



Los Angeles County
Office of Education
**Employee Assistance
Service for Education**



CONNECT WITH EASE

Employee Assistance Service for Education

Overview:

Monthly Article:

Transforming Resolutions Into Goals

6 Proven Stress-Reducing Tips

EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

CONNECT WITH EASE:

(800) 882-1341

Free confidential professional help for district employees and family members:

Family troubles. Emotional distress.
Stress. Anxiety.
Drug/alcohol use.
Grief. Loss.
Life transitions.

Professional counselors are ready to help.

Call the EASE Hotline for 24/7 assistance.

MESSAGE FROM EASE

January is Mental Wellness Month.

This has been a very difficult year. We continue to be in the midst of a global pandemic that has impacted every aspect of our lives. We have endured through change, loss, anxiety, fear, and anger resulting from the pandemic, racial and social injustice, unrest, and a tumultuous election year and political climate in our country all resulting in a sense of uncertainty in our lives. Dealing with ongoing uncertainty can leave us feeling stressed, confused, and physically/emotional drained. Emotional distress is common and normal in the context of uncertainty. In these states of emotional distress, it can be difficult to manage stress in our lives.

As we begin the new year, this **month is dedicated to being mindful about our own mental and emotional wellbeing.** We are juggling a lot of different things and roles during these difficult times and what is often lost is time and priority to take care of oneself. It can be very necessary and extremely beneficial to take a break and do something enjoyable and soothing to reduce stress and anxiety. Stress is a normal part of life. No matter how much we might long for a stress-free existence, the fact is, stress can be healthy and is actually a necessary part of our nervous system regulation. Stress becomes problematic when we do not have the internal coping mechanism reserves to balance and regulate our responses to it. This can happen when we are exposed to high or toxic levels of stress over long periods of time. Learning to effectively cope with stress can ease our bodies and our minds. Stress can also lower our immune systems which is so important for our health during this time. Use this month as a way to lay a strong foundation for the year focusing on your own mental and emotional wellbeing. This work on yourself is not easy, and it will not happen alone. It requires focus, intentionality and prioritization. EASE is available to support you on your journey towards mental and emotional well-being.

On behalf of EASE, wishing you a blessed, safe and happy new year!

TRANSFORMING RESOLUTIONS INTO GOALS

We're here again. At the start of another new year. So what will 2021 be like for you? You may feel like your life is still on pause as we continue to quarantine or you may feel like nothing has changed as we're still living under the anxiety and fear of the pandemic. But every year is different; and as a result, it's difficult to consider comparing one year to another. Each year brings in new possibilities and opportunities, new friendships and connections and new hobbies and habits. This year, you've probably already made a new years resolution! What better way than to start the new year off by turning that resolution into a goal! Making your resolution into achievable goals changes your odds of success for the better. Goals give you a sense of direction and help you measure your achievement, thus building confidence for future aims. For example, **January is National Mental Wellness Month**, perhaps your goal this month is to manage stress more effectively. Set a SMART goal that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. Here are a few ways to get started: **Specific:** Be clear about your goal (ex. Starting this month I will practice stress reduction techniques once a day). **Measurable:** Make it specific enough that you can measure whether you accomplished it (ex. I will keep a journal to track what techniques I practiced daily). **Attainable:** Make sure your behavior can be achieved (ex. I will practice a breathing exercise, meditation, or yoga when I feel stressed to calm me). **Relevant:** Set a goal important to your life right now (ex. My levels of stress are high and I would like to manage my stress more effectively). **Timely:** List when you will perform this action (ex. I will practice stress-reduction technique once a day for the entire month). Meeting a goal takes hard work, courage and commitment. We hope these tips help you better achieve success in reaching your goals!



6 Proven Stress-Reducing Tips

Take a Break From Social Media. Social media is a double edged sword, it can help us stay connected to each other, but it can also negatively impact our health and well-being. There may be times when you find that family and friends have taken to social media to share their personal thoughts and feelings. In times when you don't agree with their opinions, this may trigger emotional upset. A critical act of self-care is allowing yourself to take a break from social media and disallowing upsetting posts to have access to your mental and emotional space.

Limit Your News Consumption. Limit your consumption of daily news to stay emotionally healthy. It's normal to stay informed and follow news stories, but make sure to get news from reliable sources. Be aware that too much media exposure can increase distress as you find yourself watching repeated news coverage that reminds you of upsetting events. Instead, seek social support and talk to a close friend or loved one rather than finding closure in the news.

Practice Relaxation Methods. Relaxation techniques can be helpful, but it can increase distress at first. This may happen when you focus your attention on disturbing physical sensations and reduce contact with the outside world. However, practicing relaxation techniques in small amounts that you can handle can help to reduce negative reactions. Try mixing relaxation with activities like music, walking, breathing, stretching, or spending time in nature.

Practice Mindfulness. Mindfulness involves paying attention to and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and sensations. Practicing mindfulness can help you to cope with stress or difficult emotions. The process is about being able to notice where your thoughts take you and bringing your attention back to the present.

Get Adequate Rest, Exercise, and Nutrition. Set a goal to turn off the screen early and read something you enjoy before bed. Don't neglect getting the exercise your body needs and engage in physical activity. Find a way to ensure that your body is getting the balanced nutrition it needs during this stressful season.

Get Professional Help if Needed. These are a few signs that you would benefit from additional support: You can't shake the distressful thoughts or emotions. The distressful thoughts or emotions begin to interfere with your daily life. You notice others encouraging you to reach out for help. **EASE is available 24/7 if you need someone to talk to.**

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-resilience/202101/coping-stress-caused-watching-the-us-capitol-riot>

<https://www.talkspace.com/blog/set-mental-health-goals/>

TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.
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