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MOTIVATION

STRESS BUSTERS



Stress is like dark chocolate. A little of it won't kill you. In fact, small blocks here and there can be good for you. But chronic and severe stress can damage your body and mind, blocking the fluid communication to and from most organs—especially in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and in the limbic system, the brain's emotional center. You want these two systems running as smoothly as possible, with low levels of the delinquent stress hormones in your bloodstream.

This is why I always keep some stress busters handy. Here are nine of my favorites.

1. Simplify.

Cut your to-do list in half. Ask yourself this question after every item: Will I die tomorrow if this doesn't get accomplished? Every morning I immediately jot down my to-do list. Once I experience the first heart palpitation, the list gets cut in half.

2. Prioritize.

Let's say you've got five huge work projects due next week. Record all the tasks and give each one a number from 1 and 10: 10 being life threatening to 1 being that stupid thing I signed up for. Start with the 10s. If you never get beyond the 8s, that's okay!

3. Use Pencil, Not Pen. Start using pencil instead of pen to stay as flexible as you can. Things change! And change is not your enemy. You want to be able to erase a task or reminder at any time, because who knows what your day will be like.

4. Give Away Your Cape.

You are not a superhero and don't possess supernatural qualities and capabilities. Join the race ... the human race. Surrender to limitations and conditions—like the number of hours in a day (24) and the amount of time it takes to get from point A to point B - in your car - not in your Batmobile.

5. Laugh.

When people laugh, the autonomic nervous system mellows out and the heart is allowed to relax. Laughter can boost the immune system and the levels of stress hormones. Plus it's just fun to laugh. And having fun is its own stress buster.

6. Exercise.

Exercise relieves stress in several ways. First, cardiovascular workouts stimulate brain chemicals that foster growth of nerve cells. Second, exercise increases the activity of serotonin and norepinephrine. Third, a raised heart rate releases endorphins and a hormone known as ANP, which reduces pain, induces euphoria, and helps control the brain's response to stress and anxiety. A quick stroll in the morning or in the evening might be just enough to tell the stress hormones in your blood to scatter..

7. Stop Juggling.

I realize some multi-tasking is inevitable in our rushed culture. If you have trouble chewing gum and walking at the same time like I do, you might try your best to concentrate on one activity at a time.

8. Build Boundaries.

Designate a place and time for certain things so that your brain doesn't have to wear so many hats at the same time. Make yourself abide by some rules: computer is off when I'm not working, and computer stays off in the evening and on weekends.

9. Think Globally.

This is a simple reminder that compared to other problems in our world today, the things that we stress about are pretty minor. Don't sweat the small stuff, and most of it is small stuff.

Therese J. Borchard



SAFETY SENSE WATER DAMAGE

These days, homes are at a greater risk of water damage than ever before. Heavier precipitation and less predictable weather patterns increase the chance of unwanted water entering our homes.

Water damage is serious business. It is a drain – financially, emotionally, even physically. Just one inch is all it takes to destroy sentimental or irreplaceable items, or to create structural damage that can depreciate the value of your home. The bacteria and mold it can leave in its wake can affect air quality in your home and create potential health risks.

The best way to deal with water damage is to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Here are some easy things you can do outside your home to help keep you safe and dry.

- **Disconnect downspouts** from the municipal sewer system. Extend downspouts at least 6 feet away from your basement walls and drain away from your house towards the street or backyard..
- **Install a rain barrel** to minimize the amount of surface water that could enter your home
- **Grade the earth** or hard surfaces around your home to slope away from your foundation.
- **Before temperatures drop** to freezing, turn off the water supply to outdoor taps and faucets, then open the taps to drain the water completely. Leave taps in the open position until spring.
- **Keep gutters and downspouts clear** of leaves and other debris – clean them out at least once a year – late fall is a



good time.

With a little know-how and some routine maintenance, you can stay ahead of the wave and keep unwanted water out.

BEDROOMS FIT FOR A DREAM

While the purchase of smaller homes is becoming more popular, large-scale master bedrooms continue to remain the-trend, as they offer a retreat from the real world. With these tips, you will be dreaming in your bedroom both day and night..



Atmosphere- Leave the world and the items that remind you of it outside. The master bedroom should be clutter-free; offering a place to de-stress and find solace. Replace cell phones and computers, better suited to a home office, with candles and photos of loved ones.

Furniture- Keeping with the streamlined look, furnish the room with essentials only. An oversized bed with lots of pillows offers a comfortable escape and focal point. Additional furnishings such as “his and hers” bedside tables provide a place for personal items and an armoire can host a television, decorative books and photographs.

Window Treatments- The right window treatments can soften harsh light and provide privacy for a restful environment and maybe even a touch of romance. Silhouette window shades diffuse light through two fabric layers for a warm glow and calming effect.

Decorative Accents- Brighter, airy colors such as yellows and warm blues invoke a sense of warmth and happiness. Using a fresh coat of paint in these colors can dramatically alter the look of a room. Add an inspirational element using paintings from places around the world where you have travelled or hope to travel.

En-suite Bathroom- Luxury still resonates with the en-suite bath. “His and Hers” vanities remain popular as well as relaxing soaking tubs. Aromatherapy candles and oversized, fluffy towels add both a functional and decorative element.

GRASS AND MUD STAIN REMOVAL

Summer months spent outdoors invite mud and grass stains onto unwelcome places. Try these quick and easy ways to remove them.



Take it away with tape.

Adding water to a mud stain actually makes it worse. Instead, wait until it's dry and place some packing tape over the mark to lift it away.

Use meat tenderizer..

Dampen the grass stain and sprinkle meat tenderizer on the spot before tossing it in to the wash. Stains will magically lift away.

Make marks disappear.

Before washing a grass-stained cotton or denim garment, apply rubbing alcohol to the mark, then soak in hot water to safely dissolve stains.

Remove mud from carpet.



If the kids tracked dirt into your carpet, wait for it to dry, and then use a small brush to loosen up the mud. Then just vacuum up the dirt particles.

Work it out.

Mix 3 parts baking soda and 1 part vinegar to form a paste. Gently work it onto the backside of a grass stain. This will push the stain outward instead of further into the fabric. Launder as usual.

Stains on your skin.

Soap and water not cutting it for removing the green hue? Wash the area with vinegar and warm water to dissolve the grass pigments on the skin.

INSPECTION INSIGHTS

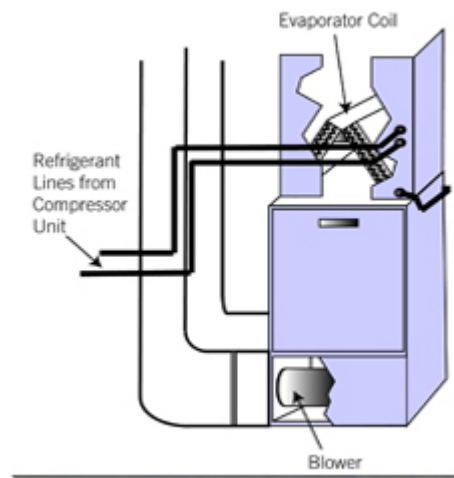
CENTRAL AIR

Central air conditioning systems are a luxury in some areas of North America and a basic necessity in others. It is in your best interest to understand how to choose the right system for your home, and how to maintain it for optimal use.

The most common system is called a "split system" because part of it (the condenser) is located outside the house, and part (the evaporator) is located inside. The evaporator is mounted inside an air handler, a blower that circulates air throughout the house.

For forced-air heating, the furnace acts as the air handler. In these cases, the evaporator is simply mounted on top of the furnace.

SEER stands for Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio. It designates the efficiency rating of air conditioning systems. A 14 SEER air conditioner is more efficient than a 10 SEER unit. Since January 2006, manufacturers are no longer permitted to manufacture air conditioning systems with a SEER less than 13.



The 13 SEER system is much larger physically than older systems. If you are replacing a failed older system, the new evaporator may not fit into the old air handler, or even into the space it once occupied. The ducting can be modified to fit the new evaporator, but in some cases the entire air handler (or furnace) may have to be replaced.

CAPACITYsizing is very important. Installers traditionally err on the side of over sizing a system to avoid client complaints on the hottest day of the summer. A larger-than-necessary system will not function optimally. It will cool the house off quickly and then shut off. These short on-cycles are not good because:

Here is what you can learn from these statistics

- Most air conditioning systems take about seven minutes of operation to reach peak efficiency.
- An oversized system will operate at a fraction of its rated efficiency, costing more to operate than it should.
- The central air conditioning system also dehumidifies the home. If the on-cycles are short, you get little dehumidification. The result is a cold and clammy home.

Choosing the appropriate capacity for the air conditioning system requires a skilled and experienced air conditioning contractor that can do a heat gain calculation for your home.

Like any system in your home, a central air conditioner will work at its peak efficiency and performance when it is properly fitted for capacity and regularly maintained.

COMMUNICATION

INTERNET PERSONALITY

The image that represents you on a website, Facebook or Instant Messenger is called an “avatar”. Your avatar almost always represents your true personality. What does your choice say about you?



- **Pet or favorite animal:** You are a youthful optimist. Looking at an adorable animal boosts moods, so when your friends see this avatar, they think of you as happy too.
- **Family photo:** You are a complicated empathy. A loved one's image reveals how loyal and nurturing you are. It suggests you are empathetic and open-minded..
- **Photo of yourself:** You are open and extroverted. A real photo says you have nothing to hide in either the virtual or real world. You are perceived as trusting and trustworthy..
- **Cartoon character:** You are a creative wit. While your whimsical icon reveals you can scale heights of creative thinking, it shows also how modest (even shy) you can be.
- **Celebrity:** You are a romantic go-getter. You convey idealism and romanticism. You are willing to both network on the Web and pound the pavement in the real world to get where you want to go.

FRESHEN YOUR TRASH CAN

One of the easiest places for ugly odors to collect and lurk is the frequently used kitchen trash can.

Here are some ideas to bring a fresher scent into your kitchen.

Scent your trash bags. Soak a few cotton balls in your favorite essential oils and toss in your can for a refreshing smell. Replace when you throw out the trash.

Line it Taking out the trash will be less of a chore when you line the can with three bags. Lift out the garbage bag to have the new one instantly handy.

Sanitize the can. When cleaning your trash can, mix ¼ cup baking soda and 2 Tbs. vinegar to make a paste that will scrub your can clean. It'll not only remove tough stains, but also fight germs and odors.

Use a dryer sheet. Leave a dryer sheet beneath the garbage bag to release a fresh smell into your trash can.



HOUSEWATCH MAINTENANCE

AIR CONDITIONING MAINTENANCE



Clean or replace the filter in the air handler regularly, not just for clean air, but also because the filter protects the heating and cooling equipment. Dust can clog the evaporator coil, reducing the heat transfer, efficiency, and life of the system..

Trim vegetation away from the condenser for free air flow. Do not enclose the condenser within the trellis or anything else that might block air flow.

Service the system regularly. Servicing is inexpensive and will increase the life and efficiency of the system. A technician typically cleans the condenser coils and checks the refrigerant pressures, adjusting the refrigerant charge as needed.

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