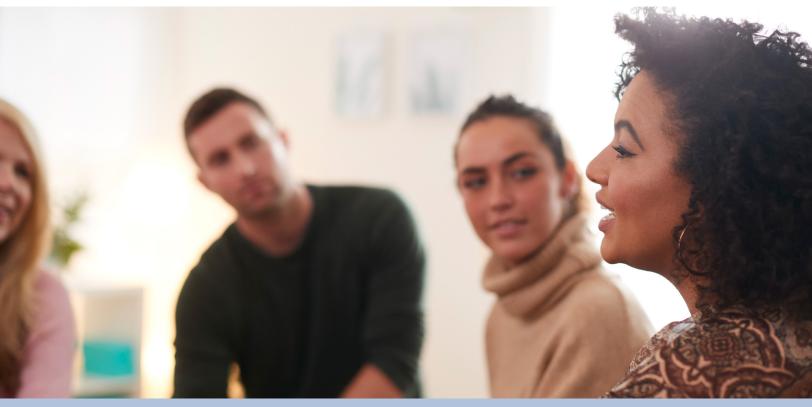
EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission's Employee Advisory Service (EAS) Newsletter contains useful articles and information for managing various well-being and work-life issues in order to create a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace. EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance.



UPCOMING WEBINAR

How to More Effectively Respond to Stressful Situations

During these difficult times, stress levels have been higher than ever for many of us. This practical session will provide several suggestions for managing our reaction to stressful situations, including being more intentional about stress management, increasing our emotional intelligence, and more effectively utilizing our personal and professional support system.

Date: March 23, 2023 Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2: Managing Challenges

Page 3: Jump Start Your Exercise Goals

Page 5: Coping with Financial Stress

Page 7: Your EAS

Managing Challenges

Many people face challenges that can be stressful and overwhelming. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will help you, the people you care about, and those around you become more resilient.

Stress can cause the following:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Trouble concentrating and making decisions
- Nightmares or problems sleeping
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems and mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, illegal drugs (like heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine), and misuse of prescription drugs (like opioids)

For immediate help, call 911 or the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) at https://988lifeline.org, 98 8 for English or Spanish, or Lifeline Chat (https://988lifeline.org/chat). TTY users can use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.



Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress.

Here are some ways you can manage stress, anxiety, grief, or worry:

- Take breaks from news stories, including those on social media. It's good to be informed, but constant information about negative events can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, TV, and computer screens for a while.
- Take care of your body. Staying physically healthy can improve your emotional wellbeing. Here are some ways to improve your health:
 - Eat healthy. Have fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and low-fat or no-fat dairy. Limit foods with unhealthy fats, salt, and added sugars.
 - Get enough sleep. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day to help you sleep better. Adults need seven or more hours per night.
 - Move more and sit less. Every little bit of physical activity helps. Start small, and build up to 2.5 hours a week. You can break it into smaller amounts, such as 20 to 30 minutes a day.
- Limit alcohol intake. Choose not to drink, or drink in moderation on days you drink alcohol. Moderation means having two drinks or less a day for men or one drink or less for women.
- Avoid using illegal drugs or prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed. Don't take someone else's prescription. Substance use treatment is available, and recovery starts with asking for help.
- Avoid smoking, vaping, and the use of other tobacco products. People can and do quit smoking for good.
- Continue with regular health appointments, tests, screenings, and vaccinations.
- Make time to unwind. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.

Jump Start Your Exercise Goals

Perhaps you tell yourself that a couple of walks from the TV to the kitchen for another handful of chips is enough exercise for one evening. Then you watch with envy at the wiry neighbor who rises early every day to run five miles before work. Face it: Deep down, everyone knows that more exercise is important for better health.

Regular exercise, or even an increased level of daily physical activity, will lead to:

- An improved physique
- An improved sense of well-being
- A reduction in stress and fatigue
- Greater capacity for staving off life-threatening or debilitating diseases
- A body less prone to aging and injury

However, despite good intentions, many people find it difficult to follow a serious exercise regimen. While it is easy to consider beginning an exercise program, it is not always easy to make it past the first few workouts. Often, people may give up when it feels as though the exercise routine is too much. If that's happened to you, it may well be because you weren't armed with the right information. You may have chosen the wrong program, or set up unrealistic and unfair goals for yourself. You might even have suffered an injury.

But with the right information and expectations, you can make a difference.

Start by setting realistic goals.

What do you want to do? Lose 10 pounds? Be able to fit into the jeans you wore in college? Perhaps you'd just plain like to feel healthier. Decide what your goal is first, and then write it down. But don't set yourself up to fail. If you want to lose 20 pounds in 20 days, forget it. You'd have to starve yourself, and you'd gain it back as soon as you started eating again. What you're shooting for, remember, are realistic goals.

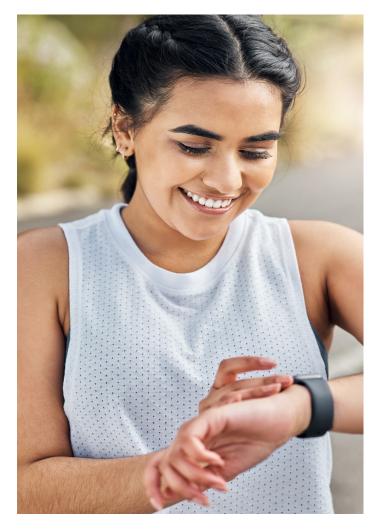
Determine how much time and energy you can give to exercising and how much time you're prepared to dedicate. If you want to set aside a certain number of hours per week for programmed exercising, go for it! But if you know that's not your style, then think about what you will do. Could you commit to a walk for half of your lunch time every day? Or would you rather consider increasing your daily activity in a lot of small ways? Decide what goals will work for you, and then start to think about how to reach them.

Every time you make a decision about the kind of exercise you want to do, the time you can give it, or what you're aiming for, write it down.

Make a commitment to your goals.

Exercise can be fun or grueling—that's your choice. But it won't be easy. You have to decide that you're ready to make a commitment to the goals you've chosen, and then stick with them.

One thing you can do to help yourself is to start small. You won't want to plunge into the whole program on day one. Your body probably won't be ready for it, anyway, so once again, you might be setting yourself up for failure. If you want to run five miles at a time, start with just a third of a mile, or less, depending on the shape you're in. Or if you work on the seventh floor of your building, start by walking up one or two flights slowly. Then gradually increase the speed and the number of flights you mount each day. Build slowly to that exercise peak you have in mind.



Anticipate your objections.

Comedian George Burns once said, "If I knew that I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." More and more people are living to what used to be unattainable ages. Wouldn't you rather be healthy and mobile in your 90s? Then why not take better care of yourself? Oh, sure, there are obstacles. We all have obstacles—some might call them excuses—for not exercising. Some of them may even be legitimate. But each obstacle can be overcome.

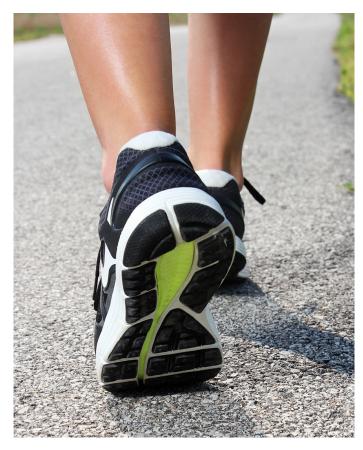
You may think you're:

- Too pressed for time
- Too tired
- Too old
- Too injury-prone

But what you can tell yourself instead is:

- If I'm pressed for time, I'll do mini-exercises while I'm on the phone or talking with a colleague or sitting at my computer.
- If I'm too tired it's probably because I'm stressed out and not exercising enough. Exercising is a proven rejuvenator of energy and spirits.
- It's not possible to be too old to exercise—I'll plan my exercising to fit my needs. I may not run the Boston Marathon but I can walk briskly around my street several times a week.
- If I start exercising I'll be in better shape—so I'll be less injury-prone.





Focus on the positive side and stop wasting energy constructing obstacles. Doesn't it make more sense to put that energy into exercise?

Key Tip 1

Exercise is the most effective stress reducer known to science. When you exercise, your body releases natural chemicals that restore your body to its normal equilibrium. Get up from your desk for just five minutes of stretching exercises and you'll feel the difference. Remember to keep breathing as you stretch.

Key Tip 2

Exercise slows the aging process. It helps boost your circulation, fights osteoporosis, and increases your resistance to many serious illnesses. It even helps fight "middle-age spread."

Key Tip 3

Exercise is an extremely effective antidepressant. Even a walk or some stretching exercises will improve your mood. If you're dealing with serious depression, a more regular exercise program can supplement the treatment you may already be receiving.

Coping with Financial Stress

Money worries are one of the most common causes of stress. Unexpected expenses, price increases, income loss, and high levels of debt can cause pressure that may feel all-consuming. When money runs short, it doesn't simply create financial hardship. It can lead to feelings of shame, anger, fear, and depression. Those negative emotions can get in the way of the clear thinking you need to deal with your financial challenges. Here are some suggestions for coping with financial stress and navigating a path toward better financial and emotional wellbeing.

Focus on what you can control.

Don't panic about things that are beyond your control. You can't change the economy to bring prices down or create more and better-paying jobs. You can control how you spend your money and how you manage your debt and savings. There may be ways you can earn more money. By acting on things you can control, you'll begin to feel more in control of your life, and feeling more in control can help you stay calm and make good decisions.

Understand your financial situation.

When you're worried about money, it can be tempting to avoid thinking about it. However, avoiding financial challenges won't resolve them. Turn toward your money worries instead of away from them. Take the time to understand your finances as they really are.

Add up how much money you earn every month, and compare that to what you spend. Make a chart breaking your expenses down into categories. A budgeting worksheet or an app can help as you build this picture of how your money comes in and flows out. By gathering this information in one place, you can see how your income and expenses match (or don't). Seeing the totals by category can help you understand where you might need to make adjustments. While it can be scary to start this process, having the information is empowering and sometimes even comforting.

Talk as a couple and as a family.

If you're facing money challenges, your partner and other members of your household are also affected. Once you understand your financial situation, talk about it in calm, respectful, and mutually supportive ways. Recognize that others may be scared about what might happen in the future. They may have different ideas about what to change to bring household finances into balance.



By talking, you can agree on a plan, then follow that plan together. Prioritize changes, and make them one step at a time.

Financial stress can feel overwhelming. You can make it feel more manageable by choosing a few changes and making them one step at a time. As you experience small successes, you'll gain the confidence and courage to make bigger and more difficult changes. If you're facing a financial crisis, you may need to make significant changes quickly. Consider talking with a professional advisor right away.

To correct a budget that is out of balance, you can either increase your income or cut your spending—or both:

- Consider options to increase your income. These might include working extra shifts at your job, applying for a promotion, asking for a raise, taking a second job, earning money from an outside activity, renting a room in your home, or exploring options for government support.
- Think about ways you might cut expenses. These might include conserving energy to reduce heating and A/C bills, carpooling or working from home more often, switching to less-expensive phone and internet plans, shopping from a carefully planned grocery list and using coupons, exploring less-expensive housing options, paying down high-interest debt, ending subscriptions you rarely use, eating out less often, or cutting back on concerts and other entertainment.
- Leave room for fun and pleasure in your life. Many activities that bring joy don't cost money. Spending time in nature, playing games, and many forms of exercise are free. Even extras that cost money are worth keeping if they help you stay calm and clear-headed. If your yoga class helps you relax or an occasional latte gives you a lift, don't punish yourself by eliminating those expenses.

Practice stress management.

Making progress in resolving your money challenges will help you feel more in control of your life, but the changes can take time. To keep your stress under control while you work on your finances, take care of yourself, and use stress-management techniques that work for you:

- Talk to trusted friends. It can be hard to talk about money and embarrassing, at first, to admit to having money problems. But opening up to supportive friends can help you put your worries in perspective and feel calmer. You don't need them to fix your problems, just to be a friend and help you feel better about yourself.
- Focus on the positive. Think about the progress you're making, rather than how far you have yet to go. Think of what you're grateful for in life, rather than what makes you unhappy. Look for the positive opportunities in the changes you're making.
- Exercise. Physical activity is important to good health.
 It's also calming when you're feeling tense. You don't need to pay for a gym to exercise. Go for walks, ride your bike, or find exercise stations in public parks.
- Eat healthy foods, and get the sleep you need. Nutritious meals and regular sleep will help you feel better, maintain your energy, and think clearly.
- **Practice a relaxation technique.** Try deep breathing, mindfulness, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, listening to calming music, or spending time in nature. Find an activity or a technique that works to relax your mind and body when you're feeling anxious.

Ask for professional help.

Credit counseling and financial planning services offer expert guidance on money matters. Mental health counselors can help you deal with stress and change behaviors that may be contributing to your money worries. Your employee wellbeing program- New Jersey Employee Advisory Service- can provide stress management counseling and referrals to financial and mental health professionals.



For more information.

American Psychological Association. (Updated 22 March 2022). *Managing your stress in tough economic times*. Retrieved September 30, 2022, from https://www.apa.org/topics/money/economic-stress

Caron, C. (25 July 2022). "I'm always worrying": The emotional toll of financial stress. The New York Times [online version]. Retrieved September 30, 2022, from https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/well/mind/stress-money-relationships.html

Robinson, L., & Smith, M. (Updated 30 August 2022). *Coping with financial stress.* Retrieved September 30, 2022, from HelpGuide: https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/coping-with-financial-stress.htm

Scott, E. (Updated 29 July 2022). Financial stress: How to cope. *Verywell Mind*. Retrieved September 30, 2022, from https://www.verywellmind.com/understanding-and-preventing-financial-stress-3144546

Your Employee Advisory Service

Employee Advisory Service (EAS) is a program designed to help employees and their immediate family members with personal, family or work-related issues that may adversely impact the employee's work performance.

EAS provides confidential assessment, counseling, and referral services and helps to restore the health and productivity of employees and the workplace as a whole. Problems are addressed in the quickest, least restrictive, and most convenient manner, while maximizing confidentiality and quality.

EAS can assist with:

- Work life Balance
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Grief Counseling
- Anger Management
- Critical Incident Stress
- Stress Management
- Substance Abuse
- Family Issues
- Job Performance Issues

SERVICE REQUESTS / MANAGEMENT REFERRALS

Click Here

Your confidentiality is protected by state and federal law and regulations. All of the services offered are guided by professional and ethical standards. EAS staff may not release details of your need for services without your prior written consent. Information concerning the date and time of your appointments and referrals can be released to your Human Resource Office.



Employee Advisory Service
Support - Empowerment - Growth

Number:

1-866-327-9133

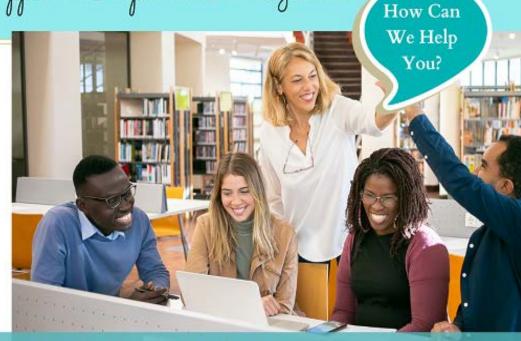
Email:

EAS Help@csc.nj.gov

Website:

www.csc.nj.gov/csc/employees/ programs/advisory/eas.html

24 hours a day 7days a week (Emergency Mental Health Services)



Contact us: 1-866-327-9133 | Email: EAS_Help@csc.nj.gov