



A Weekly Bulletin for "Choose a PATH to Wellness"

**Week 1  
Purpose**

# Vibrant

TEXAS ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES  
HEALTH AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS POOL



Together. Better. Stronger.

## An Olympic Challenge

### Mission One

## PURPOSE & Meaningful Work

*"Pleasure in the job puts  
perfection in the work."*

— Aristotle

Being able to make great decisions about your health and your future is a hard skill to access when you are constantly under the duress of every day problems - large and small.

After decades of research on stress and the body, clinical professionals have come to a glaring conclusion: stress is what you make it. Those who perceive their worlds as unmanageable will experience a sense of high stress over the smallest of things. Those who are resilient, won't bat an eyelash at the most difficult of scenarios. It's not rocket science but stories of perseverance continue to mesmerize our minds and captivate our hearts. As a result, the ante for heroism has become excessively high. The honest truth is that we are heroes the minute we make the decision to get out of bed and go to work each day. Little acts of heroism happen all around us every second, and it is our supreme obligation to stop and honor each of our own and those by the ones we love, as often as possible.

The first step toward clearing the view to those heroic acts is to get a handle on the every day stressors of work. Here are some tips for managing a truly stressful workload:

**Start with what matters most.** If you really love your job, put boundaries on what you love most and begin to hone this part of your work. It's okay to let go of pet projects especially if they get in the way of really powerful work. Ask your boss/supervisor for help prioritizing and laying down boundaries. That way, you'll have back up when you say "no" to someone.

**Work on changing your job.** If don't love your job, start on a new path today, this very moment. Begin a plan to move on. Consider talking with a career coach or reading up on career changes.

**Build a decision making model or formula.** Try thinking about a few hypotheticals and then walk yourself through your process of how you would solve a problem. If you like that process, draw a visual or a spreadsheet or the like to help you automatically go to that process when the heat is on. If you think your process is rough around the edges, ask a friend, or a life coach, boss or even a mental health professional for help.

**Sleep on it.** Tomorrow will always be there and problems can often be solved with a good night's rest, as long as you allow yourself the right to truly relax and recharge.

**Take a stretch or activity break.** Literally walk away from the situation. Get some oxygen to your brain and new perspective on the world. When you come back, your creative juices will flow.

**Stop the clutter.** Organize your workspace to help ease any sense of losing control. You've got enough going on, don't add the guilt of a mess.

**Share your stress with someone you trust.** Get it out! Go ahead, blow off steam but be sure to chose a trustworthy friend who will support and honor your need to

vent. Then, be willing to listen to some ideas or strategies, and be willing to do the same for that person when he/she may need an ear.

**Have a "plan B" for really stressful times.** Plan for when stressful times take you by surprise and when you know certain times of year will be harder than others. Who will help, what can be put aside for the time-being, what creative strategies will you use? Just *knowing* you have one or more co-workers who are willing to assist you in times of stress may reduce your stress level. Just remember to reciprocate and help them when they are in need.

**Find humor in the situation.** When you (or the people around you) start taking things too seriously, find a way to break through with laughter.

**Be realistic with expectations.** We can only fit so much work into one day. Having unrealistic expectations for what you can accomplish sets you up for failure, and increased stress.

**Perfection is an illusion.** Decide when it's right to let go. Sometimes B+ work is okay if it saves you time and energy to be A+ with the next task, or at home with your family.

**Bottom line:** Work on a positive attitude. Reward yourself for little accomplishments (even if no one else does) and work hard at seeing the bright side of every situation.





## Training Tips

### About the Olympics

#### Turn of the Century

**1896** – Athens. The idea was that Greece would always hold the modern games but war with Turkey forced the games to Paris. They would not return to Athens until 2004.

**1900** – Paris. Women were invited to participate in a few sports: Croquet, Tennis, Golf. Only 22 women competed.

The Paris games were held during the World's Fair; a bad idea as the fair was a big distraction for spectators.

**1904** – St. Louis. These games were also held during a World's Fair and too far away from Europe for an athlete to travel in those days.

**1908** – London. The first games to have *Opening Ceremonies*. These games also unveiled the *Olympic Creed* - Pierre Coubertin's famous line, "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part."

**1912** – Stockholm. A 199 mile cycling race took place. It is still the longest race event ever held in Olympic history.

The first time real gold medals are given to champions.

Obscure sports from these years included Tug-of-War, Motor Boating, Rope Climbing, an Underwater Obstacle, and a Dumbbell Contest.

*World War I halted the games until 1920.*



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### This Week's Stretch & Strengthen Exercise:

#### Lunge Twists



#### Instructions:

- ♦ Step forward with your left leg.
- ♦ Bending at the left knee, dip down to where your right knee almost touches the floor.
- ♦ As you dip, twist your trunk and shoulders toward your left knee.
- ♦ To come up and out of the Lunge Twist, press your left heel into the floor, squeeze your left thigh muscles and rear end, and stand up straight over your left foot, dragging your right foot up to (even with) your left foot.
- ♦ Repeat the sequence with the right leg and continue to alternate legs until you've done 10 on each side.
- ♦ As you get stronger, hold a weighted object such as a dumbbell or a medicine ball.
- ♦ Add more lunges or more sets as you get stronger.

#### Important Cautions:

- ♦ Don't ever let your bent knee go past (over) your toe. Always strive to keep your knee in line with your ankle.
- ♦ Don't step out too far or your hip flexors (muscles that go across the front of the hip joint) will over stretch and begin to ache.



### Training Table Recipe

#### Warm Cabbage & Apples

- 1 (3 lb) red cabbage
- 2 TB vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 med. apples (tart), peeled, cored, cut in wedges
- 5 cups boiling water
- 2/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 TB sugar

Wash and shred cabbage (cut out the core and slice the quarters crosswise into 1/8" wide strips). In a 4 to 5-quart saucepan, heat oil over moderate heat. Add onions and cook, stirring frequently until they are lightly browned. Thoroughly stir in cabbage. Add apples and pour in the boiling water. Bring back to a boil over high heat, stirring occasionally, then reduce to low. Stir in red wine vinegar, salt and sugar. Cover and simmer for 1 1/2 to 2 hours (until the cabbage is tender). Check occasionally to make sure the cabbage is moist and tender. If it seems dry, add a tablespoon of boiling water. When the cabbage is done, there should be almost no liquid left in the casserole. Serves 6.

## Safety Corner

### Electrical System Safety Tips:

- ♦ Make sure smoke alarms are installed on every floor outside sleeping areas and in every bedroom, and are in good working order.
- ♦ Look for telltale signs of electrical problems such as dimming of lights, frequent circuit breaker trips or blown fuses. Talk to an electrician about options/repairs.
- ♦ Limit the use of extension cords, and don't overload outlets.
- ♦ Use light bulbs that are the proper wattage for the fixture - higher wattage bulbs can destroy the wires in and around the fixture.