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Wellness Matters

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Your Wellness Journey

Managing Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms

When times get tough, instinct often pushes people toward coping mechanisms. These mechanisms can help people feel like they're escaping reality by relieving stress or distracting their minds. While this is a standard response, it can become problematic when one turns to harmful, unhealthy coping mechanisms. Common unhealthy coping mechanisms include oversleeping, excessive substance use, over- or under-eating, and impulsive retail spending.

It's expected to have feelings of wanting to escape from reality due to stress or anxiety. Healthy coping mechanisms can help you positively address such feelings and develop long-lasting habits. Consider these healthier coping alternatives:

Create task lists. Unhealthy coping mechanisms can prevent you from reaching your short- and long-term goals. Making a task list of personal goals can

help you achieve what you want and elevate your mood by physically seeing your accomplishments when they're checked off the list.

Talk about stress. Find someone willing to listen to you, such as a close friend, family member, or mental health professional. Putting your feelings into words can help alleviate stress and anxiety.



Address negative feelings. Negativity is a normal part of life. Trying to avoid it is called avoidance behavior, which can result in reaching for unhealthy coping mechanisms.

Learn your triggers. Knowing what situations you negatively

respond to can help you keep track of your triggers and be aware of how you react.

Pick up a new hobby.

Activities such as painting or running can be therapeutic for many. Designate a regular time and space to practice your new hobby.

Having negative or overwhelming emotions is natural, but it's important to lean on healthy coping mechanisms to help deal with stress and anxiety. Talk to your doctor or a mental health professional if you are experiencing ongoing emotional struggles.

Telehealth is a great place to start receiving virtual mental health care, especially if you live in a rural area. Or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline at (800) 662-HELP / 4357. Remember to check in with yourself and reach out for help if needed.

Obesity: Are You at Risk?

Obesity increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions, including coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, high blood pressure, stroke, and osteoarthritis.

Do you know your body mass index (BMI)? BMI is an approach to assess if your weight is considered underweight, normal, overweight, or obese. You can enter your weight and height into this calculator to find your BMI: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

If you are overweight or obese, talk to your doctor about achieving a healthier weight. Also consider these lifestyle changes:

Be active. Find ways to increase your physical activity each day. If you're just starting out, it could be as simple as taking a 30-minute walk each night after dinner or spending more time playing with your kids.

Eat nutritiously. Choose sensible portion sizes and eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy.

Sleep well. Get about eight hours of sleep each night.



Healthy & Nutritious

Food Facts...and Fiction PART ONE

You know it's important to eat plenty of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables—but you may have questions regarding certain foods.

- **Are avocados good or bad for you?**
While it's true that avocados contain more calories and fat than other fruits or vegetables (one-fifth of an avocado contains 50 calories and 4.5 grams of fat), they also have many health benefits. Avocados contain heart-healthy unsaturated fat, which can help lower cholesterol. In addition, they are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fiber that are part of a healthy diet.
- **Are some nuts better for you than others?**
Yes. All nuts are rich in fiber, vitamin E, and protein, but walnuts contain the highest levels of omega-3 fatty acids, almonds have the most vitamin E, cashews have the most iron, and Brazil nuts contain the most magnesium and selenium (which works as an antioxidant). Opt for varieties without added salt for the most health benefits.
- **What's the difference between a vegetable and a fruit?**
Scientifically, "vegetable" is defined as all plant life or plant products—specifically, the edible portion of plants (roots, stems, leaves, flowers, or fruit). A "fruit" is the ripened ovary and seeds of a flowering plant. However, fruits and vegetables are often identified by how sweet they are or how you cook them.

