



**MONTHLY
MOTIVATION:**

**FAILURES DO
WHAT IS
TENSION
RELIEVING,
WHILE
WINNERS DO
WHAT IS
GOAL
ACHIEVING.**

**~DENNIS
WAITLEY**

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Keys to Reducing Stress

Stress is part of the universal human experience. It affects us all daily. Stress is our response to physical, chemical, emotional or environmental factors.

Often stress can be a motivator to accomplishing our goals. Our bodies respond to stress by initiating a chemical reactions that sends our hearts racing and heightens our senses. Stress can help keep our bodies strong and minds alert. However, chronic stress can have devastating effects. An excess of the hormones released by your body when you are under stress can lead to physical symptoms and even stress related illnesses.

Here are five tips that will help



you manage your stress level in a healthy way:

- 1. Exercise and Eat Well**
Physical activity is a great stress buster. Aerobic activity can reduce anxiety, depression and tension.
- 2. Turn off the News**
The media inundates us with anxiety producing information that causes stress. Monitor the amount of news
- 3. Reconnect**
Friends and family can be a support network that helps us deal with stress. Spend time with your community, not commiserating but having fun!
- 4. Reach Out**
People often feel powerless during tough times. Helping others develops a sense of empowerment. Healing can take place by helping others.
- 5. Breathing Exercises**
These exercises give your mind and body a time out. Whenever you feel stressed inhale deeply through your nose and slowly exhale through your mouth to the count of eight. Practice this regularly throughout the day and you will find yourself better able to manage your stress.

COBRA's New Premium Subsidy Law

On February 17, 2009 Congress signed into law The American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which includes a provision that requires employees to pay 65% of employer's, who were involuntarily terminated since September 1, 2008 through December 31, 2009, COBRA premiums. The period expires on the earlier of (i) nine months, (ii) the date the individual becomes eligible for major medical group coverage, (iii) the end of

the maximum required period of continuation under COBRA. Details about eligible state continuation plans are still unavailable. We will communicate those changes as soon as they are available.

Employers are reimbursed for their contribution by taking a refundable tax credit on their Form 941, when they file their taxes. If companies do not want to wait to receive the IRS refund, they can reduce their

employment tax deposits (i.e. federal income, social security, and Medicare taxes).

The U.S. Department of Labor is scheduled to provide compliance guidelines on March 19, 2009. Further guidance is expected from the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service as well. We will continue to monitor the COBRA changes and keep you abreast of your responsibility.

“COBRA provides former employees and qualified dependents the right to temporary continuation of health coverage at group rates.”

COBRA

COBRA provides former employees and qualified dependents the right to temporary continuation of health coverage at group rates.

Who is entitled to COBRA? A qualified beneficiary generally is an individual covered by a group health plan on the day before a qualifying event who is either an employee, the employee's spouse, or an employee's dependent child.

Qualifying events are certain events that would cause an individual to lose health coverage. The type of qualifying event will determine who the qualified beneficiaries are and the amount

of time that a plan must offer the health coverage to them under COBRA. A plan, at its discretion, may provide longer periods of continuation coverage.

Qualifying Events for Employees: voluntary or involuntary termination of employment for reasons other than gross misconduct or reduction in the number of hours of employment

Qualifying Events for Spouses: voluntary or involuntary termination of the covered employee's employment for any reason other than gross misconduct, reduction in the hours worked by the covered employee, covered employee's becoming entitled to Medicare, divorce or

legal separation of the covered employee, death of the covered employee, covered employees becoming entitled to Medicare, **Qualifying Events for Dependent Children:** voluntary or involuntary termination of the covered employee's employment for any reason other than gross misconduct, reduction in the hours worked by the covered employee, covered employees becoming entitled to Medicare, Divorce or legal separation of the covered employee, or death of the covered employee. COBRA administration varies by group size, carrier, and state. Contact our office to clarify how to offer your employees COBRA.

What is Open Enrollment?

Open enrollment occurs annually during the month prior to the anniversary of your insurance policy. During this period each eligible employee is given an opportunity to select Coverage from a different plan included in the groups benefit package.

Open enrollment is also the time of year when dependent changes can be made without a

qualifying event or life change. Spouses and children who were not covered on the insurance during the previous period may be added to the policy.

Qualifying events that allow changes to be made during the plan year are marriage, birth, loss of coverage, or death. Please notify our office of changes within thirty days of

the event, or changes will need to wait for open enrollment.

Another opportunity provided by open enrollment is for employees who refused the benefits after their waiting period to once again have the option of electing coverage.

Please make sure that your employees are educated as to when they can make these changes.

Participation

State guidelines require that 75% of eligible employees must participate in the group's insurance policy. The insurance carriers audit groups at renewal to ensure that participation is being met.

One way to make certain that your group is meeting the participation requirement, is offer new employees the benefits at the completion of their waiting period. Please contact our office when you have employees who are about to

be eligible for coverage. We would be glad to send out a representative to explain the benefits and enroll your employees. It would be best to contact us at least 3 weeks before the employee would become effective, so that we can schedule a time to meet with the employee and to send the information to the insurance carrier before the next month's bill is generated.

It is also important to notify our office of employees who have become eligible due to a qualifying event, such as marriage, birth, or loss of coverage within 30 days of the event. If the change is not requested within 30 days of the event, the change cannot be made until open enrollment (please see the article above for further explanation of open enrollment)



employee enrollment made easy



Living Well: Wellness Tips for Healthy Living

Exercise & Metabolism

- Activity raises HDL levels, burns fat, builds heart muscles, & reduces stress. Strive for 30minutes a day. Take advantage of weekends for frequent walks. Forget expectations-Do what works!
- A buddy may motivate you on “tough” days. Use friends and family as a support system.
- Jump start metabolism by increasing intensity of an existing exercise routine. Add resistance training to build a higher muscle to fat ratio. Vary workout frequency and duration. Space your meals out by eating five small meals throughout the day and do not skip breakfast.
- Maintain a healthy body weight. Use resources to determine a healthy weight but most importantly, listen to your body and know how your clothing fits, www.acefitness.org



Tax Tips

1. Bundle Medical Expenses To Maximize Itemized Tax Deductions

When you incur medical expenses that are not covered by health insurance, you are only allowed to deduct them from your taxable income to the extent that they exceed 7.5% of your adjusted gross income.

To maximize the use of this tax deduction, you need to do three things:

- Each year calculate an estimate of what 7.5% of your adjusted gross income will be.
- Keep a running total of your out-of-pocket medical expenses each year.
- If you have a year where you are nearing your threshold, determine if there are expenses you can bundle into the current calendar year.

2. Additional Refundable Child Tax Credit

Taxpayers with earned income of at least \$8,500 may qualify for a refundable credit of up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under 17. Even if their income was not high enough to claim this credit last year, they may be able to claim it this year.

To claim the Child Tax credit:

- You have to file your taxes using the 1040 or 1040A forms. You can claim the Child Tax Credit in addition to the Earned Income Credit and the Child and Dependent Care Credit if you qualify for them. Remember this is a tax credit and not a tax deduction, i.e. you subtract the child tax credit directly from the taxes you owe to the IRS and not the taxable income.

3. Recovery Rebate Credit

Early last year, the government sent taxpayers an economic stimulus tax rebate check, which is now called Recovery Rebate Credit For some, changes of their circumstances in 2008 also mean they may be able to reclaim part, or all, of the credit when filing their 2008 federal tax returns. Now with the Recovery Rebate Credit, we may get some more back this year. According to the IRS, people who may be eligible for the tax credit include:

- Individuals who did not receive an economic stimulus payment.
- Those who received less than the maximum economic stimulus payment in 2008 because their qualifying or gross income was either too high or too low.
- Families who gained an additional qualifying child in 2008.

What's Cooking?

Vegetarian Coconut Curry

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can drained garbanzo beans
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 chopped green pepper
- 3 chopped carrots
- 1 chopped zucchini
- 4 chopped red potatoes
- 1/2 t coriander
- 1/4 t red pepper
- 1 cup veggie broth
- 1 cup coconut broth
- 3 cloves

DIRECTIONS

- Combine ingredients in crockpot
- Cook on low setting for 10-11 hours





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**“WHERE INSURANCE MEETS
INTEGRITY AND OUR
SERVICE MAKES THE
DIFFERENCE”**

At Danny Page Employee Benefits our priority is personal service and building relationships. Our company provides comprehensive benefit packages with health, life, dental, and disability. We have been in the industry for over 16 years, and are contracted with all major insurance carriers.



Client Spotlight: Superior Service

Superior Service sells and services residential air conditioning and heating systems, and also performs duct cleaning. Superior Service is more than giving you the best air conditioning service, Superior Service is also in the business of selling “superior” products. John Phillips, owner of Superior Service in St. Augustine, is proud to announce the company has recently brought the most energy efficient air conditioning and heating system to the area. When Phillips opened his air conditioning business in St. Augustine nine years ago, he didn't have to think long and hard what to use as a name for the company. Superior Service is not just a name, it is what sets Phillips' business apart. Providing superior service starts with Phillips' personal commitment and extends through his professional staff. “All of our people undergo drug screening and background checks,” said Phillips. “We only hire people that will fit in our organization and present the image that has become Superior Service.”



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