

The Lexington Group Employee Assistance Program

NEWS YOU CAN USE

May 2012

Information and tips to help you live healthier and happier

Americans Engage in Unhealthy Behaviors to Manage Stress

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), too many Americans engage in unhealthy behaviors such as comfort eating, poor diet choices, using alcohol or smoking to help deal with stress. While common, these unhealthy coping methods may give temporary relief from stress, but actually cause more damage in the long run.



Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

The health consequences of chronic stress are made worse when stress is managed in unhealthy ways. If you practice any of these unhealthy behaviors, it is recommended that you cut back or eliminate these behaviors and adopt healthier strategies to manage stress.

Emotional eating – According to the latest Stress in America survey conducted by the APA, twenty-eight percent of Americans say they turn to food to help alleviate stress or help deal with problems. Comfort eaters report higher levels of stress than average and exhibit higher levels of all of the most common symptoms of stress, including fatigue, lack of energy, nervousness, irritability, and trouble sleeping. Additionally, comfort eaters are twice as likely as the average American to be obese.

Using alcohol – Using alcohol to deal with stress is never a good idea. Using alcohol, like the use of any drug, can lead to problems of abuse or dependence. If you regularly use alcohol to relieve stress there is a risk that you will require more and more alcohol to get the stress-relieving affect you are seeking. Additionally, using alcohol doesn't help you think more clearly or problem-solve effectively to find solutions to the problem that is creating the stress in the first place.

Smoking – Just as with emotional eating and using alcohol, smoking does not help solve your problem, it only hides it. The cause of your problem remains. And, the relief from smoking only lasts a short time. Soon your stress returns and you will feel the need to smoke another cigarette. Additionally, smoking actually causes more stress than it relieves. According to the American Heart Association, smoking is the single most alterable risk factor contributing to early death in the U.S.

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Caring and individualized help for personal and family concerns is only a phone call away.
For confidential services 24 hours every day, call us toll free at:

United States	1-800-676-HELP (4357)
Canada	1-800-567-4343
England	0-800-169-6706
Mexico	001-888-819-7162
Marshall Islands	1-800-676-4357
Puerto Rico	1-800-676-4357
TTY	1-800-955-8339