



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

February 2019

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



Take Care of Your Heart
by Managing Your Stress

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Oxytocin: The Glue
That Binds Us Together

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Eating Disorders and the
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Healthy Recipe:
Baked Banana Chips

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Take Care of Your Heart by Managing Your Stress

We know for certain that stress and heart disease are related; however, it's uncertain if stress is a risk factor for heart disease on its own, or if stress increases other risk factors by the existence of high levels of adrenaline and cortisol (the stress hormone) in the body. Either way, it is beneficial to our heart health to manage the stress in our lives.

How do you know if you're stressed?

Your body may show physical signs of stress. You may have tense shoulders, excessive fatigue, headaches or indigestion.

You may have mental signs of stress, such as being forgetful, unable to concentrate, experiencing brain fog and a poor memory.

You also may be short and snappy with the people around you, highly critical, portraying a negative attitude, and less humorous and fun.

How do I minimize stress?

The most important thing is to manage the stressors in your life. Perhaps work has been difficult or you're not getting along with your

spouse. It's important to manage these situations to alleviate the physical and mental impact stress has on you over time. If you need to set boundaries at work, reconcile with your partner, get control over your finances, or whatever other circumstance, **make the changes necessary to get control over these situations.**

Exercise regularly, even if that means taking a brisk walk for a few minutes a day or working out with a video on YouTube. **The endorphins from exercise will improve your mood and aid with relaxation.**

Live by your values. **Feel good about yourself by identifying the values you choose to live by, and then live by them.** Knowing what you will and won't do in any given situation alleviates a lot of decision-making stress and allows you to be the person you want to be.

Take care of your heart by managing your stress.

If you're in need of additional support, your EAP can help. Call your BHS Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150.



Oxytocin: The Glue That Binds Us Together

Oxytocin is a neurotransmitter and hormone known as the “love hormone” because it plays a role in your connection with others. That role is complicated, but evidence exists to imply that oxytocin elicits positive social personality qualities such as warmth, trust, altruism, and openness in humans. In short, it draws us closer to each other and improves our bonds within our personal relationships and our social groups.

Feeling close to others is related to increased happiness at work and higher satisfaction within families. Long-lasting love within marriage or domestic partnerships is fully reliant on oxytocin to maintain those relationships, and couples with the highest levels tend to have longer, more fulfilling relationships with one another.

What can you do to increase feelings of closeness among your peers and loved ones?

- ▶ **Laugh together.** You laugh when someone is speaking as a way to say “I like you,” and not always because what they’re saying is funny. If you don’t like someone, you’re not likely to laugh at their jokes, even if their jokes are funny to you. Laughter not only strengthens relationships between colleagues and friends, it can be a great ice-breaker in uncomfortable, confrontational scenarios.
- ▶ **Listen attentively.** When a person is speaking to you, don’t scroll through your phone or respond to text messages. Engage with them. Listen to what they’re saying to you and participate in the conversation. When we feel cared about and engaged with, we are much likely to reciprocate the same treatment.
- ▶ **Physical touch.** This may be inappropriate in work environments, but in personal relationships, physical touch increases oxytocin and closeness between yourself and others. Give your children hugs before they’re off to school, show affection to your partner daily and give a close friend a warm hug.
- ▶ **Honest expression.** At times, it can be hard to express yourself. Some feelings, especially negative ones, are hard to talk about with other people, but you don’t necessarily have to go there. You can just tell a story about your day or mention something you found funny. Friends and colleagues can become closer just by sharing the thoughts in their head, and it doesn’t have to be about a heavy topic to be genuine. Sharing yourself and allowing others to share with you is vital to maintain closeness.



Eating Disorders and the Comparison Crisis

February 25, 2019 kicks off National Eating Disorders Awareness Week. This year's theme is *Come as You Are*. More information can be found at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/get-involved/nedawareness.

It's easy to get caught up in the latest dieting fads, especially when we are inundated from every direction—from magazine covers to social media and even billboards when we're driving to work. While it's good to remember that these images are curated and doctored to achieve a certain look, it's easy to get caught up in comparing ourselves.

According to the National Eating Disorders Association, **there's a strong correlation between the amount of time spent on social media and the likelihood that an eating disorder will develop.**

If you notice yourself becoming preoccupied with food and dieting, and you're sacrificing your health to achieve a certain look or body size, consider that you might have an unhealthy relationship with food.

If you're trying to eat healthy, great! **Make sure you're meeting all the necessary nutritional requirements to fuel your body each day.** It's

possible to lose weight in healthy and unhealthy ways, so if you want to shrink a size or two, make sure you're doing it with the goal of health as your primary focus.

Find ways to feel good about yourself that improve your self esteem in the process. Take a break from social media if necessary, and spend time with people who care about you.

If you are in need of additional support, call your BHS Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150.

BAKED BANANA CHIPS

10 ripe, but firm bananas, thinly sliced; freshly squeezed lemon juice (1 lemon)

Preheat oven to 200°F. Cover a sheet pan with foil and lightly grease with cooking spray. Toss the bananas in the lemon juice. Arrange bananas in a single layer on the baking sheet. Bake for 2 hours, flip the slices with a metal spatula, and continue to bake for 1.5 additional hours. Remove from oven and transfer to a wire rack, allowing them to cool completely.

Source: <https://diethood.com/homemade-baked-banana-chips-recipe/>