



Texas DPS Fitness Wellness Unit

Wellness Tips
August 2018

August 3, 2018

“Our bodies change our minds, and our minds can change our behavior, and our behavior can change our outcomes.” - Amy Cuddy PhD

In our busy, technology driven world it is easy to forget that you have a body attached to your extremely complex brain that is constantly analyzing and processing our daily to-do lists and our high level ideas. However, a little bit of movement can go a long way to make our brains function better and to prevent neck and back pain. This short list of simple stretches can be done in the office when you start to feel tension build up, or better yet, before you feel tension build up.

Seated Twists, Shoulder Shrugs, Supported Lunge (Hip Flexor Stretch), Seated Hamstring Stretch, Chest Stretch

If you find yourself forgetting to get up here are a few strategies: every hour set a timer to get up and get out of the desk for a quick 200 step walk or get the heart rate up by walking up a few flights of stairs. Drink water! The more you drink the more often you will have to get up to use the restroom. Creating a new habit of stretching a few body parts before you get back to your work area may improve productivity and reduce back pain. Taking regular breaks at work will leave you feeling refreshed and ready to tackle the next thing on the list.

August 10, 2017

Portion Sizes

Wanting to lose weight and don't know where to start? Looking at portion sizes could be a great first step. Have you noticed that at many restaurants one plate of food could feed almost three people? Once we get started eating, it is very hard to stop, even when we feel full. Eating to a place of discomfort has become a norm for many Americans on a daily basis. Here are some quick tips and tricks to help cut down on portion sizes:

When dining out: Once you get your meal, ask for a box. Immediately place half of the food on your plate in the box and put the box out of sight (lunch for the next day!). Another option is to share a meal with someone.

When eating at home: Serve yourself one plate of food, and if you are still hungry after that plate of food, eat only the vegetables for seconds.

When snacking: Don't eat straight from the box or bag, measure out one serving size. Better yet, swap processed snacks for real food (chips for carrots and hummus or an apple and peanut butter).

All the time: Start tracking the calories that you are consuming to get a good idea of what you are eating and how much.

August 17, 2018

Sleep matters for our health and wellbeing

Do you wake up happy to face the day or exhausted before you even get started? According to the CDC, one in three US adults get less than the recommended amount of sleep, which is seven hours or more every night. Why does sleep matter so much for our health and wellbeing?

Productivity: Many times we skimp on sleep to be more productive. Our productivity is reduced substantially when we are sleep deprived.

Impairment: Not getting enough sleep can impair your abilities similar to being drunk!

Weight gain: Bad sleep habits can increase your calorie intake and may impact your risk of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Studies show that an individual that is sleep deprived will consume more calories than on a day where they are rested.

What can we do to help ourselves get more sleep? Set an alarm to start your nighttime routine, or an alarm to go to bed. Speaking of nighttime routine, do you have one? This can help you to wind down and get your body prepared for sleep. Spend 15 minutes prepping for the morning so you aren't dwelling on these things instead of sleeping. Lastly, read before bed. This has been proven to relax the brain to fall asleep and cut stress levels in half in just six minutes. Instead of looking at a bright screen (phone, iPad or computer) reach for a book.





August 24, 2018

Why is it so easy to overeat junk food?

Can't resist the chips... the cookies... the ice cream? Processed food is very easy to overconsume, and it's normal to feel like you can't stop eating these types of foods. The food industry has created cheap, easily accessible products that our taste buds and our brains cannot resist. Long ago, humans prioritized calorie-dense foods to help them survive. Today manufacturers use calorie density to create hyper-palatable junk food. Sugar, fat and salt aren't that appealing on their own, but when combined they are irresistible. This makes real food less appealing and leaves us fighting our brain to not eat these processed foods.

Food companies use The Big Five for processed foods:

- 1) Calorie dense and high in sugar and fat making the food addictive
- 2) Intensely flavored, we are wired to want a lot of flavor
- 3) Immediately delicious, the first bite makes us want more and more, and leaves us craving more when it is gone
- 4) Melted down easy or dissolves in your mouth
- 5) Easy to eat or minimal chewing

This makes picking real food very hard as real food does not activate the pleasure center of our brain to the extent processed foods do. Real food is not addictive and we tend to stop eating real food when we are full. The next time you crave processed food, make a conscious decision to switch it out for a healthier option. This switch may be hard at first, because you are fighting your brain, but keep at it and you will feel significantly better and possibly drop a few lbs!!

August 31, 2018

How alleviate stress in 2-minutes

Stress is lurking everywhere, and is usually silent. Studies have associated chronic stress with heart problems, impaired sleep, overeating and depression among many other ailments. Most of us understand that stress is not good for us; however, some of us deal with it the only way we know how... by ignoring it. We overvalue the work culture and undervalue the relaxation culture. The first step in reducing stress is to be more self-aware of your own stress level. Here are some simple 2-minute stress relievers for when you realize you are feeling stressed.

- 1) Focus on your breathing: This doesn't mean an hour of yoga, just a few deep intentional breaths allows your body to relax and enter a state of calm. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds and exhale for 7 seconds. Do this 10 times.
- 2) Say hello to a friend: Making social connections is very important for relieving stress, as this is signaling to our brain that you are safe. Building and maintaining relationships helps us feel secure. This also takes us out of our own heads and away from the stress that we are feeling.
- 3) Balance thoughts: When we are feeling stressed, the tendency is to focus on the worst possible outcome. Start looking at things a little differently, and when the brain starts to travel down the road of catastrophe, turn it in a different direction. Just recognizing that negative thoughts have crept in, and actively trying to change those thoughts, will help to eliminate stress.
- 4) Take a humor break: Find something that makes you laugh. The idea is to provide a quick boost of positive emotion. Research has shown that laughing increases endorphins, the feel good brain chemicals.

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