

LIFE IN *BALANCE*

Your guide to healthy living.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, the National Alliance on Mental Illness is raising awareness to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for equal care for those with mental illness.

This year, NAMI is using the theme “CureStigma.” It’s an important cause because 1 in 5 Americans is affected by mental health conditions. For those with mental illness, stigma can be toxic to their mental health because it creates an environment of shame, fear and silence that prevents many people from seeking help and treatment.

The perception of mental illness won’t change unless we act to change it. The good news is stigma is 100 percent preventable through compassion, empathy and understanding. Your voice can spread the cure. Together we can cure stigma about mental illness.



**Cure
Stigma.**

Laughter Really is the Best Medicine

It's true – laughter is strong medicine. It draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress.

By seeking out more opportunities for humor and laughter, though, you can improve your emotional health, strengthen your relationships, and find greater happiness. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hopes, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused and alert. It also helps you to release anger and be more forgiving.

With so much power to heal and renew, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing your relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use. Studies in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

Also, laughter makes you feel good. And the good feeling that you get when you laugh remains with you even after the laughter subsides. Humor helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments, and loss. More than just a respite from sadness and pain, laughter gives you the courage and strength to find new sources of meaning and hope. Even in the most difficult of times, a laugh—or even simply a smile—can go a long way toward making you feel better. And laughter really is contagious—just hearing laughter primes your brain and readies you to smile and join in the fun.

In order to bring more laughter into your life, begin by setting aside special times to seek out humor and laughter, as you might with working out, and build from there. Eventually, you'll want to incorporate humor and laughter into the fabric of your life, finding it naturally in everything you do. Here are some ways to start:

• *Smile* •

• *Count your blessings* •

• *When you hear laughter, move toward it* •

• *Spend time with fun, playful people* •

• *Bring healthy humor into conversations* •

The ability to laugh, play and have fun with others not only makes life more enjoyable, but also helps you solve problems, connect with others and be more creative. People who incorporate humor and play into their daily lives find that it renews them and all of their relationships.

Here's a little joke to get you started:

Q: What do clouds wear under their shorts?

A: Thunderpants

Now, go find your own favorite jokes for the day.



Increase Your Joy By Adopting a Senior Pet

There are thousands of senior pets awaiting their happy – and in many cases lucky – moment to be adopted into a forever family. If we could look at both sides of the equation – age and benefits – we could count many blessings an older, senior, pet can bring into our lives.

Usually older pets are much more settled in their habits and their behaviors and could develop a very tight bond with you. These pets may want to spend more time by you or time alone napping or watching the outside world happening in front of their eyes. For many people, such pets could create some powerful benefits in an emotional well-being.

Keep in mind that these pets could be a blessing and devoted companions to any age or abilities group of humans: older parents, young children, people with different abilities and needs. Senior pets can transform our lives by offering myriad benefits. These benefits can be easily applied to the needs of a human family and matched to a pet that would be a perfect companion in life. Some benefits include:

- **Senior pets have manners and are less destructive.** Senior dogs and cats are mellower and look into more time spent with you petting them. Parents will get less frustration with an older pet rather than starting a new training and learning cycle with a new puppy or kitten. One thing to keep in mind though: some pets have been through multiple homes and have been poorly trained, which could present a challenge, at least in the beginning. Getting support of your pet online communities could be a way to look for help and invaluable instructions how to handle this situation.
- **You can teach an old dog or cat new tricks.** First and foremost, most senior pets already know their commands and come with the experience of life. Either a dog or a cat would respond to their new environment better when you could establish a routine for them. Try feed, walk, play, exercise them on a schedule which would help your senior pets to get accustomed to a new life dynamic. You could be surprised how responsive these senior pets would be!
- **Senior pets are awesome with kids.** Kids will be delighted how patient senior pets are. These pets will spend time by their little masters and bask in their attention. Those kids with special needs would be

especially pleased to find a devoted friend in a senior dog or cat.

- **An older cat or dog can be advantageous for seniors.** Scheduled routines can be common in the lives of older adults and pets, so it can be a blessing to have a pet who responds to such life dynamics eagerly.
- **Temperament.** A senior pet temperament is what you see when you visit with it for the first time. No surprises later, yet a ton of benefits for all involved.



Visit your local shelter
or [petfinder.com](https://www.petfinder.com) and
ask for senior pets who
are awaiting their
forever homes.

Sitting is the New Smoking: Where Do We Stand?

Research has linked sitting for long periods of time with a number of health concerns, including obesity and metabolic syndrome — a cluster of conditions that includes increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist and abnormal cholesterol levels. Too much sitting also seems to increase the risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer. Inactivity is estimated to cause 9 percent of premature mortality worldwide.

Sitting in front of the TV isn't the only concern. Any extended sitting — such as behind a desk at work or behind the wheel — can be harmful. What's more, spending a few hours a week at the gym or otherwise engaged in moderate or vigorous activity doesn't seem to significantly offset the risk.

The fact that we can't erase the effects of a lifetime spent sitting at the desk (or on the sofa) with a few weekly trips to the gym is an inconvenient truth at a time when the majority of the population remains wedded to our desks and computers (approximately 85 percent of the workforce).

So if sitting is the new smoking, how do we quit?

Clearly the bottom line is that those who work sedentary jobs need to find sustainable ways of integrating physical activity throughout the working day rather than viewing exercise purely as an extracurricular activity. In Japan communal exercises at work, in the name of health and productivity, have been the norm for decades. An increasing number of employers in the U.S. now recognize the importance of providing facilities for employees to exercise at work, citing additional benefits such as reduced employee stress and absenteeism, and increased productivity.

Other options include replacing office chairs with exercise balls, commuting to work or off site meetings on foot or bicycle, holding walking meetings, providing an active desk (standing desks or treadmill desks) for admin work or

telephone consultations, or replacing work breaks that are usually spent sitting with short walks and/or stretching.

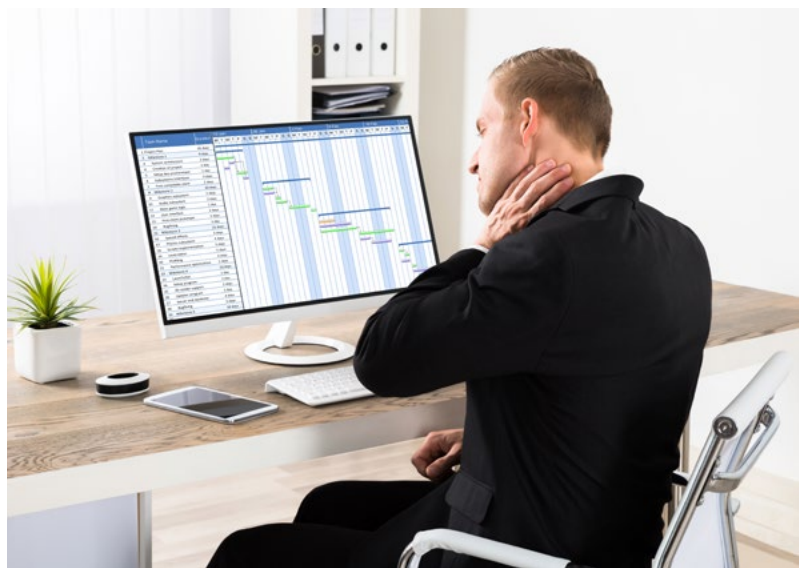
The impact of movement — even leisurely movement — can be profound. For starters, more calories will be expended. This might lead to weight loss and increased energy. Even better, the muscle activity needed for standing and other movement seems to trigger important processes related to the breakdown of fats and sugars within the body. When you sit, these processes stall — and your health risks increase. When you're standing or actively moving, you kick the processes back into action

It is likely that future generations will look back at our sedentary working practices with the same incredulity that we now regard the idea of a smoke-filled office, hospital, or airplane.

Sources:

-National Center for Biotechnology Information

-Mayo Clinic



BH-086



Oakview Professional Building
3000 Westhill Dr – Suite #100, Wausau, WI 54401

Aspirus Stevens Point Outpatient Therapies
2957 Church St, Stevens Point, WI 54481

Aspirus West Medical Office Building
410 Dewey Street (2nd Floor), Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

Curran Professional Park Building
315 S Oneida Ave, Rhineland, WI 54501

Confidential Helpline

800.236.4457

Counselors available 24/7

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