

Employee Frontline

February 2021

A newsletter from the Washington State Employee Assistance Program

February is Heart Health Month Remember to Take Care of Your Heart

With the threat of contracting COVID so much on our minds during the past year, it makes sense that other health priorities -- like our heart health -- may have slipped down our list. Many of us have not been getting our regular health check-ups and have been letting our healthy habits slip -- too much sitting and overeating coupled with not enough moving can take their toll.

February is Heart Health Month, so why not take advantage of this opportunity to remind yourself of the importance of taking good care of your heart. First, some quick facts:

- [Heart disease is the leading cause of death](#) for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States, causing about 1 in 4 deaths overall (655,000).
- While heart disease is the leading cause of death for all Americans, [for Black Americans heart disease develops earlier and deaths from heart disease are higher](#), due in part to risk factors such as high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes. More specifically: in 2017, [Black Americans were 20 percent more likely to die from heart disease](#) than non-Hispanic whites.
- [For women, heart disease is either the leading or 2nd leading cause of death](#) (depending on race and Hispanic origin), and with the spotlight on cancer prevention and men's heart disease risk, too little attention has been paid to [heart disease risk factors and prevention for women](#).



The good news is that there's a lot you can do to protect your heart and live a heart-healthy life. Here are the basics, from the National Institutes of Health's [Know the Difference Fact Sheet](#): 1) Ask your doctor about your blood pressure, cholesterol, and A1C; 2) Reduce the sodium, and increase the fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in your diet, through eating plans such as [DASH](#); 3) Be physically active; 4) Maintain a healthy weight; 5) Don't smoke; 6) Manage stress; 7) Keep your diabetes under control.

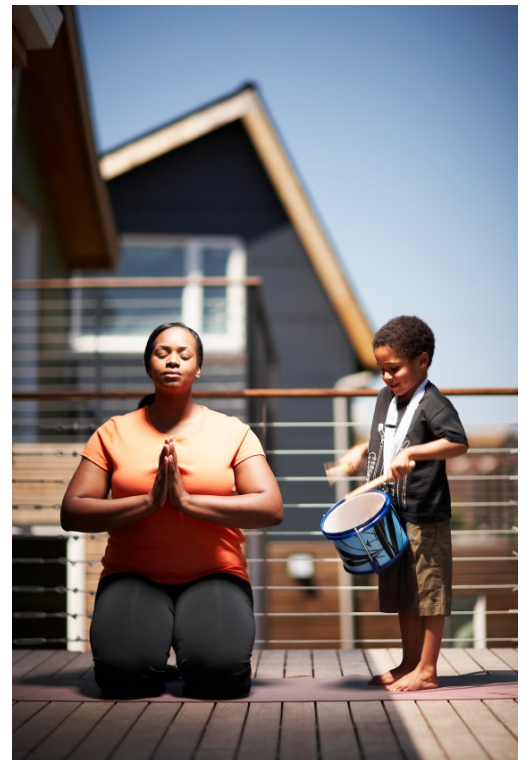
For example, if being physically active has been a struggle during COVID, you can find tips and strategies in [7 Tips To Get Back On Your Home Exercise Game](#) from [NPR's Life Kit](#) and the CDC's [How to Be Physically Active While Social Distancing](#).

Change Your Perspective: Think “Self-Preservation,” Not “Self-Care”

Are you tired of hearing that you should be doing more “self-care”? Since COVID began, self-care has been frequently promoted (including by us here at EAP), advocating for all of the basic life activities we all know we should be doing but have been extra difficult to do, as we try to also cope with the layers upon layers of challenges and difficulties we’ve been navigating. For some, the concept of self-care seems self-indulgent and selfish: given our limited time and resources (especially during COVID) it feels like we’re asked to care for ourselves at the expense of caring for others. Further, self-care seems possible only for those with abundant money and time to spend on themselves.

Here’s a new perspective to try: when you hear the term “self-care,” substitute “self-preservation.” [This idea](#) was pioneered by [Audre Lorde](#), the self-described “black, feminist, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,” who dedicated her life and her work to addressing and confronting injustice. More recently, in this [webinar](#) psychologist and author Marc Brackett, Director of the [Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#) (developers of [the RULER approach](#) to social and emotional learning (SEL)) advocated for this shift to self-preservation as well. He advises that one way to keep self-care as a top priority and help shift from an indulgence to preservation mindset is to think of your physical/mental/emotional/spiritual capacity as a “budget” and know that you can be “broke,” with literally nothing to give, if you don’t make consistent efforts to replenish yourself with the basics: sleep, nutrition, exercise, nature, social connection and other activities/experiences that nourish you. Finally, here are a couple more resources to support you in living the idea that [self-care is not selfish](#) and [instead is an act of self-preservation](#).

For additional support, you can: work with this [Self Care wheel handout](#); view [EAP COVID Resources](#) such as the [Self Care webinar](#) or the [Navigating Change webinar](#), or reach out to EAP for further assistance and guidance, at 1-877-313-4455 or [online](#).



Upcoming Live Webinars

Orientation to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Presented by: Kari Uhlman, MA, LMHC- EAP Counselor

- Thursday, February 11, 2021 2:00pm – 2:30pm [Register](#)
- Tuesday, March 16, 2021 10:00 am—10:30 am [Register](#)

