

thrive!

Helping AU employees optimize their health and wellbeing.

.....

COPING WITH COVID-19 BURNOUT

Taking Care of Yourself by Managing Stress

Note: This is the second in a series of articles from Auburn University Human Resources (AUHR) on dealing with COVID-19, mental wellness and other relevant topics.

If you read [last week's edition of thrive!](#), you may recall that up to 40 percent of Americans have experienced burnout at work during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes hundreds of Auburn University employees.

Fortunately, there are several ways to help manage stress and cope with COVID-19 burnout. Nkenge Hyter, an Urban Regional Extension Agent (Alabama Cooperative Extension System) from Jefferson County, recently shared several tips in her article "[Managing Stress Caused by Change.](#)" While these tips apply to any major change, they are certainly relevant during the pandemic:

- **Stay Active:** Now is a great time to develop an exercise plan or to modify your current plan. The goal is to stay active and burn calories. Staying active helps reduce stress, increases energy and improves muscle strength. You can stay active by enjoying walks outside or getting busy doing some cleaning.
- **Express Feelings:** Change can often cause an increase in emotions, such as fear, anxiety, sadness or confusion. Talking to someone is a wonderful way to deal with these emotions. Express feelings with loved ones, friends or mental health professionals. Journaling, drawing, poetry and dancing are also creative ways to express feelings.
- **Start a Fun Project:** Base the project on things you love to do or the things you want to learn. Being focused on a project creates a healthy avenue to help deal with stress. Remember, this project should be fun and not stressful.
- **Give Back:** Volunteering can expand social networks. It also offers the chance to give back to the community, develop new skills and release stress. Time spent serving others makes a person feel appreciated and it adds meaning to life.
- **Be Mindful of Eating Habits:** When stressed, be mindful of what you eat, the portion sizes and the number of times you eat. Eating smaller portions, less sweets, less fast foods and drinking more water are all healthier choices. Also, planning meals is a great way to invest in health.

Managing Stress at Work

Andy Brantley, president and chief executive officer of the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), says it is possible to [manage stress at work](#) by doing the following:

- **Intentionally take short breaks to get up and move,** and stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Create space for yourself. Be willing to put down the phone and walk away.
- **Making time to get out of the house or office and enjoy the outdoors.** Take quick walks, go for a run or visit a nearby park. Getting outside is important.
- **Turn off the news and social media,** or significantly limit the amount of time and energy you dedicate to them. Minimize or distance yourself from negative influences and negative people. (This is good advice even if you're not at work!)
- **If you are working from home, trying to make your schedule closer to what it was before the pandemic.** For example, if you had a commute, use some of that time to listen to podcasts or go for a walk instead of jumping right into email.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

* The [Alabama Cooperative Extension System](#) has published dozens of articles on COVID-19, with topics ranging from health and family to cyberbullying and remote work.

* [A Sound Mind: Mental and Emotional Self-Care during COVID-19](#) was created by Student Affairs with relevant information for students and non-students. Much of the information focuses on how to deal with social distancing and/or self-isolation.

.....

COMING SOON!

AUHR will host a pair of webinars on mental wellness and COVID-19 fatigue on Jan. 28 (American Behavioral) and Feb. 4 (Health Promotion and Wellness Services). Both webinars will begin at 2 p.m. Registration information will be coming soon.