

WELCOA* | APRIL 2022

WELL BALANCED^o

Be Well
AT WORK

STRESS STRATEGIES

TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP
YOU THROUGH YOUR DAY

LOL!

HOW TO INJECT A
LITTLE MORE HUMOR
IN YOUR LIFE

REPAIR:

THE BEST WAYS TO KEEP
YOUR BODY HEALTHY
AND INJURY-FREE



ISRAELI *Couscous* SALAD

Couscous is sometimes confused for a grain, but it's actually pasta. Unlike its tiny couscous brethren, the Israeli style is bigger and pearl-shaped. (That's why it's also known as pearl couscous.)

This vegetable-packed Mediterranean salad is full of crunch and flavor. Serve it as a side dish, bring it along to a picnic, or enjoy it by the bowlful at lunch.

1 ¼ cups water

Pinch of salt

1 cup Israeli couscous (also known as pearl couscous)

½ medium cucumber, sliced and quartered

½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved

1 green onion, thinly sliced

½ cup marinated artichoke hearts, chopped

¼ cup Castelvetrano olives, sliced

1 small garlic clove, minced

1 handful of fresh basil, roughly chopped (about ¼ cup)

1 ½ teaspoons balsamic vinegar

1 ½ teaspoons extra virgin olive oil

Pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS:

In a pot, bring water to a boil with a pinch of salt. Add Israeli couscous, cover, and lower heat to a simmer for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until cooked al dente. Drain with a fine mesh sieve and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine cooked and drained Israeli couscous, cucumber, cherry tomatoes, green onion, marinated artichoke hearts, Castelvetrano olives, garlic, basil, balsamic vinegar, and extra virgin olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serve right away, or cover and refrigerate to enjoy cold.

SERVINGS: 4

NUTRITION INFO:

Calories 225, Fat 5g, Carbs 37g, Protein 6g, Sodium 238mg



From the Kitchen of **CADRY NELSON** // Cadry is the writer, photographer, and recipe creator at Cadry's Kitchen, a vegan food & lifestyle blog. She shares plant-based comfort food classics that are ready in about 30 minutes. Cadry has been featured on Today, NBC News, Mashable, Reader's Digest, Shape, and Huffington Post. For more, visit cadryskitchen.com.

Spice UP YOUR Life

AND YOUR DINNER

Herbs and spices make meals more delicious and add to their signature flavors.

After all, what is a taco platter without cumin, paprika, or chili powder? Who wants curry without turmeric, coriander, or ginger? Where would pasta night be without oregano, basil, or garlic?

But herbs and spices don't just add flavor to recipes. Many of them are also rich in antioxidants and phytochemicals that help fight inflammation and protect against cell damage.

HERBS AND SPICES TO ADD TO YOUR REPERTOIRE:

Cinnamon

Cinnamon has been credited with reducing inflammation, as well as balancing blood sugar, and lowering cholesterol & triglycerides.

Add a dash of cinnamon to your morning oatmeal or sprinkle it on toast. When you make coffee, try adding a couple of dashes to the coffee grounds or sprinkle some on top of a latte. It adds subtle but delicious undertones.

Turmeric

Bright yellow turmeric is well known for its anti-inflammatory properties. It contains curcumin, a powerful antioxidant that fights oxidative damage, which can be a precursor to early aging and disease.

In studies, turmeric has been shown to relieve arthritis, reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, as well as improve brain function and fight Alzheimer's.

Add turmeric to curries, soups, and stews. You can also include a pinch of turmeric in your post-workout smoothie or afternoon cup of green tea.

Rosemary

Fragrant rosemary is a good source of vitamins A, B-6, and C, as well as iron and calcium.

It can be enjoyed fresh or used in dried form. It's also rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that have been shown to prevent cell damage, improve blood circulation, and boost the immune system.

Add rosemary to your roasted potatoes. It's also terrific in a pot pie, stews, and soups.

Chili Powder

Chili peppers are a vegetable. But when dried and ground, they become a robust seasoning that will give your dinner a kick. In the process, they may also boost your metabolism, thanks to capsaicin. That's the chemical compound in peppers that gives them their heat.

Research from the American Heart Association has shown that people who regularly consume chili powder could reduce their risk of dying from heart disease by 26%. Chili powder has also been shown to help alleviate muscle and joint inflammation by way of its anti-inflammatory properties.

Use it to season beans, chili, or fajitas.

Cumin

If I could only have one spice in my cabinet, it would be cumin. It is an essential part of so many cuisines - from tacos and hummus to curries.

Cumin has anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties, as well as antioxidants that ward off free radicals. It has been shown to help control blood sugar and may help lower cholesterol.



About CADRY NELSON // Cadry is the writer, photographer, and recipe creator at Cadry's Kitchen, a vegan food & lifestyle blog. She shares plant based comfort food classics that are ready in about 30 minutes. Cadry has been featured on Today, NBC News, Mashable, Reader's Digest, Shape, and Huffington Post. For more, visit cadryskitchen.com.



STRESS LESS AT WORK

No matter what line of work you're in, it's likely that you've experienced stress on the job. Things like looming deadlines, unrealistic workloads, and angry co-workers and/or customers are just a few things that can increase your stress levels. Constant, unwavering stress at work is not healthy (see the "Ask the Expert" sidebar to learn more about burnout and what you can do about it). However, it's unlikely that you'll be able to eliminate all workplace stress. A more realistic approach may lie in using effective coping strategies to help reduce and manage stress on the job.

It's important to note that there's no "one-size-fits-all" strategy when it comes to stress-reduction tactics. What may work for some, may not work for others. So, review the list below with an open mind. If even one tip helps you feel better and less stressed, it's a success!

Start every workday with self-care. You may be setting yourself up for a stressful day at

work if your morning is filled with the chaos of getting kids out the door for school, rushing to commute, or cramming in chores before flying out the door. Make an effort to take time for yourself every day before your work begins. Maybe this means waking up a little earlier to enjoy your coffee and eat a healthy breakfast. Or maybe it's walk outside to get some fresh air and clear your mind. Taking intentional time for yourself will help you manage work stress more easily.

Make your workspace a hub of health, happiness, and joy. A lot of stress can come from the environments that surround us. Think about every aspect of your workspace and make adjustments that lend way to a more comfortable, happy space. Adding family pictures, plants, and pieces of art can lift your spirits and provide a more "Zen-like" space. Also, make sure your workspace is physically optimized with the right ergonomic equipment you need to perform your job and prevent any physical stress on your body. This could

include an ergonomic desk chair, adjustable monitors, and a comfortable keyboard.

Stop multi-tasking. Multi-tasking sounds great in theory—you can do a few things at once and maximize your time. Sounds great, right? Not exactly. What most people find with multi-tasking is that they're usually doing a poor job doing two or three things at once instead of doing well on just one task. Focus on creating a daily list of top priorities and completing one thing at a time. You'll likely find you're more efficient and produce higher quality work this way.

Move. Movement is a very effective weapon to combat work stress. Simply put, prolonged sitting is not healthy for our bodies, and it can make you feel stressed and lethargic. Even getting up to stretch and move for 30 to 60 seconds helps circulate blood and oxygen throughout your body. Moving around can also improve your mood because it sparks the production of endorphins, the brain's

feel-good neurotransmitters. Aim to get up and move every 30 to 60 minutes and if you can work in walks during your breaks or in meetings, even better.

Make sure you've been given clear expectations and ask your boss for them if you haven't. Not knowing exactly what is expected of you or frequent changes to expectations can cause a lot of stress. If you find yourself unsure of what you should be doing or not knowing if it's enough, it may help to have a talk with your manager. Ask to go over expectations and discuss strategies for meeting them.

Connect with a co-worker. Having a trusted colleague to lean on is extremely helpful in stressful situations. Make a point to build rapport and trust with your co-workers. Ask them how their day is going, if they have fun plans for the weekend, invite them to join you for lunch or a virtual coffee chat (if you work remotely), etc. When you know and trust your co-workers it can pave the way to a healthier and more supportive work environment.

Ask the Expert...

What's the difference between workplace stress and burnout?

Everyone experiences occasional stress at work. However, if you're encountering stressful experiences at work every day, it will lead to chronic stress. Chronic work stress can lead to a psychological syndrome known as burnout. Warning signs of burnout include overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism, and a sense of inefficacy. If you're experiencing any of these symptoms immediately talk to your manager and/or a healthcare professional.

WELL BALANCED™ has an impeccable reputation for providing trustworthy information to improve your well-being and create healthier work cultures. Our network of physicians, dietitians, wellness professionals, and more are here to answer your crucial health questions.

Have a question? Ask our experts by going to [welcoa.org/expert](https://www.welcoa.org/expert). If your question is selected we will contact you directly with your answer and it will be featured in an upcoming issue.

All questions are handled in confidence and will not, without prior consent, be disclosed or used by WELL BALANCED™ or its contributors.



Laugh THERAPY



How small giggles can lead to big health gains

You're likely familiar with the pillars of maintaining optimal health: good nutrition, exercise, proper sleep. But did you know that laughter is another key enabler to your overall well-being?! No joke, April is National Humor Month, so it's a great time to spotlight the wonderful health benefits a little laughter can bring to your life.

SERIOUS BENEFITS

Laughter triggers physical reactions in your body. A true "belly laugh" increases your intake of oxygen, which stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain. Being able to let go and laugh, just feels good. Here's what else laughter can do to enhance your health and well-being:

- » **Eases tension and stress.** Stress causes your muscles to tense up. When you laugh, your muscles relax and that tension eases. In fact, experts say a good laugh can relieve your muscles of extra stress for up to 45 minutes.
- » **Aids heart health.** Laughter can improve the function of blood vessels and increase blood flow, which is critical to heart health. Laughing has also been shown to decrease arterial wall stiffness—a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.
- » **Boosts your immune response.** Some studies have shown that humor and laughter may raise the level of infection-fighting antibodies in the body and boost the levels of T cells (cells that are part of the immune system).
- » **Enhances mood and self-esteem.** It's hard, maybe even impossible, to laugh and be angry at the same time. Laughing helps lighten your mood. When you're able to laugh and look at the humorous side of things you can view the world and yourself in a more upbeat, positive way.
- » **Helps you live longer.** A large Norwegian study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* found that those with a strong sense of humor lived longer than their not-so-humorous counterparts, even in spite of having chronic illnesses like cardiovascular disease.

TAP INTO YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR

Not feeling your funny bone lately? No worries. Finding and enjoying humor can be easily learned:

Schedule it. Set aside time every day for humor. This could mean penciling in 15-20 minutes on your calendar to watch silly clips on the web, watch a comedy special, or listen to a funny podcast.

Fake it. According to a study published in *Experimental Psychology*, researchers found that smiling, even a fake smile, can have a positive impact on mood. So, smile and laugh even if it's a little forced. You'll feel better.

Seek it. Spend time with fun, lighthearted people. You'll find their playful point of view and laughter to be contagious.

Ask about it. Ask people about their funniest work or school story. Feel free to share your anecdotes too!

EXERCISE RECOVERY

for the Win!

Get Stronger and Healthier with Rest and Recovery

When you exert yourself (think brisk walking, resistance training, running, hiking, etc.) you're placing some stress on your body in the form of microscopic muscle tears. When you stress your body like this, you trigger your body's immune system to repair that damage. This repair process allows your body's tissues, muscles, bones, heart, and lungs to recover and become slightly stronger than they were before. This cycle also leads to muscle growth, fat loss, improved insulin sensitivity, reduced inflammation, and better overall health. But here's the deal: you must give your body time to properly recover before you start stressing it out again.

Resting and recovering after exercise allows your body to re-energize and heal so you can continue to increase your health and fitness. There are several ways to recover. Here are some of the safest and most effective strategies:

- » **Active recovery:** With active recovery, you're still staying physically active the day after a more intense workout, but that activity is very low intensity. Active recovery encompasses exercise that promotes blood flow, tissue repair, and lactic acid clearing without further stressing the body. A slow jog, walking, bicycling, or gentle yoga are some active recovery options. Think of active recovery as anything you can do without getting winded or fatiguing your muscles.
- » **Cross-training:** Cross-training means changing up your workouts, so you still work some muscles, but give some other muscles rest. For example, if you run a few miles one day, you could perform resistance training on your upper body the next day. Cross-training allows certain muscle groups to repair while still challenging other muscle groups.
- » **Soft tissue therapy:** Soft tissue therapy includes massage and foam rolling and is usually performed immediately before or after exercise. Some studies have shown

that soft tissue therapy can help decrease feelings of delayed onset muscle soreness while speeding muscle recovery.

- » **Complete recovery:** Passive recovery means complete rest. If you're feeling too tired and sore for cross-training or active recovery, complete recovery is probably a good idea.

Also, keep in mind that healthy lifestyle habits are key to repairing muscles and promoting recovery. Staying hydrated is key to helping muscles repair and rebuild. Dehydrated muscles will take longer to recover. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean protein gives your body the nutrients it needs to remain physically active day after day. And don't forget about sleep! During sleep, the body produces the majority of hormones that aid in daily muscle repair and recovery. Aim for 7-9 hours a night to give your muscles time to recover from exercise.

NEED ANOTHER REASON TO REST AND RECOVER?

Research suggests that neglecting rest and recovery can contribute to poor immune function, neurological changes, hormonal disturbances, and depression.



HOW DO I BECOME MORE *Culturally Aware?*



We live in a beautifully diverse world. Indeed, every day you're likely to see people of various ages, ethnicities, and cultures. You may notice people speaking different languages, dressing in different kinds of clothing, eating different kinds of food. It's important that we not only see and observe cultural differences, but that we embrace them. Embracing diversity and having cultural awareness paves the way for a better appreciation of others' values, customs, and beliefs. Moreover, being culturally aware enables better communication and can help build stronger relationships because you understand what may be considered inappropriate or offensive to others.

How does one become more culturally aware? It's easier than you may think. Here are some pointers and tips to help you get started:

Understand that culture is more than just someone's race and ethnicity. There's much more to someone's culture than the color of their skin or their ethnic background.

Culture encompasses the social behavior and norms found in our societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups.

Do some research. This may be especially helpful if you work, have friends, neighbors, etc. of different cultures. Reading up on the history and norms of these cultures will give you better understanding, and it may help address misunderstandings or unconscious biases you may have held.

Attend community events and celebrations. You can learn about different cultures and have a lot of fun while doing it! Many communities celebrate traditions or specific dates that are important to their culture and heritage. From Cinco de Mayo to Pride parades to the Hindu celebration of the arrival of spring—there are cultural celebrations all the time, around every corner.

Acknowledge differences and ask about them. If you think you're being kind by ignoring someone's culture, think again. People feel

respected and appreciated when others take a genuine interest in who they are. Ask open-ended questions about their culture or share your personal story or experience to initiate conversation.

Keep in mind that cultural awareness is a lifelong journey. If you gain awareness in one culture it doesn't mean you have competence in another. Keep finding ways to expand your learning and awareness!

RING IN SPRING!

Celebrate the arrival of spring with the "Holi Festival of Color". This is a Hindu celebration of the triumph of good over evil and the arrival of spring. With the Holi tradition, participants throw and catch a rainbow of powdered colors, essentially painting themselves and becoming living, breathing works of art! If you live in Boston, Houston, Chicago, or other major cities in the U.S., there may be a Holi Fest near you.