

A monthly newsletter published by Interface EAP

Strategies for Overcoming Back to School Stress

August can be difficult for children and parents. Fear and anxiety about the new school year, and sadness for summer's end can cause a lot of stress. As families get ready for school, parents can be overwhelmed by the pressure that comes from dealing with children's needs, as well as their daily work and household responsibilities. Help your kids and yourself to de-stress at the start of the school year. Try the following strategies to help overcome common back-to-school obstacles.



First Things First

- > **Remain calm.** A new school year can turn your child's emotions into a tangled mess of fear, excitement and anticipation. Staying calm and relaxed will allow your child to draw comfort and strength from your attitude.
- > **Talk to your children.** Discuss their concerns, worries, expectations or fears about going back to school. Have a discussion before school starts, and for the first several weeks of school.
- > **Make family time.** Take time to relax with your family. Eat your meals together whenever possible and make time at least once a week to do something special together.

Mad Money

- > **Check your wallet, and set your priorities.** The money you spend on supplies and clothes can add up, and that is just the beginning of the costs associated with school. Do not forget about yearbooks, lab fees, field trips, sports, etc. Prioritize your expenses before you head into the stores.
- > **Differentiate between "need" and "want."** Make a list of the basic items, but try to be flexible enough to allow an extra amount for a special item your child may want.

> **Create a budget.** Think about the unexpected expenses that always seem to pop up and the kids' growth spurts and how you will be able to pay for additional items.

Stressful Schedules

> **Create a schedule.** Buy a planner and write down every activity as soon as you learn about it. When you get sports and activity schedules, write down every practice and every game. Make time weekly for the family to review and coordinate schedules to avoid miscommunication and stress later on. Decide what is important and schedule time for it.

> **Just say no.** Taking on unessential things can limit valuable time with your family. Before you say yes to anything, decide if you really have the time. Learn to say "no" when necessary. Remember volunteer opportunities can wait, but your family cannot.

> **Make lists.** Planning and organization are two of



the best ways to avoid stress. Make lists of daily responsibilities for everyone in the family. If you keep things organized, you should be able to eliminate a lot of

unnneeded stress for everyone. Prioritize and delegate whatever tasks you can. You may need to put aside tasks that are not essential to make time for those that are.

> **Make time for yourself.** Even just ten minutes two or three times a week of "me" time can help refresh your mood and slow down your body's stress response systems. You have to take care of yourself before you can really take care of others.

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Strategies for Overcoming Back to School Stress *continued*

Hostile Homework

- > **Homework comes first.** It should be done before TV, video games, surfing the Internet, talking on the phone, or any other "extras". Make sure the kids know it is a priority. This will help to avoid kids with too little sleep from late night study sessions or the future stress that comes when dealing with missing assignments and the resulting poor grades.
- > **Designate a desk area.** Set a specific time and place for homework. Eliminate unnecessary distractions so that each child can focus on their assignments in a designated homework area. It does not have to be a desk; it can be any place they are comfortable and able to work.
- > **Try to balance work and play.** The goal behind these solutions to your back-to-school stress is to allow you to have fun with your children and enjoy this special time in their lives.



Manic Mornings

- > **Be the early bird.** Being late just adds stress. To ensure everyone has enough time, get everyone up 15-20 minutes earlier than necessary. Have perks for everyone who is ready early.
- > **Prevent problems with prior planning.** Several people getting ready at the same time can create a lot of stress. Eliminate as much as possible by choosing clothes and readying backpacks the night before.
- > **Do not sweat the small stuff.** Keep your own stress under control as you deal with the inevitable lost items, forgotten assignments and other seemingly end-of-the-world issues for kids. Children absorb your stress and irritability. Work together to make night and morning routines that work for your family.



When Someone You Love has an Addiction

Addiction harms individuals, as well as their families and friends. Substance abuse can lead to family disintegration, school failure, domestic violence, and child abuse. If someone you love has a problem with addiction, there are some things you can do to help:

- ◆ **Speak up.** Express your concerns about your loved one's problem in a caring way.
- ◆ **Do not make excuses.** Do not make it easier for your loved one to use the object of addiction by lying to protect him or her from the consequences of that use.
- ◆ **Do not blame yourself.** Remember that you are not to blame for this problem and you cannot control it. Allow the person with the problem to take responsibility.
- ◆ **Be safe.** Do not put yourself in dangerous situations. Find a friend you can call for assistance.
- ◆ **Step back.** Do not argue, lecture, accuse or threaten. Try to remain neutral.
- ◆ **Be positive.** Remember that addiction is treatable. You may want to learn about what treatments are available and discuss these options with your loved one.
- ◆ **Take action.** Consider staging an intervention.
- ◆ **Focus your energies.** Encourage your friend or family member to get help, but try not to push. Remember that the only person you can change is yourself. Do not hesitate to use available resources to help yourself.

EAP provides access to licensed counselors in private practice that specialize in addiction recovery.

Contact Interface EAP for free and confidential assistance.

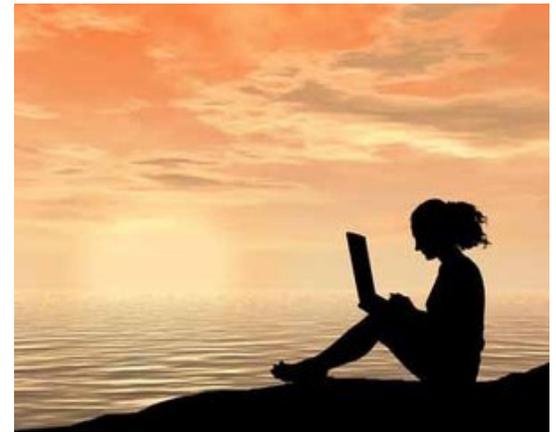
Making the Most of Your Vacation

Leave Work at Work While on Vacation & Return Stress-Free!

Americans are working more hours than ever before, and in addition to living in a high-tech, “constant contact” society, are having a harder time relaxing and disconnecting from their jobs while on vacation. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, employees who take regular time-off to relax and rejuvenate are more productive and creative, and less likely to experience burnout than their overworked and worn-out counterparts.

If you are someone who is physically on vacation but mentally still at work, make the most of your time away from the office by keeping the following tips in mind:

- * Set expectations for your colleagues and clients and let them know when or why you should be contacted. Make sure they know your time frame for being away and when and how you will be checking in, if at all.
- * Schedule a day off before your departure, and come back at least one day before you return to work to give yourself time to readjust to your workday pace.
- * Know your “chill” self. If sitting on a beach with no distractions keeps your mind running through your to-do list, engage in activities that distract your mind and involve physical or mental stimulation, such as sport or recreational activities, or board games.
- * Practice mindfulness and being in-the-moment while on vacation, and work on not working!



Prepare for your return:

Returning to work after a vacation can be equally stressful. Being greeted with a backlog of emails and a briefing with your boss first thing when you walk in the door can be a rude awakening from the blissful vacation mindset! The easiest way to avoid this stress and back-to-work chaos is to prepare for it before you leave:

- * Arrive an hour early on your first day back at work so you can re-acclimate in peace and quiet before everyone else arrives.
- * Clear your schedule so you do not have any meetings or appointments the first day you return. Spend your time getting reorganized.
- * Scan the contents of your physical mailbox, your email inbox, your calendar, and anything else that has appeared on your desk before you tackle any one task. Get a general idea of all of the new items that you need to address along with the old items still on your to-do list.
- * Alternate between old action items and tackling new action items, as well as between focused and mindless tasks. Take a stretch break at least once an hour, take a deep breath to regain order and your sanity, and do not forget to eat - your brain and body will need the fuel.

Stress

Financial

Legal

Depression

For free and confidential assistance, call your
Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator:

(713) 781-3364

(800) 324-4327

Se Habla Español

(800) 324-2490

www.4eap.com

Marital Problems

Family Problems

Alcohol/Drug Problems

Other Referrals

Your employer has contracted with Interface EAP to provide you an Employee Assistance Program.