



**Texas DPS
Fitness Wellness
Unit**

**Wellness Tips
April 2018**

April 6, 2018

Just Breathe: Hacking the Nervous System

Have you ever noticed what happens to your breathing when you feel stressed? It gets shallow and rapid. When you are relaxed you may notice that your breath rate slows down. What you may not be aware of is what else is going on inside the body. As your breath rate increases, the heart rate increases, blood pressure increases, digestion, immune function and our reproductive systems slow down. Most importantly, our brain is affected which reduces our ability to communicate and solve complex problems. Controlling our own breath rate is simple and easy and will counter balance the effects of stress and conserve energy. Try this simple tactical breathing technique regularly throughout the day to improve performance: inhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, exhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4. Complete for 5-10 rounds 3-5 times each day and notice how it impacts your health and your reaction to stressful situations. If you would like to schedule a class for your team to further understand the benefits of self-regulation skills email resilience@dps.texas.gov

April 13, 2018

Gratitude and Your Health

A quick exercise: think of the things that you are most grateful for. List the top 3 on a piece of paper nearby. By doing this simple exercise you have created a shift in your hormone pathways that will improve your health. A formal practice of gratitude (writing or tracking in an app like Gratitude 365) has been proven to change your brain pathways to improve health and quality of life. Gratitude is doesn't come easy for many of us. With practice, this simple technique can make a lasting change in the way we see the world.

Like ruts on a muddy road, if we continue to use the same pathway, our brain forms deeply ingrained patterns that are hard to change. If you have experienced life with a person that tends to look for what is wrong rather than what is right then you have experienced the effects of negative pathways. Counting blessings or writing a gratitude list before bed promotes better sleep, lower blood pressure, better digestion, and a stronger immune system. The next time you are feeling down, pull out your gratitude lists and remember all you have to be grateful for.

For more information or for an entire workshop on the practice and science of gratitude send a request to: resilience@dps.texas.gov

April 20, 2018

Mindfulness: Be Here Now

Have you ever pulled into the driveway at the end of the day with no recollection of your drive? Have you ever finished an entire meal without actually tasting one bite? We all have, it's normal. However, when we learn skills to be more mindful in everyday life research has shown improved health and quality of life. Mindfulness also improves vigilance by making us aware of what is actually happening around us (sights, sounds, smells, etc.) Learning to be mindful requires awareness. By paying attention to what is happening in the moment you are being mindful. Here is a quick mindfulness exercise that can be practiced anytime, anywhere with your eyes open.

Stop what you are doing and take a deep breath.

Follow your breath, pay attention to it for 3-5 deep breaths.

Notice where your body is contacting the chair you are sitting in, or your feet on the floor.

Notice the sounds where you are, how many sounds can you detect?

Notice the smells.

April 27, 2018

Which is More Important? Resistance Training or Cardiovascular Exercise?

People are often motivated for various reasons to start exercising. Nonetheless it can become confusing on which is better, cardiovascular or resistance training. In reality, both cardio and resistance training are important for overall health. In addition to health, exercise can positively affect one's percent body fat and metabolism. A study done by Westcott and colleagues, found that participants who performed 1 set of 10 resistance machine exercises and 20 minutes of cycling or walking, 2-3 days per week for 10 weeks. They found individuals who trained 2 times per week saw an increase in 3.1lbs of lean weight and lost 3.2 lbs of fat. Additionally, people who trained 3 days per week added 3.1lbs of lean weight and lost 4.4 lbs of fat. So in short, when focusing on metabolism and fat loss, the combination of cardio and resistance training has been shown to be beneficial without spending long hours in the gym.

