



# Hidalgo Health Associates

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

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## Stop Stressing Out — about Stress

With all the talk about stress and stress management, it's important to know that much of the stress we experience is not harmful, and serves us in many ways. The stress you feel before taking an exam helps you remain focused so you can do your best. This good stress is also called "eustress," a term coined by Hans Selye, the father of stress theory. Stop stressing about stress. The type of stress to be watchful for is "chronic stress." Chronic stress (ongoing stress experiences that do not let up) can be physically harmful. What it feels like: You have little control over how much stress you feel, how long the stress lasts, and when you'll next experience it. Caregivers are highly prone to chronic stress. If you experience chronic stress, figure out how you will intervene to control it.



## Fight the Stigma of Mental Illness in the Workplace

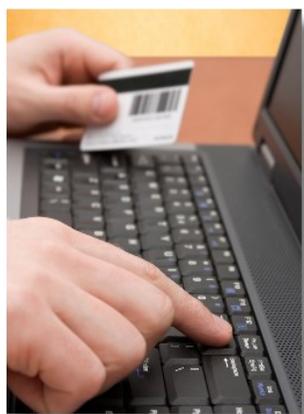
The stigma of mental illness in the workplace contributes to denial and avoidance of treatment. Some studies have shown stigma contributing to the delay of treatment for up to eight years! That's a lot of needless suffering. Since 25% of employees will eventually have a mental health diagnosis, fighting stigma is crucial. To fight for change, take two powerful steps: 1) Talk about mental wellness just as you would physical wellness. 2) Just as you know to avoid derogatory terms for physical disabilities, also discourage language (crazy, nut-case, whacked-out, etc.) historically associated with mental illness.



Source: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) [Search: PMC5347358]

## Protect Yourself from ID Theft

ID theft is a growing problem. Here's what's hot right now: Many background check Web sites have information about you—e.g., Truthfinder.com, etc. Thieves acquire this information for free. But that free info is not enough to steal your identity. That comes next—by sending you an apparently foolproof, convincing email that appears to come from a friend—who was hacked. The email asks you to click a link that obtains the missing piece of information. The fix: Don't click a link in an email that comes from a friend until you have verified it is not fraudulent.



## First Sign of Teen Drug Use

School has started. Will your youngster someday be influenced to experiment with illicit drugs? How could you possibly know? Is there a common first telltale sign? Unfortunately, the fact is that unsuspecting parents may never know. However, the first sign that is usually observed is a sudden change of friends with whom parents or guardians are not familiar or of whom they do not approve. The most powerful, too often unused tool for parents to prevent illicit drug use is communication. Research shows it is dreaded and seldom used by parents, or if used at all, it's a one-shot thing. Best advice: Have the talk.



Learn more: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) [Search: PMC3257983]

# When Your Coworker Seems Depressed

You can't play doctor, but something's not right with your coworker. He or she is coming in late, not "caring" as much about the work, putting things off, and not dressing as nicely as they once did. They appear a little absent-minded, unsure of themselves, "scattered" or unorganized, and a little bit isolated or withdrawn from the rest of the group. Sometimes they are snappy, too—not as pleasant to be around. Although you can't diagnose, you can share your concerns. Listen and encourage him or her to get help. A whopping 23% of employees will suffer from depression and miss work because of it, according to one key study. Getting over depression is *not* an exercise in willpower. It's a neurological disease process often requiring medical intervention to overcome. As a peer, you could have tremendous influence—likely more than a family member with whom the employee possibly engages in conflict. This means it doesn't take much effort to influence a coworker's decision to take action and get help. Simply sharing your observations (in private) and encouraging a coworker to get help could be enough to motivate him or her to do so. Depression left untreated can lead down a chronic path of worsening symptoms. You may help your coworker avoid years of pain as the illness grows worse, and coming to work may be a lot more pleasant for you, too.



# How to Be More Proactive

**Are you a proactive employee?**

Being proactive means acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes. Proactive employees naturally get more stuff done with fewer crises and less work strain. Not being proactive does not mean you don't act or respond to critical issues, but that you may just act later on these things. This means being prompted by a crisis that includes more stress. To be proactive: 1) Pay attention to your gut telling you to act now on what you're facing. 2) Resist the temptation to use procrastination as a way to manage work, causing you to respond daily to only what's urgent. 3) On the job, keep the big picture in mind. Doing so will cause you to feel more energized by work tasks, rather than perceive them as burdens to avoid or postpone.



# Tips for Overcoming Stage Fright

Late-night talk show hosts experience anxiety before they perform, just as you might experience before giving a presentation. They tame this nervousness with practices that reduce intensity so it becomes a tool of success. You can too. 1) Arrive early and greet members of your audience to feel closer to them. You will feel more familiar with your audience and therefore more in control. 2) Rehearse in private. Four or five times is ideal. Doing so "greases the wheel" and causes your words to flow more easily. Your confidence will grab hold and increase during your presentation. 3) Make eye contact with a few individual attendees while speaking. You will feel closer to your audience, thereby reducing your stress. 4) See your audience as people who really need what you have to offer. This empowers you to be genuine. 5) Breathe slowly and deeply as needed to release tension prior to speaking.



# Foods That Prevent the Afternoon Crash

If that droopy feeling zaps your afternoon performance, examine your diet. The culprit might be lunchtime foods like white bread or white rice—or foods that contain white flour, like pasta. Are you eating enough protein? A protein deficit will affect your energy. Your body wants protein in order to do its jobs, like metabolizing and repairing. A little bit of unsaturated fat is a good thing to keep your metabolism up. Foods like avocados, nuts, and oily fish, like salmon, are good choices. These also supply energy without the crash. Finally, experiment with smaller, more frequent meals during the day, say every three hours, to see if your energy remains up. Keep a diary, and discover what works for you.



Learn more at International Food Education Council [www.foodinsight.org](http://www.foodinsight.org)