

# LET'S Talk

WINTER 2006

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

## World AIDS Day Stop AIDS: Keep the Promise

DECEMBER 1 WAS WORLD AIDS DAY 2005, an international day of action for HIV/AIDS. The World AIDS Campaign is responsible for this year's observance, and the theme is "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise."

About 95 percent of people with HIV/AIDS live in developing countries. But HIV is still a threat to men, women and children on all continents around the world.

World AIDS Day, which was started in 1988, is not just about raising money, but also about increasing awareness, understanding, education and research, and fighting prejudice. It reminds people that HIV and AIDS have not gone away, and there are still many things to be done.

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## Deck the Holiday Stress

**You've decked the halls, but you'd rather deck Uncle Walt. Calm down, simplify and delegate.**

**YOUR HEART IS RACING**, your head aches, your palms are sweating, and you realize you're holding your breath. Don't panic. You're probably just stressed out.

It happens to the best of us. And there's nothing like the holidays to bring on stress. All that shopping and decorating and cooking and cleaning and ... well, you get the picture.

### How you can fight stress

"If you're not going to do it joyfully, then don't do it," says Cecile Andrews, Ph.D., author of *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life*. She urges people to make their own choices about how to observe the holidays.

When you feel anxious, try some of these tips:

- **DELEGATE TASKS.** Don't try to do everything yourself. Share holiday shopping with friends and family.
- **PRACTICE SAYING NO.** You simply cannot do it all. Ask your family to help with household chores.
- **FIND TIME FOR YOURSELF.** Schedule time to curl up with a good book. Sit by the fire and listen to your favorite music.



- **SHARE YOUR FEELINGS WITH A FRIEND.** Talk about the stress you feel. You'll find out that you're not alone.
- **SOAK IN THE TUB.** Take a walk. Play with your pet.
- **LAUGH A LITTLE.** Laughter has the opposite effect of stress on your body. It can even boost your immune system.
- **EXERCISE REGULARLY.** Try to work in some exercise at least three times a week. Make time for a brisk walk, whether it's around the mall or to a friend's house.  
"This time of year is not just about getting presents," Dr. Andrews says. "It's a time of inner growth, finding new insight and meeting your own values."

what's new

## Late-Breaking Health News

**>>Few U.S. adults maintain a healthful lifestyle,** according to a report in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

Researchers identified a healthful lifestyle as one in which the person is a nonsmoker, maintains a healthful weight, eats five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day and exercises regularly.

Using data from more than 153,000 adults from all 50 states, researchers found only 1 percent of U.S. adults follow such a lifestyle.

Seventy-six percent of Americans don't smoke; 40 percent maintain a healthful weight; 23 percent consume five or more fruits and vegetables a day; and 22 percent exercise regularly (at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five times a week).



**>>Pregnant? Don't choose booze**

If you're expecting a baby or might become pregnant, think before you drink. U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona, M.D., warns women to stay away from alcohol to head off birth defects. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders range from learning and growth problems to central nervous system damage. Doctors don't know what, if any, amount of alcohol is safe for unborn children. "When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby. Therefore, it's in the child's best interest for a pregnant woman to simply not drink alcohol," Dr. Carmona says.

Studies show alcohol could affect a baby in the first weeks after conception, even before a woman knows she is pregnant.

**>>Smoking may increase the risk of developing diabetes,** according to new research at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The finding emerged when researchers examined the relationship between smoking and diabetes among participants in a major national study, the Insulin Resistance Atherosclerosis Study. They compared the incidence of diabetes after five years among smokers and those who had never smoked.

Twenty-five percent of the participants who smoked and did not have diabetes when the study began had developed it by the five-year follow-up, compared with 14 percent of the participants who had never smoked.

Smoking has long been associated with heart disease, as is diabetes, and diabetes and heart disease share many risk factors.

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# Build Your Confidence

**THE ROAD TO FORMING HEALTHFUL NEW HABITS DOES NOT FOLLOW A STRAIGHT LINE.** You stride forward confidently, then fall back a few steps, and sometimes you stay in the same spot for a while before moving ahead. This is a normal part of the process — learning new skills and changing old behaviors take time and effort.

All those stops and starts can take a toll on your confidence.

It isn't always easy to know you're making progress. So it's important to make building your confidence a key part of your plan for change. Here are three ways to boost your self-esteem.

## 1 TAKE SMALL STEPS.

Whatever behavior you are trying to change, learn to set realistic goals for yourself so you don't set yourself up for failure. An easy example for people trying to lose weight is to set a weight-loss goal of one-half to one-and-a-half pounds a week — and no more.

## 2 USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK.

We all talk to ourselves at times, although much of what we say is unconscious and, unfortunately, often negative. By countering those negative thoughts with positive statements, you will help boost your self-esteem and build a more realistic picture of how successful you are.

The next time you slip up — you eat more than you wanted to or smoke a cigarette — instead of calling yourself a failure, tell yourself, “Oops, I slipped up. But one day won't ruin all the weeks I've been doing well. I just need to get back on track.”

## 3 ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SUCCESS.

To be successful, you have to notice that you are successful. So the next time people tell you how proud they are of you for quitting smoking, or give you a compliment on the new, slimmer you, look them in the eye and say, “Thank you!”

It's also important to build in rewards for yourself along the way. When you hit a weight-loss or exercise goal, treat yourself with something nice (and not food-related). You deserve it!

# Hurricane Relief — for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

IF YOUR FAMILY IS AMONG THOSE whose lives have been dramatically changed by the recent hurricanes that have brought great destruction and loss of life to the U.S. Gulf coast, you or a loved one may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Powerful emotions, disturbing thoughts and feelings of grief may seem overwhelming and interfere with your efforts to put your lives back together.

But there are ways you can help yourself and your loved ones recover emotionally. Here are some examples:

- **TAKE THINGS ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME.**
- **STAY IN CONTACT WITH OTHERS.** Friends and family members may offer different views of the situation or express common concerns.
- **SET UP NEW ROUTINES** or return to old ones that bring you comfort. Try to eat meals, exercise and rest on a regular schedule. Make an effort to spend time together as a family.
- **DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS**, such as water and juices. Avoid overuse of alcohol or drugs.



- **GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO FEEL BAD** — you are in a difficult situation. Recurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks are normal. They will generally decrease over time.
- **GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO HEAL.** Be patient with your emotions. Many people will naturally bounce back on their own with time.
- **SEEK SUPPORT** from medical, mental health and/or spiritual resources.

If you have been affected by the hurricanes and are having trouble adjusting or find yourself using drugs or alcohol to help you cope, ask for help.

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## Get Involved

World AIDS Day is about people getting the facts about HIV and AIDS. We're all in this together, since no area or demographic is unaffected. So get involved in the fight — there are many ways to do so. You can help create a more AIDS-aware society in which everyone takes action.

Achieving this ambition requires more support and action than people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS are able to generate on their own. What is needed is the involvement of more people from many different walks of life, whether they are individuals or groups, whether they are part of a trade union or a faith group, or whether they are just people who want a better world in the future.

## The Red Ribbon

The red ribbon is an international symbol of AIDS awareness. People wear it year round to demonstrate care and concern about HIV and AIDS and remind others of the need for their support and commitment.

For more information about AIDS treatment, prevention and research, visit the "AIDSinfo" site at [www.aidsinfo.nih.gov](http://www.aidsinfo.nih.gov).

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