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6 WAYS TO EAT AND DRINK MORE MINDFULLY

UTILIZING SELF-CARE BY ABLETO

In the rush of daily life, we often overindulge in food and drink, whether it's mindless snacking during a movie or excessive wine after a tough day. Stress triggers these behaviors for many adults, leading to negative eating habits and binge drinking. But change is possible. Mindfulness-based approaches show promise in addressing stress and curbing unhealthy coping mechanisms. By understanding triggers and finding healthier alternatives, we pave the way for long-term change. Instead of guilt, we approach habits with kindness and cultivate awareness for mindful choices. Here are six tips to help on this journey.

1. Get to the "why"

Identify the underlying reasons for overeating or excessive drinking. These can range from physical triggers to emotional coping mechanisms. When tempted to indulge, pause and reflect. Ask yourself questions like: Am I stressed? Angry? Bored? Frustrated? This self-inquiry helps uncover the motivations behind these habits.

Having trouble pinning down emotions? A log might help. The mood tracker in your AbleTo program gives you example words to pick from. They can get you started. The more you tune in, the easier it is to spot patterns. When you do, you can start to swap in coping tools that support your well-being.

2. Find other ways to cope

Alcohol may provide temporary relaxation, but it has long-term health consequences, including increased stress response, weakened immune system, and disrupted sleep. Instead of turning to alcohol for comfort or stress relief, consider alternative activities such as connecting with loved ones, pursuing hobbies, exercising, practicing mindfulness through breathing exercises, journaling, or creating a "fun list" of enjoyable activities to turn to when feeling bored or down. These alternatives can uplift mood and promote overall well-being.

3. Learn how to sit with the tough stuff

When tough emotions arise, the urge to indulge in treats or alcohol often stems from a desire for the temporary relief they provide. However, this creates a feel-good loop where consumption triggers positive feelings without addressing the underlying issue. Over time, the body craves more to fulfill this need. Instead of immediately reaching for external comforts, pause and observe the emotion. Take note of how it feels in the body without judgment. By naming and accepting our emotions, we become better equipped to cope in healthier ways, ultimately increasing resilience through practice.

4. Have a social plan

Being mindful about alcohol use in social settings can be tough. You don't want to feel like you're missing out. And it's easy to get swept up in the action. Having a plan ahead of time helps. These days, fancy mocktails are often an option. You can also just ask for seltzer with lime. That way you still have a glass in your hand.

5. Give yourself a little self-love

If you're feeling sad, lonely, or a bit socially anxious, you're not alone. Everyone struggles from time to time. Instead of judgment, try to offer yourself grace and kindness. This can be a chance to get to know yourself better. Once you find your triggers, you can build better coping skills.

6. Get more support

Like many other issues, alcohol use falls on a spectrum. Responsible drinkers and people with alcohol-use disorder are not the only options. The same is true for eating habits. If you want to dial back in either area, paying attention to your habits is a good start. Self-Care from AbleTo includes a habit tracking tool to help you stay accountable.

If you're concerned about yourself or someone you know, professional help is also available. Consider reaching out to your primary care physician. A trusted loved one can also be helpful.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) is available at **800-985-5990**. You can also seek out recovery resources via [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) or through [Optum Live and Work Well](#). Remember: You've already taken a big step. You're more informed. You have new ideas to try. And you're never alone when you need more support.

Need help putting these tips into practice?

[Sign up for Self-Care from AbleTo](#), a mental wellness app that puts science-backed self-care tools at your fingertips. Whether you log in from your phone or a computer, you can track your habits, build coping skills, and more. It's available whenever and wherever you need it. Bonus: Self Care from AbleTo can also be used by any covered dependents (ages 13+) at no additional cost. [Sign up today](#) to give yourself and your loved ones the care you deserve.

[LEARN MORE](#)



EXERCISE YOUR MIND CHALLENGE

EARN A WELL-BEING ACTIVITY INCENTIVE

The first portal challenge through Wellness Your Way, is here! Wellness Your Way allows you to choose which incentive(s) you earn and rewards you for engaging in wellness activities that are most meaningful to you. Several wellness challenges are offered throughout the year, and you are able to start earning Well-Being Activity Incentives today when you sign up for the Exercise Your Mind Challenge!

Just as our bodies require care and exercise over the course of our life, so do our brains – especially as we age. Lifting weights strengthens our muscles, while strengthening our mental “muscles” improves our memory, attention, brain speed, people skills, intelligence and navigation.

The key is variety. Similarly when we exercise our body, if doing something becomes too easy, it's time to make a change to build brainpower. The more something is second nature, the less our brain has to work to do it.

For example, if you can do a crossword puzzle in record time, it's time to increase the difficulty level to challenge yourself and get the best work out for your brain.

People of all ages can benefit from incorporating a few brain exercises into their lives to stay mentally sharp for the long haul. All it takes is a few minutes each day.

Register for the challenge by March 13th to participate and earn \$50 in Well-Being Activity incentives. To earn credit, you must achieve both the participation requirement and the daily goal as outlined at [fccThriveOn.com](#). This challenge will run from March 6th- April 2nd.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

NURSE'S NOTES

FROM YOUR  UnitedHealthcare HEALTH ENGAGEMENT NURSES
February 2024



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February is an important time to raise awareness about heart disease. While many associate heart disease with a single condition, it's essential to recognize its various types, each presenting unique risk factors and symptoms. The encouraging news is that for many of these factors, individuals can take steps to lower their risk.

Types of Heart Disease

- **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD):** This prevalent form of heart disease is often caused by the buildup of plaque in the arteries supplying blood to the heart. Reduced blood flow can lead to chest pain (angina), heart attacks, or strokes.
- **Heart Failure:** Contrary to its name, heart failure doesn't signify the heart stopping altogether but rather an inability to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs, often developing gradually over time.
- **Arrhythmia:** When the heart's rhythm becomes irregular, it can lead to complications. Fortunately, many forms of arrhythmia can be managed with medical intervention.
- **Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD):** This occurs when plaque builds up in arteries outside the heart, typically in the arms and legs, causing pain and discomfort due to reduced blood flow.

Controllable Risk Factors

Several [risk factors](#) for heart disease can be managed through lifestyle changes and medical intervention:

- **High Blood Pressure (Hypertension):** Monitoring blood pressure through medication, diet, and exercise significantly lowers heart disease risk.
- **High Blood Cholesterol:** Elevated cholesterol levels contribute to plaque buildup in arteries. A heart-healthy diet and prescribed medications help manage cholesterol levels.
- **Diabetes and Prediabetes:** Controlling blood sugar levels through diet, exercise, and medication reduces heart disease risk.
- **Smoking:** Quitting smoking is among the most effective ways to reduce heart disease risk.
- **Weight Management and Physical Activity:** Maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active improve heart health and reduce heart disease risk.

Factors Beyond Control

While some risk factors are within our control, others, unfortunately, are not:

- **Age:** The risk of heart disease tends to increase with age, particularly for women after the age of 55.
- **Family History:** A family history of heart disease can elevate an individual's risk.
- **Preeclampsia During Pregnancy:** Women who have had preeclampsia during pregnancy may have a higher risk of developing heart disease later in life.
- **Ethnicity:** Certain ethnic groups, including African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, and Hispanics, have a higher predisposition to heart disease.

February serves as a reminder to prioritize heart health and take proactive steps to reduce the risk of heart disease. By understanding the different types of heart disease and addressing controllable risk factors through lifestyle changes and medical intervention, individuals can work towards a healthier heart and a longer, happier life.

Your UnitedHealthcare Health Engagement Nurses are available to help you and your family with many healthcare situations such as finding a primary care physician, support and education for disease prevention and management, and helping you achieve your personal health goals. See more information about Nurse Therese and Nurse Carmen, including how you can contact them under their photo!

ATTEND AN UPCOMING WEBINAR

Join us every month for a series of engaging educational webinars brought to you by Franklin County Cooperative and ThriveOn, featuring a diverse range of topics including nutrition, financial support, health-related discussions, and much more from our trusted vendors.



WeightWatchers

Momentum: The secret to maintaining your healthy habits

Thursday, February 29 at 1pm

This webinar will introduce a new way to think about making changes: rather than relying on motivation, we should focus on building momentum. Join WeightWatchers to learn more!

[REGISTER NOW >](#)

Maven

Maven Moments: Unrealistic expectations placed on women today

Tuesday, March 12 at 12pm

A thought-provoking discussion on the challenging world of unrealistic expectations placed on women today. Gain valuable insights from our Maven experts on effective strategies allowing you to rise above societal pressures and embrace your full potential.

[REGISTER NOW >](#)

EAP Group Sessions

Get the Best of Stress

Wednesday, March 27 from 1-2pm

In this training, participants will learn stress basics and coping strategies for the workplace, including stress hardiness for healthy management. Attendees will also gain tools to reduce stress levels and enhance understanding of personal and organizational stress factors.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

UPCOMING WEBINARS

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ThriveOn
Your Health and Wellness Program