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Wellness Works

STAY HEALTHY AND WELL WITH INFORMATION FROM CIS BENEFITS!

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SPRING CLEAN YOUR WAY TO HEALTH AND HAPPINESS!

When you think about spring cleaning, you may think about your home's dusty blinds or that messy hall closet. And just like our homes can get cluttered and dusty, our minds can too. Balancing work with family, or other commitments, is enough to create cobwebs in your head — dust that deserves some deep cleaning.

Deep clean your mind

The first thing to be aware of is how negative words (and people) can influence your life. Reducing how often you respond negatively to a question or suggestion will help you feel empowered instead of overwhelmed about the decisions you're making. This may feel impossible at first, but being aware of how you respond to others — and your own inner dialogue — will go a long way in changing your thought patterns.

The secret to calmness

Experts agree that the key to a calmer existence is finding bite-sized, everyday solutions for stressors and releasing what we can, be it physical or psychological clutter.

"When you start to let go, your life lightens up because you have less to think about and less to maintain," says Geralin Thomas, a professional organizer in Cary, N.C. "You finally feel in control."

And the payoffs don't end there — you can sharpen your focus and even lose weight!

Is the gym the answer?

The gym is great, but it may not be your answer. Sometimes you just can't get there to exercise your stress away. So, when your gym isn't an option, doing housework instead can keep your heart healthy, while significantly reducing cardiovascular disease. Doing chores can even increase your lifespan.

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Choosing an orderly life

Now back to that dusty, cluttered house! Beyond the physical benefits of living in an orderly environment, there are positive psychological aspects.

A study of women showed the importance of creating a home that's restful and restorative. A disorderly home can lead to higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, because living in a cluttered space is associated with feelings of depression and fatigue.

Another perk of living in an organized home is that it may motivate you to choose healthier snacks.

But even if you're not quite ready to purge your pantry and clear your closets, you may want to at least start making your bed every day. The simple task of making your bed gives you a feeling of accomplishment first thing in the morning, and can make the rest of your day more productive. The simple task can also help you feel calm and less stressed at bedtime — and it may even help you sleep better, which also lead to better health.

And once you start your neatness habits, chances are your desire for orderliness will spill over into other areas of your life.

So, your homework assignment is to dust out those mental cobwebs and start your spring cleaning!

REFERENCES:

- **The effect of physical activity on mortality and cardiovascular disease in 130 000 people from 17 high-income, middle-income, and low-income countries: the PURE study**
- **No place like home: home tours correlate with daily patterns of mood and cortisol.**
- **Physical Order Produces Healthy Choices, Generosity, and Conventionality, Whereas Disorder Produces Creativity**

IT'S GOOD TO LET GO

Michelle M. Hill, LCPC says, "When we clean out the old things in our closets or basements, we tend to ask ourselves questions like, 'Do I need this? Do I want that? Did I even realize I was still holding on to this?'"

"Feelings of fear, guilt, regret, and shame often play the same role. We hold on to things we don't need and don't really want but can't seem to let go of. Part of this is because we have a fear of not being prepared for the future and we feel that by holding on to the past, it will prevent us from getting hurt in the future. While in a certain sense, that may be true, holding onto the past also prevents us from reaping the rewards of new positive experiences as well.

"It's good to remember that we can let go of past hurts and still remember the lessons we learned from them."

