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EMPLOYEE
NEWSLETTER

IMPACT

April-June 2017

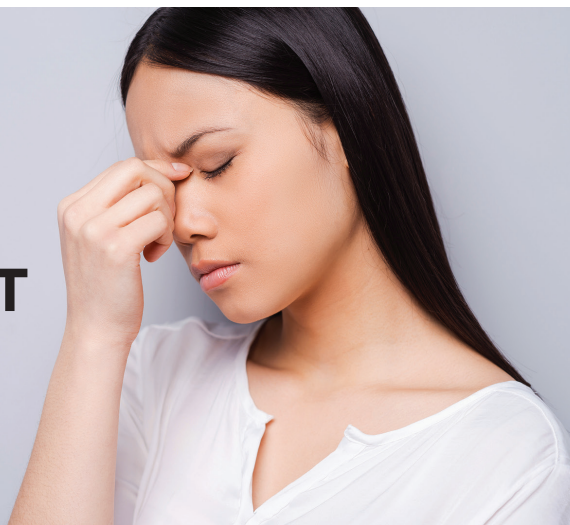
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HOW TO FEEL GOOD WHEN YOUR LIFE ISN'T PERFECT



Most people have thoughts and dreams about how their lives ought to be. When things don't work out the way they had pictured, they tend to blame other people or situations.

They don't realize that the bad feelings come from their own thinking.

"When things are bad, people say to themselves, 'Things aren't the way I like them,' and then say, 'That's terrible, that's awful' - meaning they think things are so bad that they shouldn't or mustn't be that way," says Albert Ellis, Ph.D., the creator of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and author of *Feeling Better, Getting Better, Staying Better*.

It's normal, however, to have to deal with difficult situations and difficult people as you go through life.

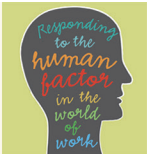
Unconditionally accept yourself

Most people want to do well in order to feel good about themselves and be loved by the significant people in their lives. But this way of thinking can make you feel crazy.

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Claremont EAP distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

For confidential help, call:
800-834-3773
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HOW TO FEEL GOOD WHEN YOUR LIFE ISN'T PERFECT

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“It’s important to accept yourself whether or not you do well and whether people who are important to you love you,” says Dr. Ellis. “Don’t think, ‘I have to do well,’ because then, if you don’t, you’ll worry. Instead, just prefer to do well. Even when people are doing well and being loved by significant people, they worry about tomorrow.”

Don’t over-generalize

You can evaluate what you think, feel and do, but don’t give yourself a generalized rating. You’re like a diamond in the making and have many facets. Some shine brilliantly, and others still need to be polished.

“People generalize and say, ‘I failed a few times, and I might fail again.’ That’s true enough, but then they over-generalize and say, ‘I failed a few times, and I’m a failure.’ You can’t be a failure or a success,” says Dr. Ellis. “But you can fail at things and be successful at things.”

Even evaluating yourself as a good person creates stress, because you’ll always have to live up to your image and do good things. The truth is that you do thousands of things - some good, some bad.

Unconditionally accept others

You may get angry with relatives, friends, co-workers or other people because of things they’ve done. You’ll feel far less miserable if you feel disappointed, instead.

“You can think, ‘I don’t like their behavior, but they’re fallible humans who sometimes do good and sometimes behave badly. I can accept them and not make myself incensed or furious at them.’ “ says Dr. Ellis. “You can judge their behavior as bad or wicked, but never judge them, as people, as bad, evil or rotten.”

This doesn’t mean you should tolerate bad behavior. You can still try to get them to change how they behave, but you can do it without anger.

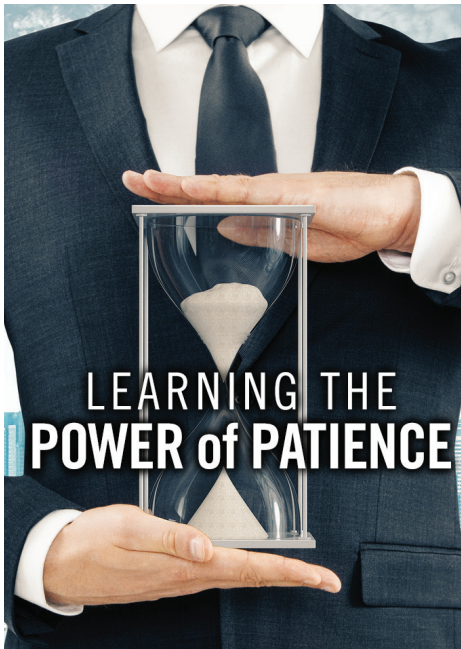
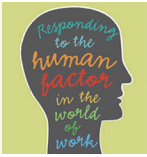
Unconditionally accept life

Many bad things may happen to you in your life, but you don’t have to view them as terrible, because you can handle them and even be happy in spite of them. Therefore, it’s not the bad things that upset you - it’s your view of them.

Feeling bad comes from demanding that something turn out a certain way.

“A demand says, ‘I have to have something, or to have something turn out a certain way, and it’s terrible and I’m no good if I don’t have it,’ “ says Dr. Ellis. “You don’t need life to be good. It’s preferable, of course - highly preferable - but it’s not a necessity.”

The StayWell Company, LLC 2016



You know the price you pay for being impatient -- a tightening of the chest, rise in blood pressure and surge of irritation and anger directed at a person or circumstance.

But have you considered the benefits that come with being patient? You make better decisions, reduce your stress and anger and increase your peace of mind.

“Patience with yourself, with other people and with the big and small circumstances of life is a determining factor in your peace of mind,” says M.J. Ryan, author of “The Power of Patience.” “Impatience is a habit; so is patience. And by practicing being patient, you can increase its presence and power in your life.”

Ms. Ryan defines patience as the capacity to stop before you act so you’re clearly able to decide the best course of action or choose the right words to say instead of simply reacting. Patience accomplishes this by bringing these

three qualities of mind and heart together:

- **Persistence.** Patience gives you the ability to work steadily toward your goals and dreams.
- **Serenity.** Patience gives you calmness of spirit. Rather than being thrown into anger, panic or fear by circumstance, you can put it into perspective and keep your cool.
- **Acceptance.** Patience gives you the ability to cope with obstacles graciously and respond to life’s challenges with courage, strength and optimism.

“It’s easy to be accepting when all is well,” says Ms. Ryan. “But when you’re patient when things aren’t going the way you want, you’re truly practicing patience.”

Patience boosters

“Patience is something you do, not something you have or don’t have,” says Ms. Ryan. “It’s a decision you make again and again. Patience is a quality that can be strengthened like a muscle.”

Here are several steps you can take to strengthen your patience:

- Reframe the situation by asking yourself one question: How else could I look at this situation that would increase the possibility of a good outcome or greater peace of mind? “What you’re looking for is an interpretation that offers possibility instead of panic, hope instead of hysteria,” says Ms. Ryan. “Your payoff will be a huge jump in your ability to engage resourcefully with life when it doesn’t appear to be going your way.”

- Remind yourself that change is inevitable. When times are tough, it’s helpful to remember that this, too, shall pass. Doing so gives you the strength, hope and patience needed to carry on.
- Take yourself on a mental vacation. “If you’re aggravated by standing in line or waiting on hold on the phone, visualize the most peaceful place you can think of. See, hear and feel yourself there,” says Ms. Ryan. “Rather than focusing on how long you have to wait, relish a chance to take a quick daydream trip to Tahiti or the Alps.”
- Ask for help. Lots of times we’re impatient because we’re overloaded. “There’s no prize at the end of your life for doing too much, particularly doing it in a frazzled state,” says Ms. Ryan.
- Start a patience movement. Thank others for being patient when you’ve been the one fumbling for the right change and holding up everyone. “It will defuse their tension and yours, and perhaps encourage others to be more patient as well,” says Ms. Ryan.

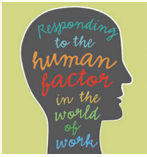
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Many people believe stress is all in the mind. But dealing with stressful situations, such as having to give a presentation or driving in heavy traffic, can have physiological consequences.

“Such situations can make you breathe more shallowly or hold your breath, and you don’t even realize you’re doing it,” says Robert Fried, Ph.D., a respiratory psychophysicologist and director of the stress biofeedback clinic at the Institute for Rational Emotive and Behavior Therapy in New York. “In turn, shallow, rapid breathing can cause you to hyperventilate, in which case you’ll exhale more carbon dioxide and eventually reduce the blood flow to your brain.”

When that happens, you’ll feel less comfortable and less in control at a time when you need to be at your best.

The breathing techniques described at right can help you combat stress by increasing blood flow to the brain.

Belly breathing

When you have to relax fast, belly breathing can be done in seconds.

“You’ll increase the amount of air you take in with each breath if you concentrate on making your abdomen move out as you inhale and in as you exhale. This increases the oxygen to your brain and can produce a calming effect,” Dr. Fried says.

Breathe through your nose when you do this exercise. “You’ll take in more air than you might otherwise,” he says.

Using imagery will help you further deepen your breathing and slow its pace. “Getting caught up in the image can help you naturally take in more air with each breath,” he says. “As you inhale, close your eyes and imagine the air swirling into your nose and down into your lungs. As you exhale, imagine the air swirling back out again.”

It’s also helpful to repeat statements to yourself that are consistent with what’s physiologically occurring in your body. “Inhaling and exhaling are controlled by two different parts of the brain,” he says. “Inhaling has an excitatory effect, exhaling an inhibitory effect.”

To produce these effects when you breathe, say to yourself while inhaling, “I’m awake. I’m alert. I’m full of energy.” When exhaling, say, “I’m relaxed. I’m comfortable. I’m in control.”

“Learning to use belly breathing for relaxation is a wonderful tool if you can learn to do it effectively in four or five breaths,” Dr. Fried says.

But it’s not for everybody. “Try something else if you can’t do this exercise and relax in three to four breaths,” he says.

Another caveat: Belly breathing may not be advisable for people with certain medical conditions, such as kidney disease or diabetes.

Meditative breathing

The ujjayi breath, a yoga technique, can provide a sense of calmness that’s otherwise difficult to achieve when you have a million things to do.

“Rather than thinking about everyday worries, such as needing to buy groceries, you’re in the moment,” says Christina Haberek, a private yoga instructor in Lake Placid, N.Y.

To perform this technique, sit in a comfortable position and slightly close your mouth. Shut your eyes and gently press your tongue against the roof of your mouth while inhaling, fully filling your lungs. “As you inhale, the air should travel over the roof of your mouth and through the back of your throat, making a ‘sa’ sound,” she says.

Hold your breath for one or two seconds, then exhale softly and slowly. “As you exhale, the air should travel through the back of the throat and make a ‘ha’ sound,” Ms. Haberek says. “When you’re first trying this breathing technique, you might not feel a sense of serenity immediately. You may have to practice it for 5 to 10 minutes a day.”

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Claremont EAP can help with all of these choices!

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