



WELLNESS SEASON SIMPLIFIED

It's Wellness season again and you know what that means! An article reminding you to do some easy and enlightening incentive activities so we can send you a loaded prepaid Visa card.

Reasons to complete:

- early health risk detection
- earn some easy spending money
- gain some helpful knowledge

Reasons not to: (sound of crickets)**IN THIS ISSUE:****WELLNESS SEASON
SIMPLIFIED****DECLUTTER YOUR
SPACE, DECLUTTER
YOUR MIND****VAGUS NERVE
RELAXATION METHODS****YOUR EAP**



2024 MMIA EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
WELLNESS
EARN UP TO \$200

 **50**
**HEALTH
SCREENING**
Get your Health Screening
at an It Starts With Me
event or at a Montana
Health Center
July 1 - September 30

 **50**
**HEALTH
SCREENING
REVIEW CALL**
Schedule online and
complete a review call with a
Take Control health coach
Complete by November 1

 **50**
**EDUCATIONAL
VIDEO AND
QUIZ**
Watch the short
educational video and
take the quiz online
Complete by September 30

 **50**
BONUS ROUND
**80% EMPLOYEE
PARTICIPATION**
If 80% of eligible employees
in your city or town get a
Health Screening, everyone
screened earns another \$50



All activities can be either accessed or scheduled straight from our Wellness page at: mmiaeb.net/wellness/
Get started today!

DECLUTTER YOUR SPACE, DECLUTTER YOUR MIND

Let's just say it – stuff and things can be super cool! New stuff and things are especially exciting. But when all the stuff and things accumulate over time, they can bombard our space and, bit by bit, create anxiety and unrest.

In fact, Diane Roberts Stoler states in a *Psychology Today* article titled “The Many Mental Benefits of Decluttering”, ‘Several studies show a correlation between disorganization, clutter, and mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, and stress. Messy environments can cause frustration, helplessness and feeling overwhelmed.’ (Stoler 2023). The excessive stimuli combined with our already overstimulated life of smart phones and overabundance of streaming media always at our fingertips can leave us stressed and burnt-out.

Conversely, a clean and tidy environment can help boost mood, aid relaxation and can provide a sense of calm. But how can you get to a more blissful environment when, honestly, it does seem like an overwhelming task?

Well, here are some thoughts:

- Chip away. Bit by bit. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Don't expect to have it all done immediately! Rome wasn't built in a day. How many cliché sayings can we cram in one paragraph. Goal is for one more. Enjoy mini milestones along the way and keep at it. It's the journey, not the destination. Nailed it!
- Start with the most important items you use regularly and designate a space to put them every time you are at home. Hang keys on a hook by the door. Place glasses, wallet and phone in a jewelry case or nice bowl in an easily accessible place, for example. This will help improve time management, too, since you won't have to hunt for these things every time you need them.
- Start small with micro goals and keep consistent. Focus initial efforts on the areas you use most frequently. Maybe begin with one drawer in your kitchen that drives you nuts.
- Set a timer for five to 10 minutes and work on the specific area just for that allotted time. A few minutes a day, when you string together several days in a row, can really make a difference and get positive momentum rolling.
- Or, if a timer isn't your jam, jam to, well, your jams. Make a mental agreement with yourself to declutter an area for three songs on your favorite playlist each day.
- Hyper focus your effort on just one place and know that you may not (probably won't) finish decluttering in this one session. Stay on that same area for your next 5-to-10-minute session until you have completed and then find the next target area.
- Conquering oft used counters and surfaces can have a positive domino effect. You'll eat as a family more often if your table isn't buried under clutter, and you'll be prone to cook meals at home more frequently if you have a clear counter to prepare your food.
- Lastly, use social inspiration. Invite friends for dinner to place a little exciting pressure on yourself. It will likely be the incentive you need to tidy your kitchen, dining area and living room, at least!



Reference

Stoler, D. R. (2023, February 15). The Many Mental Benefits of Decluttering. *Psychology Today*. May 23, 2024, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-resilient-brain/202302/the-many-mental-benefits-of-decluttering>

VAGUS NERVE RELAXATION METHODS

What happens in vagus ... can regulate stress and other important bodily functions.

We're talking about the vagus nerves of your parasympathetic nervous system, of course.



So, what the heck are vagus nerves?

According to the Cleveland Clinic, they are the longest cranial nerves running from your brain to your large intestine taking a circuitous route down the sides of your body. They are responsible for certain sensory activities and motor information for movement within the body and part of a circuit that links the neck, heart, lungs and abdomen to the brain.

Why should you care about them?

The vagus nerves play important roles in digestion, blood pressure, immune system, mood, and breathing.

In contrast to the 'fight or flight' response, the vagus nerves control the 'rest and digest' functions. Simply stated, they enhance your ability to respond to stress.



How can I stimulate the vagus nerve to help reduce stress and anxiety?



Deep breathing. Meditation, yoga, or maybe box breathing – breathe in for count of four, hold breath for count of four, breathe out for count of four, hold breath out for, wait for it ... you guessed it: a count of four and then repeat for a few minutes.



Humming, gargling, or singing. Engaging the vocal cords can help stimulate the vagus nerves where they run up your neck. Chords with your cords, you could say.



Cold exposure. Take a cold shower/plunge, submerge your face into bowl of ice water, or place an ice pack on your neck. Purposeful cold exposure can seem daunting, but it can help trigger a helpful relaxation response.



Physical exercise. Interval and endurance training are particularly helpful, but anything enjoyable is the best! Dancing to fun music can be a great way to relieve stress.



Massage. Did you need an excuse to schedule a massage therapy appointment? Here you go. You're welcome.



Laugh!! Catch up and laugh with a good friend. Or if you're more in the mood to be alone, check out these MMIA Employee Benefits (EB) team comedy picks: *Seinfeld*, *Brooklyn 99*, *Ted Lasso* or most anything from the Will Ferrell catalog.

Reference

professional, C. C. medical. (2022, March 16). Vagus nerve stimulation (VNS): What it is, uses & side effects. Cleveland Clinic. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/17598-vagus-nerve-stimulation>



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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sapphire Resource Connection, your trusted EAP provider, offers a network of licensed counselors trained in various areas such as stress management, work-life balance, family issues, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, financial and legal consults, and medical concerns. When contacting a counselor on the Sapphire counselor list located at www.sr-connection.com, let them know you have EAP benefits with Sapphire through MMIA when scheduling your appointment. These services are provided to MMIA medical plan members and their families at no cost.

UP TO 6

FACE-TO-FACE, VIDEO OR TELEPHONIC
COUNSELING SESSIONS

24 HOUR

HELPLINE

www.sr-connection.com

406-240-9118

or the 24-hour, toll-free help line:

866-767-9511