

# Safety Newsletter

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

Winter 2023

## Tips for Managing Stress



These relaxation tips will help to effectively manage your daily stress.

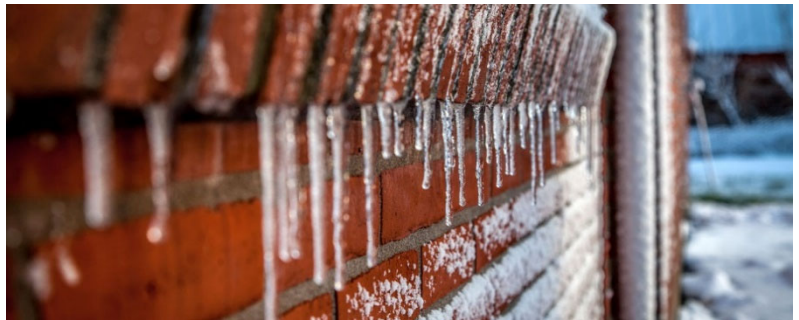
### 1. Don't forget to Smile

Have you ever heard of the saying, "Fake it until you make it." A study published in the journal [Psychological Science](#), suggests that smiling during periods of stress may help reduce the body's stress response, regardless of whether the person actually feels happy or not. Next time you're feeling stressed, don't forget to smile. It helps release endorphins and reduce the stress related hormone, cortisol. After all, there's always a reason to smile, you just have to find it.

### 2. Sweat it Out

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), exercising is an effective tool to help reduce or eliminate stress. The ADAA states that, "Studies show that it is very effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and at enhancing overall cognitive function. This can be especially helpful when stress has depleted your energy or ability to concentrate." Stop stressing and start sweating with a little daily exercise!

## Tips To Help Prepare Your Schools For Winter



Winter storms can last a few hours or several days, causing disruptions in utility services such as heat, power, and communication services and putting people and facilities at great risk. It can be warm one day, and bitter cold the next. And rapid drops in temperature, even when it doesn't get below freezing, can wreak havoc on school facilities.

These tips can help you get prepared to protect your pipes, property, and people.

### 1. Inspect the HVAC system

Make sure your schools' HVAC systems are in working order to keep your students and staff warm during the next few months. The colder weather and decrease in daylight hours mean your HVAC systems are working longer hours. Spending a little time and money now to inspect, clean, and repair could help avoid costly emergencies.

Make sure you keep indoor air quality in mind during the winter months. Properly ventilated spaces can go a long way in preventing infectious diseases like the flu and COVID-19.

### 2. Winterize pipes and major equipment, including boilers and hot water heaters

Preparing your pipes can save you money and headaches. When you leave for winter break, set your facilities' thermostats to at least 50 degrees if possible, and keep the boilers running. Pipes that are exposed to the elements can be wrapped with foam or other kinds of insulation.

To avoid damage to the system and ensure proper operation, your boilers should not be shut down over winter break



## Tips for Managing Stress (continued)

### 3. Find Happiness in a Hobby

Take a break with purpose, and find happiness in a hobby. A hobby can provide a much needed distraction from a busy, stress-filled life. Hobbies are great tools for stress management, because they help you find joy and success in an activity. In turn, this will boost your self-esteem and personal well-being. If you're looking for a hobby to help you take a time out and reduce stress [check out this awesome list from simplemost.com](#).

### 4. Breathe Deeply

Take a deep breath, and let your stress go! When you are stressed you will exhibit physical symptoms such as high blood pressure, increased heart rate, and rapid breathing. When you take a deep breath, the brain sends a message to the body letting it know it's time to calm down, collect oneself, and relax. This act of breathing deeply will cause the physical symptoms for stress to decrease. [Check out this 5 minute guided breathing exercise](#) to get you started on your stress relieving journey.

### 5. Put it on Paper

In a world dominated by social media, it's easy to post a status about a stressful event that may have happened to you. Next time you feel tempted to tell the world, try putting it on paper instead. Keeping a stress journal can help you gain a better understanding of some of the stressors in your life, allow you to analyze them and improve the way you manage stress in your life. So, how do you start a stress journal? [Learn more here!](#)

## Tips to Help Prepare Your Schools for Winter (continued)

### 3 Conduct roof inspections

Make sure your roof is ready for the winter. Check roofs, eaves and awnings for accumulating snow load and ice buildup. Icicles, ice dams, and snow sliding from rooftops can all be dangerous for students, staff, and visitors — and they can also indicate energy loss in your building.

### 4 Test electrical equipment, sprinkler systems, and smoke detectors

This is a good time to double-check any back up power systems your district has and test your knowledge of operating the fire suppression system. If your fire sprinkler systems use anti-freeze to protect pipes from freezing, be aware that the anti-freeze solution deteriorates over time and needs to be checked to ensure continual protection.

Some fire alarms and security systems can remotely monitor building conditions and even detect water leaks. If these features are available in your district, use them.

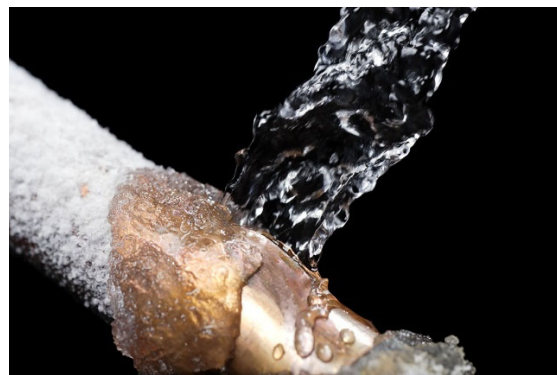
### 5 Practice powering down and cutting off water to school buildings

In serious situations, you might need to shut off all the water to your school to avoid further damage from a leak. Know where your water shut-off valves are located to act quickly.

If you discover a leak, move quickly to control damage:

- Address leak at its source
- Remove any standing water
- Dry out water-soaked items like carpet

Burst pipes can cause damage to classrooms and equipment, and it can even mean shutting down the school. Unmitigated water damage can lead to mold growth, structural damage, and health issues for students and staff.



***The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury & Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).***



## Tips for Winter Playground Maintenance

Standards for safe play at playgrounds are crucial all year long, yet wintertime brings unique circumstances. There are several ways you can maintain your playground equipment's quality throughout the year and promote students' safety.

### 1. Inspect Equipment for Wear

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends regularly inspecting playgrounds for safety, even in warmer months. Normal wear and tear can lead to damaged parts that provide less protection than they once did. Eliminate risk as much as possible by fixing protruding hardware, sharp edges and removing tripping hazards. Also take note of parts that need replacing.

### 2. Remove Playground Components

Canopies, swings and other shade structures can build up with the snow and ice that collect during a cold snap. When the weight becomes too heavy, a canopy could weaken or break, sending the snow to the ground below. Snow buildup poses a risk for kids playing under the awning and shortens the life span of your equipment. To prevent this risk, disassemble canopy parts and swings and store them until after winter.

### 3. Clear Away Snow

Before allowing students out to play, always be sure to clear snow from slides, stairways, platforms, handles and all other playground elements. Clearing snow off these surfaces can help give students better visibility, prevent falls and keep metal surfaces from getting too slippery. Check on surfaces and under snowdrifts for slick patches that students may not notice. Take note of parts that need replacing.



## Ergonomic Hand Exercises

### Wrist Tilt Exercise

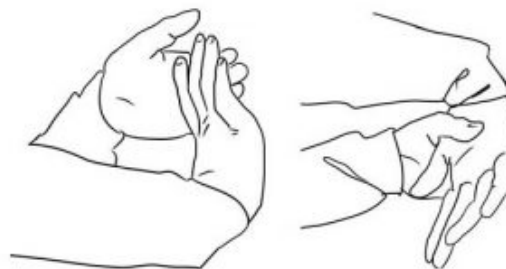
The wrist tilt is perfect to gain feeling and momentum back into the wrist joint, especially after long bouts of typing on the keyboard:

1. Begin with arm fully extended and palm facing downwards
2. Gently tilt wrist to the right
3. Hold for three to five seconds
4. Move wrist to the left and hold for another three to five seconds



### Wrist Flexion Exercise

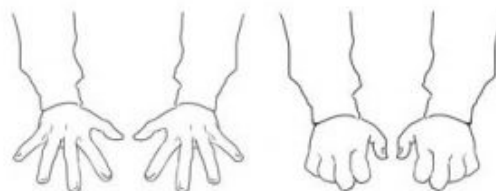
For people who have a shorter range of natural motion in their wrists, the wrist flexion exercise can help to increase flexibility and rejuvenate joints.



1. Hold arm outward with palm facing down
2. Catch the fingers of the extended hand with your opposite hand
3. Gently pull your fingers upwards until you feel a stretch on the underside of your wrist
4. Hold for 5 seconds, then release
5. Gently pull your fingers downwards until you feel a stretch on the front of your wrist
6. Hold for 5 seconds, then repeat on the other hand

### Extended Finger Stretch

The extended finger stretch is a great method for stretching through the entire hand, which helps to alleviate stiff joints.



1. Begin with both hands extended and palms facing downward
2. Extend all fingers outward
3. Hold for 10 seconds, then slowly release
4. Bend all fingers at the knuckles
5. Hold for 10 seconds, then slowly release