

WINTER

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Your EAP news

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How to thrive under pressure

If the pandemic has piled pressure on you, you're not alone. There are ways to cope with — and overcome — today's pressures, though, taking on challenges as you thrive as a person. Here are five ways you can work toward that goal.

#1. Take a pause.

Take one minute to reset. Research shows that pausing, even for as little as 50 to 100 milliseconds, allows the brain to focus on the most important information¹. Try these steps to pause and reflect:

- Consciously feel the ground under your feet.
- Take the deepest breath you can, then do it again, five times in a row. Repeat as necessary.
- Label the emotions you're feeling.
- Before you get back to your to-do list, focus on your "to-be" list. Ask yourself, "Whom do I choose to be right now?"

#2 Clarify your "vital few."

Instead of trying to do everything, take a few minutes to define the most important things you should do sooner rather than later — today, this week, or this quarter. Ask, "What will happen a year from now if I don't do it? What can I do now that could pay off later?"

Prioritizing those "vital few" things means there might be trade-offs. You might need to say no to other things and disappoint some people, or you may feel left out. The peace of mind you get from focusing on those vital few can be more than worth it.

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Lecturas recomendadas para esta temporada

Tu programa Employee Assistance Program (EAP) también ofrece información útil en español. Para leer los artículos que enviamos este trimestre, visita anthemEAP.com y selecciona español. Encontrarás la lista de temas tratados en esta edición en la sección "Noticias para Usted."

#3 Prioritize self-fullness.

No one can drink from an empty cup. If you're someone who likes taking care of other people's needs and wants, remember that you need to fill up your own cup first.

- Physically — Prioritize eating better, exercising, and getting enough sleep.
- Mentally — Set firmer boundaries, making technology-free time, and practicing more of the vital few mentioned in #2.
- Emotionally — Develop positive emotions by connecting with others and taking care of yourself.
- Spiritually — Connect to a purpose greater than yourself and to the spirit within you.

#4 Find support.

Can a team member take on activities that would free you up to focus on more important things? Do your children or partner need to help more at home? Is there something a coworker could help with, but you haven't asked? Is there something you want someone to stop doing? By getting support, you can ease the pressure of day-to-day life.

#5 Seek to serve others.

In rising to meet your challenges, you can learn, grow, and hone your strengths to help others. Use struggles as an inspiration to serve a higher good.

Forbes.com, *How To Thrive Under Pressure* by Dr. Margie Warrell, September 14, 2021. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2021/09/14/five-quick-hacks-to-thrive-under-pressure/?sh=39b2aabd5ae1>

1 Teichert T, Ferrera VP, Gribband J (2014) Humans Optimize Decision-Making by Delaying Decision Onset. *PLoS ONE* 9(3): e89638. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0089638>



10 tips for volunteering wisely

The best volunteering experiences benefit you and those you help. Here's how to make sure that happens:

Find a cause that is important to you. If you can't find the right organization, try starting one yourself.

Think about the skills you have to offer. Look for volunteer work that involves the things you do well or that will sharpen your skills in your area of expertise.

Try a volunteer opportunity where you'll learn something new. Many nonprofits seek out people who are willing to learn. Keep in mind, this might require a time commitment for training before the volunteering begins.

Combine your goals. Look for volunteer opportunities that will also help you with other goals for your life. For example, if you want to lose weight, pick an active volunteer opportunity, such as cleaning a park or working with children.

Don't over-commit your schedule. Make sure the volunteer hours you want to give fit into your life, so you don't frustrate your family, exhaust yourself, shortchange the organization you're trying to help, or neglect your job.

Be prepared to answer questions. While most nonprofits are eager to find volunteer help, they have to be careful when accepting services. You may be asked to interview for a position, fill out an application, or describe your qualifications and your background the way you would for a paying job.

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Consider volunteering as a family. The experience can bring you closer together, teach young children the value of giving their time and effort, introduce everyone in the family to new skills and experiences, and give everyone a shared experience as a wonderful family memory.

Try virtual volunteering. If you have computer access and the necessary skills, some organizations now offer the opportunity to do volunteer work online.

Think beyond the major nonprofits. Many community groups are looking for volunteers. Reach out to places like daycare

centers, Neighborhood Watch programs, public schools and colleges, halfway houses, community theaters, drug rehabilitation centers, fraternal organizations and civic clubs, museums, community music groups, neighborhood parks, youth organizations, and sports teams.

Give volunteering your all. You might not be getting paid for the work you do, but volunteering could be your most important job of all.

Adapted from the Network for Good: 10 Tips on Volunteering, accessed September 2021. <https://www.networkforgood.org/volunteer/volunteertips.aspx>



Managing caregiver stress

Caring for others has its rewards. It feels good to be able to care for a loved one, and spending time together can give new meaning to your relationship. However, it's important to remember that you need to take care of yourself to be able to care for your loved one. If you don't, you could experience caregiver stress.

Caregiver stress can take many forms. You may feel frustrated and angry one minute and helpless the next. You may make mistakes when giving medicines. The stress may cause you to turn to unhealthy behaviors like smoking or drinking too much alcohol. Long-term stress of any kind, including caregiver stress, can lead to serious health conditions like depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke, a weakened immune system, and obesity.

Here are some tips to help relieve caregiver stress:

- **Learn new ways to help your loved one.** Some hospitals offer classes to teach you how to care for someone with an injury or illness. To find these classes, ask your doctor or call your local area's Agency on Aging.
- **Find caregiving resources in your community to help you.** Many communities have adult daycare services or respite services to give primary caregivers a break from their duties.
- **Ask for and accept help.** Make a list of ways others can help you. Let helpers choose what they would like to do.

Someone might sit with the person you care for while you run an errand, or they might pick up groceries for you.

- **Join a support group for caregivers.** You can share stories, pick up caregiving tips, and get support from others who face the same challenges as you.
- **Get organized.** Make to-do lists, and set a daily routine.
- **Take time for yourself.** Stay in touch with family and friends, and do things you enjoy with your loved ones.
- **Take care of your health.** Find time to be physically active on most days of the week, choose healthy foods, and get enough sleep.
- **See your doctor for regular checkups.** Make sure to tell your doctor or nurse you are a caregiver. Also, tell them if you're not feeling well or about symptoms of depression you may have.
- **If you work outside the home and feel overwhelmed, think about taking a break from your job.** Under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year to care for relatives. Ask your human resources office about your options.

Remember, when you're a caregiver, taking care of yourself is just as important as helping your loved one. By working toward better health, you can support the health of others.



Everyday ideas for moving more

Winter is here — and with shorter days and holiday commitments, it can be a challenge to stay active. Here are tips to work exercise into your winter days:

Identify free times. Keep track of your daily activities for one week. Pick two 30-minute time slots you could use for activity time.

Make physical activity part of chores and events. For example, walk or ride your bike to work or a friend's house, walk the dog with your children, exercise while you watch TV, or park farther away from your destination.

Try to walk, jog, or swim during your lunch hour. You can also take fitness breaks instead of coffee breaks.

Check out activities that don't take much time. Try walking, jogging, or stair climbing.

Exercise with company. Make morning walks a time to catch up with friends. Play with your kids or ask them to join you for an exercise video or fitness game.

Plan to be active at times during the day or week when you feel you have a lot of energy. If you're usually tired after dinner, exercise earlier in the day.

Make exercise a regular part of your family's schedule.

Write it on a family activity calendar. Sign up your children for community sports teams or lessons.

Select affordable activities. Exercise activities that don't need costly sports gear include walking, jogging, jumping rope, and doing push-ups.

Look into local resources in your area. You can find programs through your community center, park, recreation group, or worksite.

Plan for "weather-proof" exercise. Develop a set of activities for you and your family that are always available no matter what the weather is like, such as stair climbing, rope skipping, mall walking, dancing, and active games you can play indoors.

With the right ideas and a little motivation, you can keep moving all year long.

Adapted from National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)'s *Everyday ideas to move more*. Retrieved October 2021 from <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/get-active/activity-plan.htm>.



Schedule a checkup with your doctor to talk about any signs of depression.

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