



# Front Line

aspirus.org

an employee assistance program newsletter

## Could Keeping a Happiness Journal Lengthen Your Life?



**J**ournaling (expressive writing) has been studied scientifically. It's considered a powerful tool to support change, overcome challenges, and accelerate goal achievement. It is often used to support therapy and medical treatment. This includes anxiety, depression, grief, and stress. It's not a gimmick. UCLA scientists in a brain-imaging study discovered that putting feelings into words produces therapeutic changes in the brain. The real news is that everyone can benefit from journaling, and the theme you might want to consider is "happiness." Journaling daily about happy moments in your life may lead to more of them, an upbeat mood, and perhaps a longer life, because happy people have been shown to live longer. Learn more by reading "The Healing Power of Journaling" by Zoe McKey.

Source: [www.newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/Putting-Feelings-Into-Words-Produces-8047](http://www.newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/Putting-Feelings-Into-Words-Produces-8047)

## Dial 988 for Suicide Prevention



**O**n July 16, 2022, "988," the new suicide and mental health crisis hotline, became active in the United States. (The newly named "Talk Suicide Canada" suicide prevention phone number is 1-833-456-4566.) 988 callers are connected to "a compassionate, supportive, and trained counselor" ready to give assistance to callers experiencing thoughts of suicide, a mental health crisis, and/or a substance use-related crisis. 988 is also for those concerned about someone they care about who may be in crisis. A network of over 200 locally operated and funded crisis centers across the country make it all possible.

Learn more at [www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/key-messages](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/key-messages).

## What You Forgot About Dietary Fat



**M**any dietary fats are healthy. They give you energy and support cell growth, but they are calorie dense, and more so than carbohydrates are. Olive oil is a healthy fat, but do you know a tablespoon of it has around 120 calories? Use it in many dishes, but sparingly—splashing it on with abandon every day can add 3,500–4,000 calories to your diet each month! When you consider that a person who weighs 155 lbs. uses fewer than 100 calories to walk a mile, you can see how consuming even healthy fats can

Learn more: "Dietary Fats: Balancing Health & Flavor"; International Food Information Council

## Family Goals: Making Good Stuff Happen



**H**elping to ensure plenty of happy, memorable moments with your family is something no one would consciously shy away from; however, most people do just that, by default. Busyness gets in the way. Time passes and it is finite, so don't let happiness be something that happens only by accident. 1) Decide what you and your partner or spouse want to do for the family. Try making weekly, monthly, and yearly goals. 2) Get everyone involved in the discussions and decisions. 3) Conduct these discussions at regular intervals as part of a larger family meeting. 4) Get things scheduled. 5) Consider scrapbooking everything so memories stick around. Get more ideas from [www.lifehack.org/864433/family-goals](http://www.lifehack.org/864433/family-goals).

# Chronic Pain and the Family



**C**hronic pain has many secondary effects. You know this already if you live with a chronic pain sufferer or endure chronic pain yourself. Pain can influence moods because of the resulting associated irritability it creates. Communication dysfunction can contribute to everyone becoming angry and snappy. Family members of the pain-impacted individual—the ones who care the most and feel helpless—become victims. But it doesn't end there. Family members also develop unhealthy coping strategies like avoidance and isolation. Household conflicts may be frequent, and even normal conversations become triggers for conflict. The pain sufferer's personality may be wrongly labeled as selfish, narcissistic, or anxiety disordered rather than simply pain affected. Change and relief begin with education about chronic pain dynamics, particularly the "mind body" connection and how pain creates mental stress and how mental stress makes pain worse. If your family or relationship is affected by chronic pain, it is not just about pain medication. It is also about education for learning how to communicate effectively with real conversations, avoiding triggers, separating the pain from the person you love, and dropping the blame game. Seek to overcome personal resistance to professional counseling with experts who specialize in the psychological issues associated with pain. Discover the life-changing positivity of self-help support groups for family members and the pain sufferer. And learn how to take care of your personal physical and mental health so you are more resilient in a relationship with the person experiencing chronic pain. Start with a visit to your company EAP, but also review the educational resources at [www.uspainfoundation.org](http://www.uspainfoundation.org), [www.paincanada.ca](http://www.paincanada.ca), and [painscale.com](http://painscale.com).

# Renewing Relationships at Work

**D**oes your team or employee group need to get reacquainted after its return to on-site work? Being deliberate and organized about this goal can greatly improve communication, reduce any stress associated with leaving a remote job, and rekindle trust so you are in sync with your peers. Try weekly meetings to discuss ongoing concerns about interpersonal communication and teamwork; talk about your individual roles/duties, successes, and need for support and resources as well as any issues relating to the work environment, customer stress, and growing concerns. Make honesty a tradition of this group, and follow up at the next meeting. Start the meeting and end it on time. Make it unvaryingly regular. You will quickly refresh your commitment to each other and fire up the productivity of your group.



# Don't Skip Your Health Checkups

**S**o, you are feeling well and are without any apparent health problems? Great, but are you postponing preventive health care, screenings, and examinations because you don't seem to have any cause for concern? Don't do it, especially as you grow older. Delays in identifying and treating some medical conditions can make doing so harder or even futile later. Many detectable health conditions, like high blood pressure, diabetes, vision problems, and cancer, can be cured when they are spotted early, and you won't notice any symptoms in early stages. Postponing preventive health care might be more likely if you live alone, without someone who may urge and prod you to see a doctor because of conditions like sleep apnea. Use this month (August is National Wellness Month) as your reason for making preventive health care a routine part of your life, so you can enjoy your life longer.



# What Women Should Know About Alcohol

**M**en have higher rates of alcohol-related hospitalizations and deaths than women do, but unfortunately these statistics overshadow alcohol's *disease effects* on women: Illnesses associated with alcohol use claim more lives of women than of men. Women who drink alcohol face a higher risk of alcohol-related problems than men do because women, on average, weigh less and have less water in their bodies than men, so their blood alcohol concentration will be higher after the same number of drinks. Because most women do not metabolize alcohol as quickly as men do, they also are more susceptible to long-term health problems. The risk of alcohol-related liver disease, brain shrinkage, heart damage, and breast and other cancers are all greater for women, even if they consume less alcohol over a lifetime than men.

