

# MY member newsletter

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## Stalking Prevention

**S**talking is "repeated unwanted attention and harassment directed at a specific person causing him or her to fear harm." Stalking is a crime. Although similar definitions exist in every state, unfortunately many perpetrators ignore or incorrectly "compare out" of the definition. They believe whatever they're doing isn't stalking. Many behaviors can constitute stalking including unwanted gifts no matter how well-intentioned, contacting victims friends, hiring an investigator, or even going through the victims garbage. Could your behavior constitute stalking?

## Best Way to Utilize a To-Do List

**T**o improve the effectiveness of to-do lists, consider these valuable tips. 1) Write down all tasks in "mind dump fashion" and prioritize later. 2) Break up any big tasks into small doable steps. 3) Do not make your to-do list too long because if one glance at the list causes you to feel overwhelmed, you may become demotivated, put it aside, and not complete it. Identify urgent versus important tasks—not hardest first and easiest later. 4) Add deadlines to each item because your to-do list is an action plan, not just a memory jogger.

## Use Anticipatory Joy to Manage Stress

**L**ooking forward to something enjoyable that's coming up soon can create positive emotional state to help you manage stress better. Biology is key in this stress management technique known as "anticipatory joy" or "positive anticipation". The anticipation of an enjoyable experience releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter that produces a sense of pleasure and reward. This uplifts your mood and counteracts stress hormones. Try it. Focus on a soon-to-be-experienced-activity-plan one now— that will bring joy and excitement. See if this strategy shifts your attention away from stressors and creates positive thinking. The payoffs are reduced anxiety, improved mood, increased motivation, and a sense of purpose.

## Supporting a Partner with Anxiety

**I**f you are in a relationship with someone who suffers from anxiety, feeling helpless is a common experience you share. Still, your support is extremely valuable. To offer support, don't dismiss their anxiety, worries, or fears. Don't try to shorten the episode. Do ask how you can help, and offer reassurance— "This will pass," "I'm here for you," etc. Nearly 60% of people who suffer from anxiety haven't explored getting treatment for it, so encouraging medical evaluation may be a key step if social and occupational functioning suffer. Do not allow the stigma of mental health diagnosis inhibit getting help. Most people with anxiety disorders don't suffer continuously, so intermittent symptoms can lead you to delay treatment.

## Stress Tips from the Field: Job Stress Versus Job Strain

**J**ob strain refers to heightened levels of stress in the workplace that surpass typical levels, potentially leading to severe health consequences if not adequately addressed. You will find job strain occurs when high demands of a job are coupled with low control over the duties. Strain increases with the inability to know how long engaging with demands will last and a feeling of powerlessness to control decisions that might reduce strain. Positions with job strain can be found in fast-paced healthcare settings like emergency rooms, teaching jobs in under-resourced schools, dangerous military occupations, and even some highly demanding home health aide jobs. Get help and support, and learn how to manage job strain if you identify some of the following: 1) consistently feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work; 2) frequently working long hours or taking work home to meet deadlines; 3) frequently dealing with emotionally challenging clients, patients, or customers; 4) needing to suppress emotions to remain calm in stressful situations; 5) feeling emotionally drained or exhausted after work; 6) having little or no control over work duties, including the methods and pace; 7) finding decisions about the job are being made by someone else or being micromanaged with no autonomy; 8) receiving no support from others when facing work challenges; 9) frequent isolation on the job; 10) receiving little or no training for the position; and 11) performing repetitive or physically demanding tasks.

## Revisiting Icebreakers for Increased Productivity

**I**cebreakers aren't just for meetings where everyone is a stranger. More accurately, icebreakers help set a positive tone for any sort of meeting, and they can encourage team bonding and help your group experience a more relaxed and inclusive atmosphere that boosts productivity. Rather than diving into your next same-old routine or unchanging class, try an icebreaker. Then, try a new one periodically. And yes, they work for remote meetings, too! Try this one it is guaranteed to shake things up and have everyone laughing before getting down to business: Each team member shares three statements about themselves—two truths and one lie. The rest of the team tries to guess which one statement is the lie. This activity encourages sharing personal information in a fun and engaging way.

Resource book: "50 Remote-Friendly Icebreakers: Quick and Easy Warmups and Energizers for Better Meeting Mojo" by Ben Caruthers

## Does Diet Affect Mental Health?

**N**utrition affects mental health, and nutrients with the most effect are B vitamins, vitamin D, antioxidant rich foods, omega-3 fatty acids, and fiber. News about heart health and diet is more popularly understood, but how nutrition affects the brain is obviously as important. Does your diet suffer from a lack of these nutrients? (Talk to your doctor before considering supplements.) Among hundreds of research findings, some have shown negative effects of processed foods before age three on a child's IQ; relief of depression symptoms related to omega-3; and fiber's role in supporting gut microbes as important to brain health. Older males may benefit from moderate consumption of nuts.

## Mindfulness on the Go

**M**indfulness is the practice of paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and what's going on around you, and doing so while being fully present without distractions or critiquing your thoughts. This reduces tension and can revitalize you during the workday. Nothing special is required to practice mindfulness. A popular example is deep breathing: Focus only on your breath, inhale slowly, hold your breath for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Repeating the process produces calmness. Another is "mindful walking," where you take a short walk outside and focus only on the sensations of walking, your feet on the ground, and the movement of your body. Don't wait to get home to manage stress. Do it on the go with mindfulness.

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