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information for your life

WINTER
ISSUE
2022



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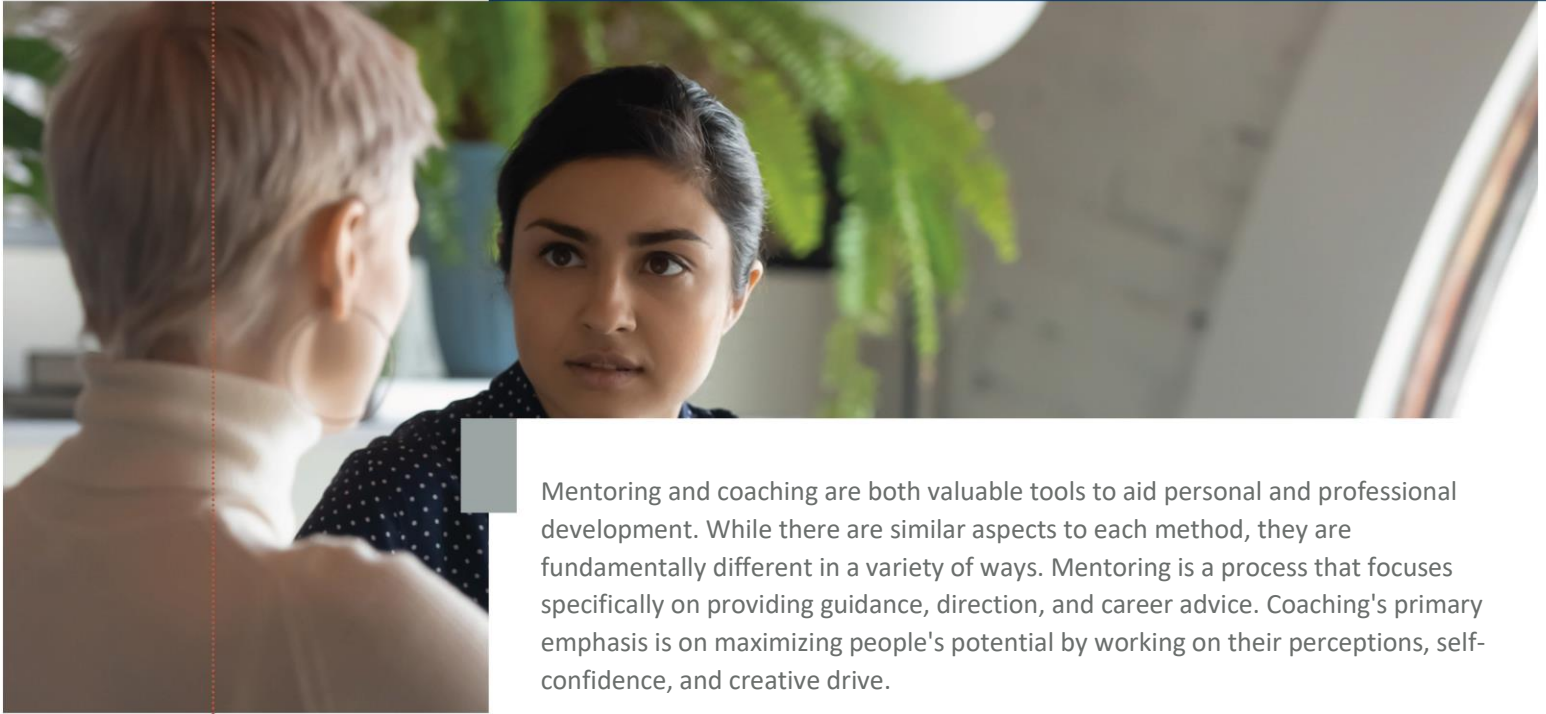
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Mentoring



Many organizations run formal mentoring and coaching programs to enhance career and interpersonal development.

Mentoring and coaching are both valuable tools to aid personal and professional development. While there are similar aspects to each method, they are fundamentally different in a variety of ways. Mentoring is a process that focuses specifically on providing guidance, direction, and career advice. Coaching's primary emphasis is on maximizing people's potential by working on their perceptions, self-confidence, and creative drive.

Mentoring and coaching efforts can operate as stand-alone programs, or they can be integrated into an organization's training and development program. Many organizations run formal mentoring and coaching programs to enhance career and interpersonal development.

Mentoring is usually a formal or informal relationship between two people—a senior mentor (usually outside the protégé's chain of supervision) and a junior protégé. Mentoring has been identified as an important influence in professional development in both the public and private sector. The war for talent is creating challenges within organizations not only to recruit new talent, but to retain talent. Benefits of mentoring include increased employee performance, retention, commitment to the organization, and knowledge sharing.

Organizations implement formal mentoring programs for different purposes. Some of these purposes include

- To help new employees settle into the agency
- To create a knowledge-sharing environment
- To develop mission-critical skills
- To help accelerate one's career
- To improve retention

Informal mentoring is another option for employees to enter into a mentor-protégé relationship. An informal mentoring partnership has less structure and can occur at any time in one's career. The relationship is usually initiated by the mentor or protégé.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (n.d.). Mentoring. In *Career development planning*. Retrieved September 5, 2019, from <https://www.opm.gov>

Take My Stress Please!



A lighthearted approach can help people stand up to life's challenges.

With the power to relieve stress, reduce anxiety, and increase mental energy, laughter really is a darn good medicine. But we know that, right? Who hasn't tried to use humor to soften an adversary, calm an upset friend, or break the ice at a big event? However, looking at the funny side is more than a crisis tool. Stress expert Loretta LaRoche sees it as a daily way of life—to help you keep the perspective that "not everything is a Grey's Anatomy segment." *Behavioral Health Newsline* explored her unique take on stress management in this Q&A.

Is there a difference between good stress and bad stress?

Oh yes. You need stress. It helps you manage your life and propels you to be successful. It even designates what is dangerous and what is not. That's why we have a fight-or-flight response. Because if you're on the highway and a car goes into your lane, you better well have a stress response.

When does good stress become bad stress? When does it cross that line?

Think of the circus performer with the plates twirling on sticks. There comes a point when he's twirling too many plates and they start dropping. Or think of an instrument like a Stradivarius. When the strings are the right tension, it plays beautifully. But when they get too tight, you get a squeaky sound. So the human body responds the same way. When it starts to feel

overloaded, it starts to give you signals. You start to get physical responses. You may get heart palpitations or headaches, backaches and gastrointestinal problems. In other words, nothing seems to make you feel good. You start to feel irritable; you overreact.

And this is where stress management comes in? How can we manage our stress, if we all need it?

One has to really be aware of his or her bodily responses. I think the problem is that sometimes people have actually forgotten what it means to be well; having a feeling of wellness. It's where you don't have aches and pains, you're able to get through the day with a lot of energy, and you're getting good sleep. When you start to get the other signals, you have to step aside and say to yourself: "It seems to me like I'm out of control."

You believe humor is a major part of managing stress, but how can people who aren't as naturally funny as you bring humor into their lives?

When I say humor, I mean that humor as a kind of umbrella to hold over yourself to live a lighthearted life. You don't have to be a comedian. It's about putting on a lighter lens to see life with more clarity, rather than through a dark lens, which leads to feeling like you're in a vampire movie. So forget the comedy or being funny. What you really want to do is to take your life more lightly, instead of seriously. Take your work seriously; take your life lightly.

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Have you seen people do that successfully?

Oh yes. I think you see it once someone recognizes that life is not a stress rehearsal. You have to recognize that you are not immortal. You are not going to be here forever. What do you want to do with the time that you have? Do you want to spend eight hours of every day complaining, moaning, and gathering forces around you to feel like a victim? Or do you want to take that time and make your day more joyful, more flexible, easier on yourself and everyone around you?

You tell people that too often we make everything into catastrophes, that a wet towel on the bed is not a mugging.

Not everything is a Grey's Anatomy segment. If the wife goes down, you don't have to go and get an emergency room physician. I think one of the best ways to deal with this is to take five things that you feel are the worst possible things that could ever happen to you or your family, and use those to put other things that stress you out in perspective. Like number one, if you have a child and that child was abducted and you never saw him again, how would that relate to your computer crashing? Take five things that really would create a crisis, like if you found out you only had six months to live. Would you be that concerned about your email not coming in?

So how do people put that kind of perspective on things?

Put that list of five things on your desk, and take a look at them periodically when you're getting stressed and say, "Wow, this really isn't as important as I think it is." Because I always say yesterday's tragedy turns into today's comedy. How many of us have laughed over some incident that we initially thought was just so incredibly dramatic?

Is stress more of a problem now than it was 20 or 10 years ago?

Is it a more of problem or is it that we've discovered it? I imagine that when the Christians were being eaten by lions, they were stressed. There was just no major study being done on them at that point.

But why does life seem more stressful these days?

The fact that technology is created and obliterated so quickly creates a lot of stress. I learn a program, and then I'm told six months later we are replacing that with a different program. Never before in history have we discovered and rediscovered things so quickly. I don't want to sound like I don't think we should move forward—we are never going to go back to my grandmother's time—but I think we have to blend the two. In the studies on stress, one constant appears over and over again. That is, without support from friends or families or coworkers—social support—you will become ill and die sooner, and loneliness and depression are at an all-time high in this society.

What does research tell us about stress?

One of the major researchers was Hans Selye. He really discovered this sort of flight-or-fight response. He discovered that we have this response as a result of being overstimulated in fearful situations. If you keep triggering that response throughout the day, maybe several hundred times a day, you are going to get yourself into a pickle. Because your body is going to become eroded by the toxicity of this response. This is when the body starts to break down. You get sick more often when your immune system is compromised by stress.

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I've read that it is not major catastrophes in our lives that erode us but the little stresses that wreck havoc on us. Is that true?

Sure, it's like going through bramble bushes. You walk, and you cut yourself here and you cut yourself there, and pretty soon you go to bed and you have all these little pains and aches all over you and you are saying, "What happened?" Your whole body is full of cuts from the brambles. I think that's what happens during the day, and it's like a domino effect.

Do you recommend meditation for calming down?

Definitely. I tell people to spend 15-20 minutes a day just calming themselves, whether it is through meditation or even prayer. A lot of repetitive activities become meditative, like knitting or needlepoint. And exercise is a wonderful way to reduce stress. If you get into a kickboxing class or an aerobics class, the repetition plus the activity stops the mind in its tracks. It is very hard to skip rope and make yourself crazy about the copy machine.

What are some good resources for stress management?

Books by David Burns or Albert Ellis. Davis Burns' classic is *Feeling Good, the New Mood Therapy*. He's done wonders for depressed or anxious people. People also might need some therapy. Go sit and talk to a party who is not involved in what you do. Because often what we do is we get people around us to validate our disturbing behavior. We say, "Don't you feel this way?" and they say, "Absolutely." And what we need is someone to say, "No, this is not how you are supposed to feel. This behavior is not serving you."

Nash, P. & Schuette, B. (Ed.). (Revised 2019 [Ed.]). *Take my stress please!* Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.



Top 10 Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

#1: REDUCES STRESS

Exercise increases concentrations of *norepinephrine*, which

- Moderates the brain's response to stress
- Boosts the body's ability to deal with existing physical symptoms that stress and worrying creates

#2: ALLEVIATES DEPRESSION

Exercise releases *endorphins*, which create feelings of happiness and euphoria:

- Studies show that exercise can treat mild to moderate depression as effectively as antidepressant medication.
- Endorphins promote neural growth, reduced inflammation, feelings of calmness, and wellbeing.

#3: ALLEVIATES ANXIETY

Exercise is a natural and effective antianxiety treatment (as for depression, endorphins also help reduce anxiety):

- It relieves tension and stress.
- It boosts physical and mental energy.
- It enhances wellbeing.

#4: REDUCES SYMPTOMS OF ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Exercise boosts the brain's *norepinephrine*, *dopamine*, and *serotonin* levels—all of which affect focus and attention—thus improving concentration, motivation, memory, and mood. Exercise works in much the same way

as medication prescribed to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

#5: REDUCES SYMPTOMS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

The body focus required during exercise can help the nervous system become "unstuck" and begin to move out of the immobilization stress response. Exercises that involve cross movement and engage both arms and legs are the best choices.

#6: SHAPES MEMORY AND BRAINPOWER

- Exercise stimulates the growth of new brain cells (*neurogenesis*) and helps prevent age-related decline.
- It increases levels of a *brain-derived protein (BDNF)*, which helps with decision-making, higher thinking, and learning.
- It also increases production of cells in the hippocampus.

#7: SUPPORTS HIGHER SELF-ESTEEM

Investment in your mind, body, and soul fosters a

- Sense of self-worth
- Sense of empowerment
- Positive self-image
- Sense of achievement

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Top 10 Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

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#8: IMPROVES SLEEP

Short bursts of exercise can help regulate your sleep patterns. Exercise raises the body's core temperature. The return to normal temperature post-exercise signals the body that it's time to sleep.

#9: INCREASES ENERGY AND PRODUCTIVITY

Research shows that regular exercise boosts energy level and increases work productivity.

#10: FOSTERS STRONGER RESILIENCE

- Exercise boosts the immune system and reduces the impact of stress. This provides a healthy coping mechanism for mental or emotional life challenges.
- Dopamine is the brain's "reward chemical," released in response to any form of pleasure.

- This dopamine release effectively distracts drug and alcohol addicts, making them deprioritize cravings (at least short-term).

How much exercise do I need?

It is recommended that you aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise, five times a week (shorter sessions if necessary). This works out to 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) per week. You could also try doing 50 minutes three times per week, or 75 minutes two times per week. In addition, perform strength-training exercises at least twice per week to work all major muscle groups.

Clifford, H.M. (2017, February 8). *Top 10 mental health benefits of exercise* [PowerPoint]. U. S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Navy Personnel Command. Retrieved March 16, 2021 from the U.S. Navy website: <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil>

Care and Connection



LONELINESS AFFECTS ALL AGES.

Human beings are social creatures. Feeling like you're part of a community helps you thrive, but people sometimes have a hard time making and keeping the relationships that sustain them. Many Americans report feeling lonely for long periods of time. Connections with others are important for your health.

Social isolation and loneliness can both cause problems. "Isolation is about whether other people are physically there or not. Being lonely is about not feeling connected to others. You can feel lonely in a room full of people," explains Dr. Steve Cole, a National Institutes of Health (NIH)–funded researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles, who studies loneliness.

Loneliness not only feels bad, it may also be harmful to your health. People who feel lonely are at higher risk of many diseases. These include heart disease, high blood pressure, and Alzheimer's disease. Loneliness may also increase the risk of death for older adults.

Some of the increased risk of disease may come from changes in behavior. People who feel isolated may not have friends or family encouraging them to eat right, exercise, or see a doctor. New research suggests that loneliness can also directly harm your health.^{1,2}

"Lonely people have differences in their biology that make them more vulnerable to disease," Cole explains. He and colleagues have studied how loneliness affects the immune system, your body's disease-fighting system. They found that loneliness may alter the tendency of cells in the immune system to promote inflammation. Inflammation is necessary to help the body heal from injury. When it goes on too long, however, it may raise the risk of chronic diseases.^{1,2}

People who feel lonely may also have weakened immune cells that have trouble fighting off viruses. "So that leaves lonely people more vulnerable to a variety of infectious diseases," Cole adds.

People often associate loneliness with getting older, but you can feel lonely at any age. A recent survey found that young

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Americans are more likely to feel lonely than older adults.³ Some research suggests that social media tools and resources are preventing younger people from connecting in real life, Cole says. However, more studies are needed to know whether this is true.

It can be hard for people to talk about loneliness, Cole explains. They may feel like something is wrong with them, even though feeling lonely happens to almost everyone at some point.

NIH-funded researchers are looking into ways to help people break the cycle of loneliness. Studies have shown that feelings of loneliness can be reduced by helping others, Cole says. Caregiving and volunteering to help others may therefore help people to feel less lonely.

Having a sense of purpose in life may be another way to fight the effects of loneliness. Research has found that having a strong sense of mission in life is linked to healthier immune cells. "When you start to pursue a goal that's important to you, you almost always have to cooperate with others to do that," Cole says. "That helps bring people together."

Wise Choices: Getting Involved With Others

Being active in your community and helping others can reduce feelings of loneliness. You can get more involved with others by

- Serving meals or organizing clothing donations for people in need
- Helping an organization send care packages to soldiers stationed overseas
- Caring for dogs and cats at an animal shelter
- Volunteering to run errands for people with disabilities

- Helping with gardening at a community garden or park
- Volunteering at a school, library, museum, or hospital

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