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Wellness NEWSLETTER

HEALTH OBSERVANCE

Stress Awareness Month

Dawn Koch – Wellworks For You

Stress awareness month is a time to take charge of your wellbeing and find ways to manage your stress and improve your overall health. Stress can have a wide range of effects on your health, impacting both your body and mind. It can affect your physical health, mental health, and behavior. Key physical effects include cardiovascular issues, muscle tension, digestive problems, and a weakened immune system. Mental health can be affected by anxiety, depression, and reduced cognitive function. One may even experience sleep issues or substance use. There are many ways to manage your stress.

Recognizing that you may not always be able to be at home to practice stress management techniques, here are some tips for things you can do anywhere.

- **Deep Breathing:** Take slow, deep breaths. Inhale through your nose for a count of four, hold for a count of four, and exhale through your mouth for a count of four. Repeat this several times.
- **Progressive Relaxation:** Tense and then slowly release each muscle group in your body, starting from your toes and working your way up to your head.
- **Mindfulness:** Focus on the present moment. Pay attention to your surroundings, your breathing, and your thoughts without judgment.
- **Visualization:** Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful scene, like a beach or a forest. Try to engage all your senses in the visualization.
- **Stretching:** Simple stretches can help release tension in your muscles. Stretch your arms, neck, and legs gently.
- **Affirmations:** Repeat positive statements to yourself, such as "I am calm and in control" or "I can handle this."
- **Exercise:** If possible, take a short walk. Physical activity can help reduce stress and clear your mind.
- **Hydration:** Drink a glass of water. Staying hydrated can help your body cope better with stress.

Source: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/11874-stress>



2 EARTH DAY AND BEYOND:

Cultivating Environmental Wellness

Discover what your environmental impact is on Earth and identify ways you can shrink your carbon footprint moving forward!



3 GETTING OUTDOORS:

The Positive Effects of Outdoor Activities on Mental Health

Spending time outdoors is a great way to improve physical health and more.



4 Featured Recipe

 ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH TIP CORNER



Earth Day and Beyond: Cultivating Environmental Wellness

Jen Allen – Wellworks For You

Discover what your environmental impact is on Earth and identify ways you can shrink your carbon footprint moving forward!

What is a Carbon Footprint:

Your carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that come from the production, use and end-of-life of a product or service. Greenhouse gas emissions include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases.

How Do I Estimate My Carbon Footprint?

To estimate your annual carbon footprint, you will need to know:

- Approximately how many miles you travel by car, bus, train, and plane
- The energy usage at the place you live
- How much you spend shopping
- The composition of your diet

Tips on Reducing Your Carbon Footprint:

- **Travel Tips:**
 - Consider alternative transportation such as carpooling, public transportation, or riding a bicycle
 - While driving, think about checking that your tire pressure isn't low, decrease AC usage, and avoid heavy city traffic
- **Energy Consumption Tips:**
 - Unplug items when not in use
 - Switch to energy-efficient light bulbs and always turn off lights when leaving a room
 - Maintain air filters
 - Check thermostat settings – especially during extremely hot or cold seasons
- **Food Tips:**
 - Eat or grocery shop locally to reduce the distance your food must travel (farmer's markets, farm-to-table restaurants, etc.)
 - Skip disposable dinnerware by bringing your own food containers with you to restaurants
 - Waste less food at home by composting or freezing items when possible
- **Shopping Tips:**
 - Donate clothes to a friend/family member, thrift store, or local homeless shelter
 - Shop at thrift stores, resale boutiques, and local yard sales
 - Think twice when making purchases and ask yourself if you really NEED the item

Source: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/carbon-footprint-calculator/?redirect=https-301>

Getting Outdoors



The Positive Effects of Outdoor Activities on Mental Health

Hope Cramer – Wellworks For You

Spending time outdoors has long been recognized as a great way to improve physical health, but its benefits extend far beyond that—especially when it comes to mental health. In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, people often find themselves disconnected from nature, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues. However, engaging in outdoor activities can provide significant mental health benefits, offering a natural antidote to the pressures of daily life.

Reducing Stress and Anxiety

Research has shown that spending time in nature can help lower cortisol levels, the body's primary stress hormone. Activities like hiking, walking in a park, or even just sitting outdoors in a peaceful environment have been linked to a reduction in stress and anxiety. The calming effect of natural settings provides an escape from the hustle and bustle, allowing individuals to relax and recharge both mentally and physically.

Boosting Mood and Combatting Depression

Outdoor activities, particularly those involving physical exercise like cycling, swimming, or jogging, trigger the release of endorphins—chemicals in the brain that improve mood and reduce feelings of depression. Exposure to sunlight also increases serotonin levels, which plays a key role in regulating mood. Regular outdoor activity can provide a natural boost to mental health, helping to alleviate symptoms of depression and elevate overall wellbeing.

Enhancing Cognitive Function and Creativity

Nature has also been shown to improve cognitive function, including memory, focus, and problem-solving skills. Engaging in outdoor activities stimulates the brain in ways that help improve mental clarity and creativity. A simple walk in nature, for example, can lead to improved concentration and a greater ability to think creatively. Additionally, the combination of physical activity and exposure to fresh air can help clear mental fog, allowing individuals to feel more present and engaged in their daily tasks.

Social Interaction and Connection

Outdoor activities also provide opportunities for socializing and fostering connections with others. Whether it's joining a group for a hike, playing a sport, or simply spending time with friends at a park, being outside encourages positive social interactions that can reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. Strong social bonds are important for maintaining mental health, and shared outdoor activities offer an ideal setting for these connections to flourish.

Incorporating outdoor activities into your daily routine can be an effective way to combat the stresses of modern life and boost mental health. Whether it's taking a walk in the park, hiking in the mountains, or simply sitting outside to enjoy the sunshine, nature provides a powerful remedy for the mind. So, the next time you feel overwhelmed, consider stepping outside—you might find the peace and clarity you've been searching for.

Source: <https://talkhealthrive.com/post/what-are-the-benefits-of-spending-time-in-nature-for-mental-health/>

FEATURED RECIPE

Healthy Deviled Eggs

Gluten-Free, Vegetarian, Heart-Healthy

 **12 SERVINGS** |  **25 MINUTES**

INGREDIENTS

- 6 large eggs
- ¼ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Kosher Salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Sweet or smoked Spanish paprika, for sprinkling
- 2 teaspoons chopped chives, for garnish
- Capers, for garnish (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. **Boil the eggs:** In the bottom of a medium saucepan, carefully arrange the eggs in one single layer and cover with at least 1-inch of cold water. Set on high heat to bring to a rolling boil. As soon as the water is boiling fast and hard, turn the heat off and cover the saucepan. Leave the eggs in the covered pan for exactly 10 minutes.
2. **Run the cooked eggs under cold water:** Drain the cooked eggs and run them under cold water until they have fully cooled (this will stop the eggs from cooking and will make them easier to peel).
3. **Peel and halve the eggs:** Peel the eggs and slice them in half from top to bottom.
4. **Prepare the filling:** Using a small spoon, scoop out the cooked egg yolks and put them into the bowl of a small food processor fitted with a blade. Add the yogurt, mustard, garlic powder, and a big pinch of kosher salt. Close the lid of the food processor and pulse several times until the mixture is fluffy and well-combined.
5. **Fill the egg halves with the deviled egg mixture:** Transfer the egg mixture to a piping bag fitted with a tip and squeeze to fill each egg cavity with the egg mixture (or you can use a spoon).
6. **Serve:** Sprinkle with the paprika, then garnish with chives and capers (if using). Serve immediately, or store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 days.

NUTRITION

Per Serving:	1/2	Per Serving:	1/2
Calories:	Egg 34.7	Protein:	Egg 3.2g
Carbohydrates:	.4g	Dietary Fiber:	.03g
Saturated Fat:	.7g	Cholesterol:	82mg
Total Sugars:	.2g	Sodium:	37.4mg

Source: <https://www.themediterraneanandish.com/healthy-deviled-eggs/>

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