Stress Reduction Workshops

Come join us on from November 7-10th at 12:00 in the Lafitte room (Student Union) this fall and learn new stress-reduction skills. And it’s FREE. Sessions will last from 30 minutes to one hour.

Nov 7 Progressive Muscle Relaxation We will complete a 15 minute relaxation exercise (progressively tensing and relaxing each muscle group of the body). People who complete this exercise tell me that it is the most relaxed that they have EVER felt.

Nov 8 Thinking Patterns Learn a simple, practical way to overcome the negative thoughts that contribute to feelings of anxiety, defeat, and depression. We will be using a “thinking chart” so this workshop will be great for people who like a straight-forward, concrete approach to de-stressing.

Nov 9 Mindfulness Skills Learn how to achieve more balance in your thoughts and how changing your perspective to your thoughts can create a powerful, positive change in your everyday experiences. Simple, easy meditation practices will be reviewed.

Nov 10 QiGong This practice uses slow, simple movements and breathing as a means to improve your energy or “chi”/“qi”. We will follow along with a DVD— This can be done in work clothes with NO SWEATING I promise. If you have ever done yoga or Tai Chi, you will also like QiGong.

Brought to you by the University Counseling Center
Call 985-448-4080 to sign-up.
December is Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness Month

The Signs of Seasonal Affective Disorder
Do you gain weight and get blue, miserable, and tired once the days get shorter? These are all symptoms of a condition called seasonal affective disorder.

By Beth W. Orenstein
Medically reviewed by Pat F. Bass III, MD, MPH

People who find they have mild to severe depression in fall and winter, when the days grow shorter, may have seasonal affective disorder (SAD) — sometimes called the winter blues. Women, especially those in their twenties, are most susceptible to seasonal affective disorder, but it can affect men and people of all ages, including children and teens. Very often, people with seasonal depression have at least one close relative with a psychiatric disorder, typically major depressive disorder or alcohol abuse.

SAD symptoms emerge during the darker winter months, then disappear as days grow longer and brighter come spring, says Ken Duckworth, MD, medical director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and an assistant professor at Harvard University Medical School.

It's estimated that a half-million people in the United States may have seasonal depression.

Seasonal Affective Disorder Symptoms include:

- **Weight gain.** Cravings for sweet and starchy foods lead to excess weight.
- **Daytime fatigue.** People with SAD are tired during the day and have less energy. They may also find themselves sleeping a lot, but getting no relief from their fatigue. “With SAD, you eat more and sleep more,” Dr. Duckworth says. “It’s hibernation-like.”
- **Increased irritability and anxiety.** People with SAD worry more about everyday events and can be easily irritated. They can have trouble concentrating, too.
- **Social withdrawal.** Those with SAD prefer to be alone; they shun the company of friends and family and do not participate in activities they normally enjoy. Often their social behavior is hard to understand.

SAD is treatable, and there are various treatment methods.

SAD: Light Therapy

“Light therapy does seem to have some effectiveness,” Duckworth says. Light therapy boxes are available that mimic the outdoors. You can buy them without a prescription, but they cost about $400 and are not covered by insurance.

The best time to use light therapy is in the morning. “You sit in front of the box in the morning before going to work and give yourself some sunshine,” Duckworth says. Light therapy typically takes about 30 minutes a day. Note: Do not try to use tanning beds as a treatment for SAD. Tanning beds use ultraviolet rays, which can be harmful to your eyes and your skin.

SAD: Professional Help

“Find a relationship with a clinician who can coach you through this and figure out if it is indeed SAD or if you do worse at Christmastime because your father died on Christmas Eve, for example,” Duckworth says.

A medical professional also can prescribe antidepressants if necessary.

SAD: Other Treatment Methods

- **Taking a vacation to where it’s warm and sunny.** “Go to Florida or to the Bahamas. Go some place south with a lot of sun,” Duckworth says. “If you can take a vacation to a sunny climate it likely will help.”

- **Maintaining relationships with friends and family.** “Don’t stop going to church if you go to church,” Duckworth says. “If your family is a big source of stress, figure out a way to be with them that is not overwhelming to you. Maybe plan your longer visits for the summer when you seem to be doing better.”

Because SAD occurs during the winter months — when holiday festivities are in full force — self-medication is tempting.

“Alcohol use tends to go up in the winter as people attend more parties,” Duckworth says. However, he says, “If you’re using alcohol or drugs to change the depressed way you feel this time of year, it’s probably compounding your problems as opposed to helping them.”

The Many Benefits of Yoga

Twenty years ago, it would have been unusual for an American to embark upon a fitness routine that included regular yoga workouts. Now it is nearly the norm. Yoga is a great way to enhance or begin a regular fitness regiment. Many great athletes like World Cup Superstar Hope Solo, tennis champion Serena Williams, and the NBA's Kevin Garnett are all reported to use yoga to improve coordination, stay strong and flexible.

Yoga has been practiced in Asia for thousands of years and has become increasingly popular in the United States. Yoga classes are easy to find and can be done so inexpensively via numerous DVDs or online. However, there is great value in live instruction and personal coaching from a credentialed teacher. Live coaching will tweak your routine, fine tune your poses, and is more likely to keep you motivated. Classes can be found at nearly every health club, YMCA, and university campus.

There are many types of yoga sessions available, but all focus on deep diaphragm breathing, strength, relaxation and introspection. Yoga is a series of physical and mental practices which promote the participant's well being. Benefits are achieved through a series of postures and poses, concentration, and body weight resistance.

Beginners are often afraid to begin the practice of yoga fearing that they may lack the basic flexibility to start a routine. These concerns are often dismissed after discussions with the instructor. Although some beginners may only be able to hold a particular pose for a short time, with regular practice this will soon change. Poses can be performed both at home and during class time. Equipment is minimal and usually only requires a yoga mat and stretchable clothing.

Participants can expect a challenging physical workout which can result in stronger muscles, greater blood circulation, stronger bones, and increased endurance. There are many mental benefits of yoga too.

Many forms of yoga induce calm and a sense of well-being to the participants. Yoga can enhance your ability to relax, release stress, and concentrate. Although you don’t need to formally meditate in order to practice yoga, the two practices support one another. These periods of short inner quiet can refresh your body and mind. Results often include increased mental clarity and self awareness.

Participants often report that the mental gains from yoga are what motivate them to continue the practice. A sense of spiritual peace is often instilled in practitioners over time.

The Office of Campus Recreation coordinates a weekly yoga session on Wednesdays at noon in the Dance Studio of Shaver Gymnasium. Admission is free to students, staff and faculty with a valid Colonel Card. The Office of Continuing Education offers a fee based yoga program in the evenings. This course is offered twice a week.

Whatever your fitness goals, anyone wishing to embark upon a fitness program should consider participation in a yoga program. Results will be improved body and mind.
According to the American Lung Association, every year in the U.S. over 392,000 people die from tobacco-caused disease, making it the leading cause of preventable death. Another 50,000 people die from exposure to secondhand smoke.

The American Lung Association’s, Freedom From Smoking Cessation classes are available on campus.

The classes are FREE to students, faculty and staff.

Individuals can sign up for one-on-one cessation classes that provide the opportunity to meet privately with a cessation facilitator for the duration of the class. If you’re thinking, I would sign up if I just had others from my department go through the class with me, then have no fear. If members of your department or student organization are interested in going through the Freedom From Smoking class together, call us and we will work with you to set up a schedule that meets your needs.

All classes on campus will be facilitated by a Nicholls State University faculty or staff member trained through the American Lung Association as a cessation facilitator. The classes consist of 8 sessions with each session lasting approximately 60-75 minutes.

If you have questions or would like to sign up for one of these cessation opportunities please contact University Health Services at ext. 2609.

The Benefits of Quitting

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<tr>
<th>Time After Quitting</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
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<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Your heart rate and blood pressure drops</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 hours</td>
<td>The carbon monoxide level in your body drops to normal</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-13 weeks</td>
<td>Your circulation improves and your lung function increases</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-9 months</td>
<td>Coughing and shortness of breath decrease, cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) regain normal function, increasing the ability to clean the lungs and reduce the risk of infection</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Your risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Your risk of dying from lung cancer is about half that of a smoker’s; the risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix, and pancreas decrease, too</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Your risk of coronary heart disease is the same as that of someone who never smoked</td>
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Guide to quitting Smoking: www.cancer.org

Other cessation resources available include:

- Quit With Us, LA
  www.quitwithusla.org
  1.800.quit.now

- American Lung Association
  Freedom From Smoking On-line
  http://www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking/

- Dr. Al Timothy, Cardiologist
  Cardiovascular Institute of the South
  1320 Martin Luther King Drive
  Thibodaux, La 70301
  985.446-2021 or 1.800.340.7030

- LSU Tobacco Control Initiative-TCI
  Leonard J. Chabert Medical Center
  Houma, Louisiana
  Wendy Detiveaux, Cessation Specialist
  wrhode@lsuhsc.edu
  985-873-2499

- American Cancer Society and Free & Clear
  Quit For Life
  1.866.784.8454
  www.freeclear.com/quit-for-life/

- Ochsner Medical Center: Smoking Cessation
  1514 Jefferson Highway
  New Orleans, LA 70121-2483
  (504) 842-3920

- National Cancer Institute
  Toll-free Tobacco Quit Line
  1.800.784.8669
  www.smokefree.gov

- Nicotine Anonymous
  1.877.879.6422
  www.nicotine-anonymous.org

Fighting for Air