

CLAREMONT EAP *Your trusted resource*

EMPLOYEE
NEWSLETTER

IMPACT

July-September 2018

Take a Hike -- Safely

Whether you plan a lengthy hike along the Appalachian Trail or a jaunt through nearby woods, make sure you are prepared before you take that first step.

Common injuries for hikers are sprains, strains, scrapes or bruises of ankles, fingers and lower legs, but most injuries are minor, the American Hiking Society (AHS) says. You can avoid most injuries if you wear proper footwear, try not to overdo it and pay attention to what you're doing.

Regular hiking can lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level, and help you maintain or lose weight, the AHS says. Hiking for an hour at 2 m.p.h. will burn 240 calories.

Continued on next page

IN THIS ISSUE

Take a Hike-Safely
[pages 1-2](#)

5 Ways to Help Teens Feel
Good about Themselves
[pages 3-5](#)

7 Ways to Beat the Burnout
Blues
[pages 5-6](#)

Meet Your Happiness Guide!

The Claremont Positivity Center is an online resource that incorporates Positive Psychology and mindfulness self-help techniques to improve employee well-being in the workplace and beyond.

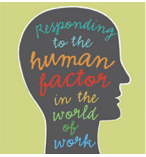
*Our Serenity Sloths
help guide you to
happiness!*



**Visit the
Positivity Center**

Claremont EAP distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

**For confidential help, call:
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Continued from previous page

General safety tips

- Know weather conditions for the next 24 hours, even if you plan a one-hour hike. Take clothing to handle a rapid weather change, but don't carry more than you can handle.
- Tell someone where you're going and when you'll return.
- When hiking in unfamiliar territory, ask about the local terrain.
- Check yourself for disease-carrying ticks in regions with Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever.
- Pace yourself. Slowing as you hike downhill can head off injuries, for example.
- Be able to take care of yourself. It's not about skill, but about your consciousness level.

Buying a better boot

Here are tips from the American Volkssport Association:

- Wear shoes or boots that support and protect your foot from bruises on rocks or from turning an ankle on rough terrain.
- Some cushioning is preferable, although it's not as important for hiking and walking as running.
- The shoe should be comfortable. Don't confuse in-store comfort with what's truly comfortable on a long hike.
- Good fit is essential. Have your foot's length and arch measured by a professional salesperson.

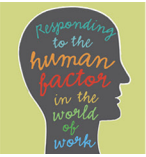
Trail gear

Here are suggestions from the American Red Cross on what to bring with you:

- Something to use as a signal (a whistle, mirror or air horn)
- Cell phone
- GPS device and extra batteries for it; with this device, you will always know exactly where you are
- Enough high-energy food to get you through 24 hours, more in winter
- Drinking water
- Identification
- First-aid essentials: Band-Aids, blister kit, anti-itch cream and tissues, plus any medications you may need in a 24-hour period
- Insect repellent
- Sunglasses, hat and sunscreen
- Flashlight, with extra batteries and bulb
- Map and compass
- Waterproof matches and a plastic Fresnel lens that can be rolled into a tight tube; a Fresnel lens is a lightweight magnifier that you can use to read small print and maps, to see tiny splinters, and to start fires
- Walking stick for balance

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5

Ways to Help Teens Feel Good about Themselves

No one wants to hang out with me. I'm a failure at school. All my other friends seem happy. What's wrong with me?

These kinds of negative thoughts are becoming more common in our homes and schools. Teens are experiencing increased anxiety, and studies indicate that college students in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States are becoming more perfectionistic over time, measuring themselves against unrealistic standards.

Why is this happening? We can't say for sure—but we do know there are steps teens can take to improve their mental health.

A 2018 study of early adolescents suggests that self-concept (your perception of self) plays a central role in emotional well-being. According to the study, a supportive classroom environment and positive social relationships also affect teen well-being—but the impact is indirect. Positive self-concept seems to be the key variable in the well-being equation. If a student feels good about herself, then she may be more likely to connect with others and benefit from the supports provided at school.

So, how can we influence how students think about themselves? This may feel like a very tall order; yet there is a lot of research out there that provides some clues for supporting the teens in your life. Here are five ways to help tweens and teens move toward a more positive self-concept.

1 Get physical

Although you may have heard this before, kids really can benefit from regular exercise (especially when their tendency is to sit in front of a screen). A recent review of 38 international studies indicates that physical activity alone can improve self-esteem and self-concept in children and adolescents.

Apparently, the exercise setting also matters. Students who participated in supervised activities in schools or gymnasiums reported more significant growth in self-esteem than those who exercised at home and in other settings.

Adolescents' self-concept is most strongly linked to their sense of physical attractiveness and body image, an area where many people struggle. So, encourage more regular exercise programs during and after school, and support team sports, strength training, running, yoga, and swimming—not just for their effects on the body but on the mind, as well. Getting out and engaging in some form of exercise can make us feel stronger, healthier, and more empowered.

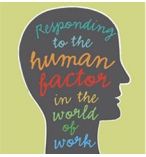
2 Focus on self-compassion (not self-esteem)

Because self-esteem is a global evaluation of your overall worth, it has its dangers. What am I achieving? Am I good enough? How do I compare with my peers?

What would happen if we could stop judging ourselves? Researcher Kristen Neff claims that self-compassion—treating yourself with kindness, openness, and acceptance—is a healthy alternative to the incessant striving and performance orientation often tied up with self-esteem.

In her study of adolescents and young adults, she found that participants with higher self-compassion demonstrated greater well-being. Why? They were okay with their flaws, acknowledged that they struggled just like those around them (“Everybody makes mistakes; you are not alone”), and treated themselves

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previous page



with the same kindness they would extend to a friend (“It’s okay; you did your best”).

If you are interested in specific techniques and strategies for enhancing self-compassion in teens, take a look at the work of psychologist Karen Bluth. She recently developed a program called Making Friends with Yourself. Youth participating in this eight-week program reported greater resilience, less depression, and less stress at the end of it.

3 Avoid social comparison

When we focus on self-esteem, we tend to get caught up in comparing ourselves to others. Teens, in particular, often sense an “imaginary audience” (i.e., “Everyone is looking at me!”) and can become highly sensitized to who they are relative to everyone around them.

Instagram and other social media platforms don’t necessarily help. Some research suggests an association between social media and depression, anxiety, loneliness, and FoMO (fear of missing out) among teens. Their posts may not rack up the number of “likes” that their friends’ posts do, or they may feel excluded when they see pictures of classmates happily spending time together without them.

A new app for teen girls called Maverick may be a healthier option than Snapchat or Instagram. On this social media platform, teens can connect with role models (called “Catalysts”) and explore their creativity (such as designing their own superhero or choosing a personal mantra). Of course, there is always the option of taking a break from social media, as well.

Regardless of what teens choose to do online, many of our schools are also structured for social comparison. Grading, labeling, and tracking practices (grouping students based on their academic performance) don’t necessarily honor the stops, starts, and inevitable mistakes that are a natural part of the learning process.

Here are some school-based alternatives designed to reduce social comparison:

- Don’t make grades public.
- Provide opportunities to revise and redo assignments.
- Avoid ability grouping as much as possible.
- Focus on individual growth and improvement.
- Acknowledge students’ small successes.

Claremont EAP
can help with
all of these choices!

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4 Capitalize on specific skills

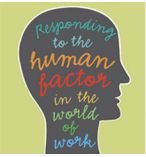
If you keep your eye out for teens’ talents and interests, you can support them in cultivating their strengths. Your son may think he is a terrible athlete, but he lights up when he works on school science projects. Then there’s that quiet, disheveled ninth-grade girl who sits in the back of your class. She may feel socially awkward, but she wows you with her poetry.

Researcher Susan Harter has studied adolescent self-esteem and self-concept for years. She claims that self-concept is domain-specific. Our overall self-esteem or sense of worth tends to be rooted in eight distinct areas: athletic competence, scholastic competence, behavioral conduct, social acceptance, close friendship, romantic appeal, job satisfaction, and physical attractiveness.

Talk to the teens in your life. What are their personal values and priorities? Share surveys with them like the VIA (which identifies character strengths like bravery, honesty, and leadership) or have them take a multiple intelligences quiz. Celebrate their talents and tailor activities and instruction around their abilities as much as possible.

It may not be easy to shift teens’ global sense of self-worth, but we can certainly highlight and encourage areas of interest and particular skill sets so that they feel more confident, capable, and inspired.

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5 Help others (especially strangers)

Finally, when teens reach out to others, they are more likely to feel better about themselves. A 2017 study of 681 U.S. adolescents (ages 11-14) examined their kind and helpful behavior over a four-year period. Researchers found that adolescents who were kind and helpful in general had higher self-esteem, but those who directed their generosity toward strangers (not friends and family) tended to grow in self-esteem.

Last Friday, I joined my daughter and her peers during the “action” phase of their “Change the World” project. Their social studies teacher, Tim Owens, tasked the eighth graders with choosing a sustainability issue, researching the problem and possible solutions, planning action, and implementing the action.

These middle schoolers spent a full day canvassing their neighborhoods to advocate for policies that protected people they don’t know, like local refugees and homeless youth—as well as animals used for product testing. I’ve never seen my daughter and her friends more energized, confident, and engaged with their community.

As adults, we can actively support service learning projects in our schools and our teens’ interests in advocacy and civil engagement. Adolescents around the world can also work remotely with non-profit organizations like DoSomething, “a digital platform promoting offline action” in 131 countries. On this site, young people can choose a cause, the amount of time they want to commit to it, and the type of help they would like to provide (e.g., face-to-face, improving a space, making something,

sharing something, etc.)

When teens regularly contribute to a larger cause, they learn to think beyond themselves, which may ultimately help them to be more positive, empowered, and purposeful.

As many teens struggle with anxiety and perfectionism, our urge may be to jump in and fix their problems, whatever we perceive them to be. But a better approach, one that will hopefully help reverse these worrying trends, is to cheer them on as they develop the mental habits and strengths that will support them throughout their lives.

By Amy L. Eva | May 21, 2018

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7 WAYS TO BEAT THE BURNOUT BLUES

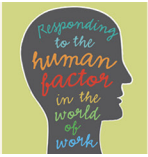
Have you ever wondered why some people leave jobs after two or three years and others stay for 15 or 20? Burnout may not be the only reason people leave their jobs, but it often is a factor.

You may be experiencing burnout if you feel bored, fatigued, apathetic, impatient, and constantly irritated with your co-workers.

Don’t panic, there’s hope. Some of the secrets to long-term job happiness are revealed below in the words of people who have avoided burnout.



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7 WAYS TO BEAT THE BURNOUT BLUES *Continued from previous page*

1. Change positions within your company

"I avoided burnout by changing positions every two to four years. During my 27-year career, I worked in sales, market research, technical management, operations, and product management. The changes kept me interested and excited about my work," says Jan Powell, from Dallas, Texas, who worked for 27 years at Xerox.

2. Find like-minded people

"To avoid burnout, the most useful tool I have found is to identify like-minded people with whom I can share humor, have fun, and vent frustrations when needed. These must be people who share a similar sense of humor as yourself and people you trust implicitly," says Bobbe White, from Quincy, Illinois, who has worked as a business development officer at a community bank for 21 years.

3. Seek out short-term projects

"I have avoided burnout because, in addition to my normal routine job, I seek out short-term projects, working with different teams each time," says Jaswant Kaur, a nine-year employee of the Samling Group of Companies.

"These projects could be on cost-cutting efforts, improving quality efforts, charitable causes, or other social functions for the company," says the Samling employee, who lives in Kuching, Malaysia.

4. Get more education

"I was previously with a technology company for more than 13 years and became burned out since I wasn't able to go anywhere within the company," says Teresa Johnson, from Southlake, Texas. "I went back to school and received a B.B.A. in management and an M.S. in human resources and training.

"The company paid for my schooling and knew when I started the master's program that I'd leave after graduation if no opportunities arose. That happened, and I left within 30 days after graduating. They felt it was worth it to keep me working at the company for the time I was in school," she says.

5. Keep on learning

"I worked at Sears for nearly 10 years many years ago. The number one thing I've learned through many years of employment is that it's important to continue to learn new things," says Melinda L. Surbough, from Dallas, Texas, who is now the managing editor of Today's Dallas Woman magazine.

6. Have pride in your job

"I work in a busy medical office. Having pride and confidence in my job and doing work that I enjoy are very important to me," says Lucretia Rolland, a receptionist at The Dermatology Center in Irving, Texas. "These, combined with appreciation and caring from management, have kept me in my job for more than 17 years."

7. Don't wait

If you start to experience burnout, don't wait until it affects your work and don't start looking for a new job. Instead, try making positive changes in your present job. Talk to your supervisor and discuss changes that could reenergize you.

Claremont EAP can help with
all of these choices!

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