

LIFE IN *BALANCE*

Your guide to healthy living.

Get Ready For Back-to-School!

Many kids (and parents) feel mounting anxiety over the approach of a new school year. The hectic mornings, after-school activities, and busier schedules can cause stress for both parents and students.

Here are two ways you can lessen back-to-school stress:

Start Your Routines Early

Over the summer, most families take their cues from the sun and stay up later. While it may be tempting to keep the late-night fun going up until the end of summer, starting your school routine a few weeks early can help ease the transition back to school. Two to three weeks before the start of school, begin going to bed and getting up earlier. This advice isn't just for little kids; teens and adults need quality sleep for proper functioning as well. Getting your schedule straight now will help prevent insomnia or sleep deprivation when school starts. Good rest can help your child better manage stress on the first day.

You may also want to plan for other routines. As you get back onto an earlier schedule, have your kids start laying out their clothes the night before, keeping their shoes by the door and get back into other morning habits that help you get out the door with less hassle. This can help make the back to school transition easier.

Do a Walk-Through

While we're on the topic of starting early, it's a good idea to visit the school before the first day. For kids who are going to be first-timers for kindergarten, first grade, middle school or even high school, this can help them feel more comfortable with the new place and get a better idea of where to go once they're there. Even for returning students, it doesn't hurt to know where the classroom is, say hello to staff, and start getting excited about going back.

The main thing to remember in dealing with back to school jitters is to be prepared mentally and logistically. Know what to expect, and have a plan to keep things manageable. Then follow that plan. If parents show enthusiasm for what the new school year brings, your kids are sure to pick up on it and the nervous energy will turn into excitement.

-Adapted from: www.verywellfamily.com



When Staying Busy Is How You Cope



One of the most common strategies for coping with painful thoughts and emotions is to stay 'crazy busy'. We live in a culture who have bought into the idea that if we stay busy enough, our lives won't catch up with us. You may have learned to avoid your emotions using a subtle, socially acceptable strategy; keeping yourself very busy.

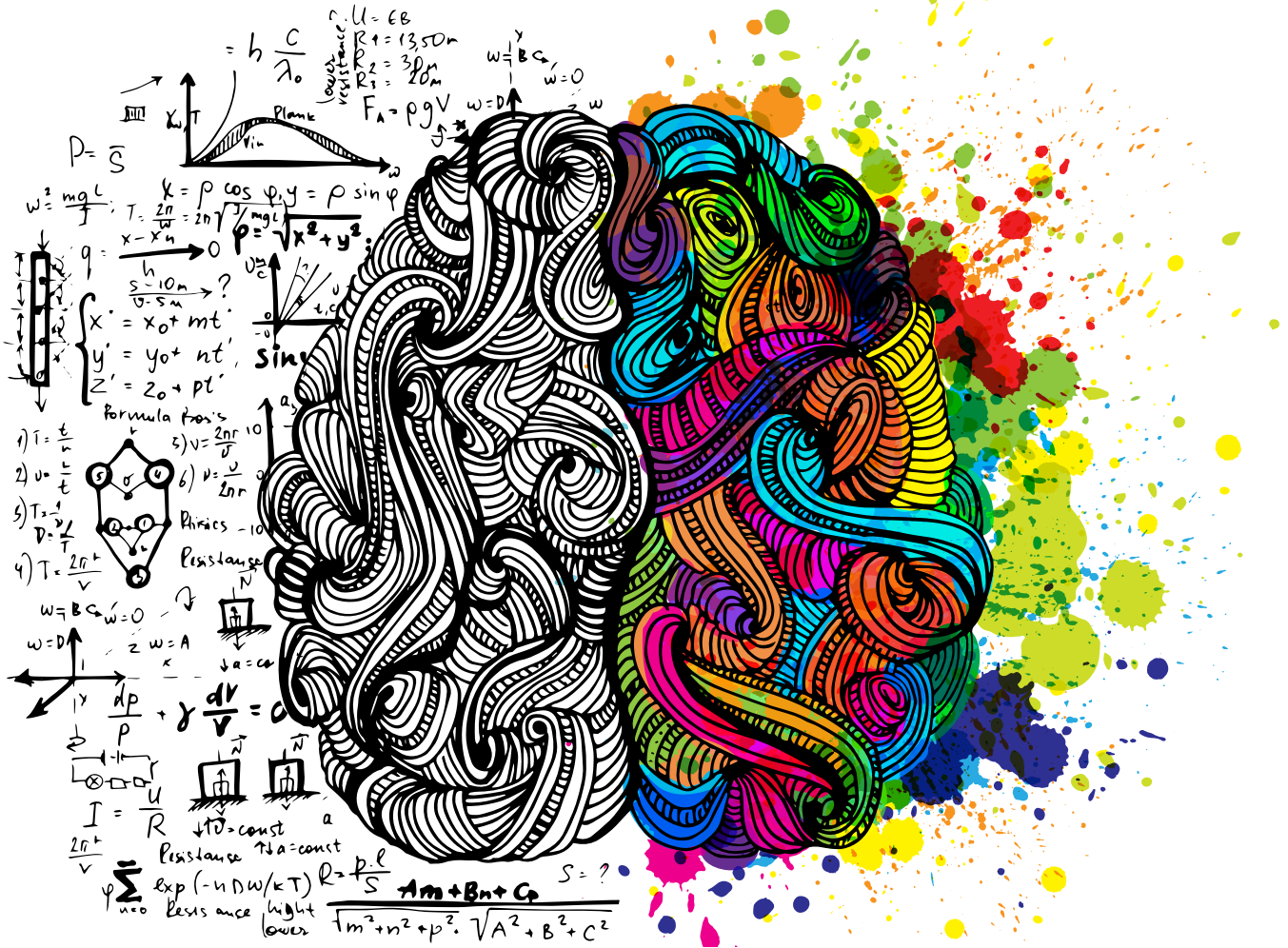
This resonates with people who wear their busyness as a badge of honor. Sometimes, people convince themselves that as long as there is another event to plan or another task to be completed, they will be okay. Sometimes this person is running away from problems, and their emotions shut down. They stay busy to numb the pain.

It can become a lifestyle to keep moving, even though they need a break, in order to put as much distance between themselves and the pain. They focus on external achievements instead of internal fulfillment. The effort is to forget, deny and avoid. There is a fear that if allowed to pause, they would be overwhelmed and consumed with sadness, anger, guilt, shame, or fear.

Staying very busy acts like armor. Our society often rewards exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity by tying it to our self-worth. It is important to distinguish healthy distraction from avoidance as ways to cope. Distraction for a short time can be adaptive and helpful. But when we constantly distract ourselves in order to run from our story or hide from our problems, it becomes avoidance.

When a person has lived like this for a long time, they often feel it may be impossible to stop. When they slow down or stop being so busy, things get quiet and they find themselves facing the thoughts, emotions, and problems they have been avoiding. The silver lining is that this is when a person is ready to make some changes in their life and listen to the warning signs their body and mind have been telling them; and begin healing. Your EAS counselors are here to help.

Excerpts from TheMighty.com



The Challenge to Learn **Something New**

Learning a new skill, task, hobby or behavior can be quite daunting. There looms the fear of failure, embarrassment, non-accomplishment, or frustration. But, what many forget is the multitude of things learned when you were younger, and how much practice each of those things took.

As we age, we tend to forget the amount of effort everything took to learn: from using utensils properly, to tying our shoes. We forget how long it took us to read or to ride a bike. But, we did it. How? As children and teens we were more fearless. There was either less or no concern about looking foolish or the question of time. We simply did it because it was the “natural thing to do” or we were motivated by the excitement of what was to come.

According to health and fitness journalist Joseph Summers, “As human beings, our true learning is lifelong. Your brain will never switch off or refuses to take in new information. The only limit is your curiosity and willpower.” There is also research to back up the understanding that consistently learning something new helps with mood, dementia, and overall quality of life.

Here is just a small list of some new things you may want to take a stab at: learning a new language, playing an instrument, cooking exotic foods, how to play a video game, gardening, improving your public speaking, training a puppy, beekeeping or the names of every dinosaur. The list is endless! But, remember: it starts with your curiosity and willpower.

Are You Applying Bug Spray Properly?

Summer is a great time to patrol your home's area, looking for sneaky mosquito breeding sites. Now is the time to dump the aging water out of bird-baths, urns, scooped swing-seats and empty flower pots – even a cupful of stagnant water can be mosquito breeding ground. Places to be sure to check? Look in culverts, wheelbarrows, old buckets and blocked drains/gutters. If your neighbor's property looks like a mad-scientist mosquito-genetics breeding ground, be sure to gently remind them about West Nile risks too. West Nile is especially dangerous for the elderly, immune-impaired, and very young.

If you're planning on being outside and mosquitoes are present, be sure to bring long-sleeved loose tops and long pants for covering up as the sun goes down.



For Sprays:

Use your mosquito-repellent of choice on remaining (minimized) bare areas.

- Shake the container and spray evenly onto your uncovered skin and clothes from about 4 to 8 inches away, as directed on the label.
- Never spray it underneath your clothes. That not only is unnecessary but also may increase the risks.

For Lotions:

Use your mosquito-repellent of choice on remaining (minimized) bare areas.

- Follow label directions; most call for a thin film over exposed skin areas.
- Don't overdo it. For insect repellents, more is not better. A thin film is sufficient.

Avoid inhaling repellent, so try to be in a well-ventilated space away from open flames when applying. Never spray repellent directly onto your face or your ears. Instead, spray some onto your hands and spread it on your face, neck, and outside of your ears, being careful to avoid your eyes and nostrils. Don't forget to rub it onto your head if you're bald.

Bug sprays can aggravate open cuts and wounds, so avoid areas with broken or irritated skin. And if you're going to be eating, wash your hands after applying. Take extra care with kids. According to the CDC, you should never apply any kind of insect repellent to children younger than 2 months. Even for older children, never spray directly onto their skin. Spray onto your hands first, then rub onto the child's exposed skin and face. Be sure to avoid his or her hands because children tend to stick their fingers into their eyes and mouth.

Source: www.cdc.gov



Confidential Helpline

800.236.4457

Counselors available 24/7