to get their attention off of their own problems. Positive activity interventions include: being kind to others, expressing gratitude, thinking optimistically, and meditating on the good things in life.
- **See a counselor or therapist** if you feel overwhelmed, have trouble coping or are using drugs or alcohol to deal with stress.



## Food and Mood



Can your diet affect your mood? Many studies observed how specific foods can affect depression, emotional eating, irritability, and behavior. Studies have shown that a diet consisting of fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats can potentially alleviate depression and decrease irritability compared with a diet high in processed foods and sugar.

### What can you do?

Aim for a balanced diet of lean protein, complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables. Reduce your intake of foods such as caffeine, alcohol, trans fats, saturated fats, and foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones.

- **Don't skip meals-** Going too long between meals can make you feel irritable and tired, so aim to eat something at least every three to four hours.
- **Focus on complex carbohydrates-** Foods such as whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, sweet potatoes, whole-wheat pasta, oatmeal, and sprouted whole grain breads can boost serotonin levels without a crash.
- **Boost your B vitamins-** Deficiencies in B vitamins such as folic acid and B-12 may trigger depression. To get more B vitamins, take a B-complex vitamin

supplement or eat more citrus fruit, leafy greens, beans, chicken, and eggs.

- **Minimize sugar and refined carbs-** You may crave sugary snacks, baked goods, or comfort foods such as pasta or French fries, but these “feel-good” foods quickly lead to a crash in mood and energy.
- **Omega 3's-** Foods rich in certain omega-3 fats called EPA and DHA can give your mood a big boost. The best sources are fatty fish such as salmon, herring, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, and some cold-water fish oil supplements.
- **Try superfoods** rich in nutrients that can boost mood, such as bananas (magnesium to decrease anxiety, vitamin B6 to promote alertness, tryptophan to boost feel-good serotonin levels), brown rice (serotonin, thiamine to support sociability), and spinach (magnesium, folate to reduce agitation and improve sleep). Other superfoods include kale, berries, goji berries, raw cocoa, salmon, lentils, beans, Brussel spouts, seaweed, cinnamon, turmeric, and sweet potatoes.

## Maintain Don't Gain during the Holidays

Many of you are dreading the holiday season because you think you will gain weight. Try changing your mindset around the holidays. Do not expect to lose weight between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, instead, focus on maintaining your weight. Keep a regular exercise pattern and healthy diet during the holidays. In spite of everything, part of the holiday season is to enjoy all the fine foods, however enjoy those delicious foods in small amounts and try to cut back in other ways.

## Tips to help you Navigate the Holiday Season with your Weight Intact

- Control portions
- Keep moving
- Eat your calories instead of dinking them
- Eat lean protein
- Satisfy a craving with a few bites
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Put it on a plate: (Serving meals and snacks on a plate will help you avoid the mindless hand-to-mouth munching that can add lots of extra calories)
- Enjoy soup or salad before going to a party
- Practice mindful eating

## Recipe of the Month



## Chocolate Almond Butter Balls

These chocolate nutty bites are a perfect treat for the holiday season and a tasty option for those with peanut allergies.

**Makes:** 20 servings **Prep Time:** 25 minutes **Cook Time:** 5 minutes **Total Time:** 30 minutes

### Ingredients

- 1 ½ cup almond butter
- 3 tablespoons butter, softened
- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 6 ounces semi-sweet chocolate for melting (chips or chopped) optional: slivered almonds for garnish

### Preparation

- Using an electric mixer combine almond butter and butter until smooth.
- Continue to mix, gradually adding in powdered sugar and vanilla extract until fully incorporated.
- Using 2 teaspoonfuls, form balls and place on lined baking sheet. Cover and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes.
- Melt chocolate according to package instructions.
- Dip almond butter balls one at a time into melted chocolate, allowing excess to drip off. Place on waxed paper lined baking sheet.
- Optional, place a slivered almond on top of each ball. Allow chocolate to firm up. To quicken process, place in refrigerator. Store firmed up ball in airtight containers in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

*Recipe by Amy Johnson*

## World Aids Day December 1

World AIDS Day is dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of the HIV infection.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for you to learn the facts about HIV. If you understand how HIV is transmitted, how it can be prevented, and the reality of living with HIV today - you can use this knowledge to take care of your own health and the health of others, and ensure you treat everyone living with HIV fairly, with respect and understanding.

Looking for ways you can take action around World AIDS Day? Go to [www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org)



## A New Year a New You

The New Year is upon us and for many people this means making New Year's resolutions. Often people tend to focus on their negative habits as areas for improvement, such as I'm going to lose 20lbs, I'm going to quit smoking, I am quitting sugar, and on and on.....What happens after a few weeks into working on

our new goals? We revert back into old habits. Another approach to the New Year's goals is trying to recognize the positive things you do in life and think about building on them. As an example, maybe you already take a walk during your lunch three times a week. What if you take it up a notch and walk an additional one or two days, or turn your walk into a light jog. Or instead of skipping breakfast in the morning, you choose to have a healthy breakfast to get your day off to a healthier start. Another option to consider is trying new things this New Year. Maybe you always wanted to try snow shoeing or take that dance class you've always wanted to try or even trying to cook new healthy recipes.

Developing self-discipline can be tough when following through with your resolutions but there is no reason why you can't be successful. Your actions and your choices not only impact the quality of your life but they also impact the world around us. With this in mind, making a new resolution this coming year could act as a gift or service to others. Keep in mind as you give you receive and when you make a conscious choice to improve yourself you make an impact on everyone around you. I wish you all a Happy and Healthful Holiday Season.

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