



Junior Officer Advisory Group

Readiness & Deployment Committee

Behavioral Health Team

Practicing Wellness

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Getting the Weight Off and Managing your Stress Level

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February has arrived, and we continue to experience stressors from the new normal and may be tackling additional weight from the holiday season. This holiday season, as did most of 2020, brought unusual times due to social distancing guidelines. The absence of seeing loved ones may have also increased stress levels. We are a nation that likes to hug and show affection towards those we care about. Having this tradition taken from us can add to stress levels that are already high. Also, because some of our workout routines were interrupted in 2020, we may not have fully adapted to the new normal. This, of course, combined with the foods we ate during the holiday season may have led to weight gain which presents as challenging to manage. I want to remind you, that as USPHS officers, we must be resilient and flexible.

Elizabeth Scott, a Wellness Coach, wrote in her article *Effective Stress Relievers for Your Life*, “stress levels can become chronic and take a toll on your well-being, while you can’t always control your circumstances, one can control how you respond to them.” Forming healthy eating and stress-relieving habits is a good way to lower stress and lose weight. Dr. Maltz (1960) wrote in his book *Psycho-Cybernetics*, that it takes a minimum of 21 days to form a habit.

Some stress relieving habits recommended by Scott (Health Coach) include:

** **Eat a Balanced Diet** - while a poor diet can provide a temporary sense of stress relief, it can add to your long-term stress. Instead of eating a diet high in added sugar and fats, try eating a healthier diet of eggs, avocado, and walnuts to support energy balance and help combat stress over the long term.

** Use **Guided Imagery** - a vacation in your mind. It can be done by listening to a recording such as waves splashing upon the shore of a beach or using your imagination to create a calm and stress-free environment.

** Go for a **Walk** - a great stress reliever to incorporate into your routine. It also is considered exercise, which helps to burn off the unwanted weight from unhealthy habits.

Stress relievers can calm your mind and body in times of stress. I do believe that as USPHS Officers, we are resilient and resourceful. We cannot allow stress to overcome us and cause us to gain weight and fail weight standards. Take action now! Consider completing a 21 day challenge to establish and/or enhance your stress management and healthy eating habits.

To find out more information on coping with stress or healthier eating please visit:

[Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19 | CDC](#)

[What is MyPlate? | MyPlate](#)

References: Maxwell, M. (1960). *Psycho-Cybernetics*, Prentice-Hall, NJ.

Scott MS, E. (2020). *Effective Stress Relievers for Your Life*, Verywell Mind. Retrieved from <http://www.verywellmind.com/tips-to-reduce-stress-3145195>