



Cook County
Public Health
& Human
Services

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

October, 2017

Topic of the Month

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic
Together Through Life
a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

Free - Help Yourself!

Ahhh..... 23 ways to chill

- ♥ Laugh out loud! Watch a funny movie or memes or a favorite stand-up comic.
- ♥ Write something: poetry, songs lyrics, short stories, a novel, a letter, a journal, etc.
- ♥ Listen to relaxation CDs or watch relaxation videos.
- ♥ Play a relaxing game, alone or with friends.
- ♥ Listen to music, and maybe even belt out a song!
- ♥ Take a walk.
- ♥ Try out yoga.
- ♥ Work in the garden.
- ♥ Explore aromatherapy.
- ♥ Take a warm bath or shower.
- ♥ Just say "No" and peel off any optional commitments that make you feel overwhelmed.
- ♥ Create art regardless of what it looks like.
- ♥ Learn something new.
- ♥ Actually use your vacation days.
- ♥ Literally count your blessings.
- ♥ Take a nap.
- ♥ Get rid of toxic media. If you feel bad after ingesting it, get it out of your media "diet."
- ♥ Get/give a massage.
- ♥ Read a paper book.
- ♥ Ask for a hug.
- ♥ Talk to yourself as kindly as you'd talk to your best friend.
- ♥ Give back. Spend time & energy focusing on being good to someone else.
- ♥ Breathe and just notice sights, sounds, temperatures, textures, thoughts, & feelings. *Breathe.*

Creating Calm

...even when life feels like *chaos.*

Experiencing
stress is part
of being alive.

Like the tides, stress usually ebbs and flows, and learning how to "surf" can help you to enjoy the ride!



**What about some
"Conversation
Coaching?"**

Are you having difficulty deciding what parts of your inner conversations are worth listening to and which parts to ignore?

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic has Behavioral Health Consultants on staff that can help you explore ways to use those internal conversations to your benefit!

Blow off some steam.

Stressful events can trigger a "Fight or Flight" response that gets your body ready for action. Give your body what it needs - pound the pavement, swim some laps, lift weights, dance until you drop. A physical workout can give you some relaxing mental downtime.

Take 5

Or ten.
Just breathe.
It's okay to take a little break from trying "fix" anything, including your current feelings of stress. Sometimes human beings just feel uncomfortable. If you can be gentle with yourself, for just a few minutes, you can rest for a bit. Then, if you want, you can always pick back up where you left off.

How thoughts can hijack feelings.

Your body and emotions can be your early warning system to the ways that your thoughts are causing you stress.

1. Notice how your body feels: tight, queasy, shaky....?
2. Pay attention to the emotional soundtrack that's playing in the background: anger, fear, frustration....?
3. Listen to the thoughts that these feelings and emotions are fueling, "It's going to be ____!" "I know that ____!"

Decide if you want to buy what your thoughts are selling.

Now that you're getting familiar with your stress response, you can decide if it's helpful or hurtful to invest your time believing and acting on all that inner conversation.

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support.
We're here to help!
Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.

Tech to Relax & Recharge

There's an app for that!

- **Headspace** - The free Basics pack teaches you mindfulness and meditation skills. A subscription will allow you access to hundreds of meditations on everything from stress and anxiety to sleep and focus.
- **Calm** - A great app for beginners and more experienced meditators alike. The visuals are beautiful, and there's great variety of topics and session lengths.
- **Relax Melodies** - Create your own mix of favorite nature sounds and melodies, then add a guided meditation for a specific need. It will even help you to get to bed on time!
- **Charity Miles** - Every little bit of activity helps both you and the causes you believe in. It works like a pedometer, and sponsors donate money. Over 2.5 million dollars have been raised!

Visual Vacations

- **University of Florida** - Counseling and Wellness Center
<https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/tools/relaxation/>
Four guided visualizations: Deep Breathing, Guided Imagery, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, & Mindfulness.
- **University of Maryland** - Loyola Counseling Center
<http://www.loyola.edu/department/counseling-center/students/relaxation>
This site has a great variety of free resources: guided relaxation exercises (both audio & video format) and links to other sites that have more relaxation options.
- For beautiful videos without guided imagery, check out:
Netflix - Search "Nature Vision TV," "Slow TV," "Moving Art," & "Ocean Wonders."
Amazon Prime - Search "Relaxation Videos"
YouTube - Search "Nature Relaxation Videos."

D.I.Y. Relaxation

Have you ever been watching a scary movie and noticed your heart start racing and your skin get clammy? Have you ever thought about something in the past that was upsetting and noticed your muscles tense or your stomach get queasy? Then you've experienced the powerful ways that your mind can affect your body. Choosing to imagine peaceful, calming images can help your body relax and unwind.

1. Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes, and take a few deep, slow breaths.
2. Imagine a setting that is calm and peaceful: a beach, a mountain, a meadow, forest, lake - any place you choose.
3. Start to pay attention to the details of your surroundings: How does the air feel? Are there smells? What sights are around you? Can you hear anything? Spend a moment just soaking it all in.
4. Notice that there's a path nearby. Start to follow it, and as you do, enjoy all details of this place. The further along the path you go, the more and more relaxed you feel.
5. Take some time just to enjoy this place and these feelings, knowing that you can return whenever you want.
6. Then, when you are ready, slowly start to come back to the present. Start noticing the sounds and smells of the place you're resting. Remember that you can carry this sense of calm with you.
7. Count to 3, and open your eyes. Notice how much more peaceful and relaxed you feel.

You can record these steps and play them back, ask someone to read them to you, or just walk yourself through them in your mind. Whatever way you do it, these few moments that you purposefully "switch channels" and choose calming thoughts, help your body to rest and relax.