

EAP & PAP Newsletter

April 2026

Say “Less” to the Stress!



April is **National Stress Awareness Month** – which does not mean simply looking at your stress and saying, “Oh, look, I’m aware I’m stressed!” It means finding ways to manage and prevent the negative physical and emotional effects of stress that can lead to fatigue, anxiety, depression, and other serious chronic health issues.

Over the last few decades, the word “stress” has become so overused that it has largely lost its meaning. People use the word to describe everything from mild irritability and discomfort to a justification for angry or even violent outbursts. And while the word may have lost some of its weight, **stress is a real experience in response to real things.**

Real things like work or the lack of it, financial strain and debt, family relationships, loss of friends, divorce, flooding, custody issues, the news, illness or chronic health conditions, weather, transportation problems, pets, grief, fear, burnout, and simply the nature of daily life that squeezes our lives into tight corners.

Stress is normal. In fact, without a certain level of stress, you wouldn’t function.

- *“Stress is not the enemy. It is a signal that we need to make some changes in our lives.”* — Hans Selye
- *“Oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure.”* — Peter Marshall
- *“Some stress is necessary in our lives when we want to stimulate creativity, or to promote learning.”*
— Christian J. Borg
- *“Stress is simply the adaptation of our bodies and minds to change.”* — Peter G. Hanson, M.D

So why does it get its own National Month? Because stress exists on a scale from zero to ten. Zero is when life is flowing smoothly. Ten is when it is too much and interferes with daily functioning. While stress is usually manageable, scores of 6, 7, or 8 can be warning signs that you’re heading toward a 10. Do you know your range? Do you know how to step back from an escalating stress episode? Do you know your triggers?

One problem with the blurring of the word “stress” is that sometimes people are having a “2” day but feel like it is a “10,” or when they’re at a 9 or 10 and think they can handle it without any support.

The key, and it isn’t really a trick, is learning your own number scale. What does a 0 feel like for you? A 3? A 7.5? An 8? And what tools and methods help you manage each number wisely?

Techniques like yoga, meditation, deep breathing, healthy eating, and walking might work for *your* 7, but they might not work for *everyone’s* 7. The numbers aren’t fixed, either. You can start a day at a 1 and climb to a 9, or come down just as quickly. But when you know your own range, you can match the right tools to any number.

If your numbers are consistently high, it’s important to seek support, and there are countless options to explore. Your EAP is here for you 24/7, 365 days a year. And recently, the EAP website added a great new resource called **My Stress Tools**. Check it out.



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Mālama

Mālama is a foundational Hawaiian word meaning to take care of, tend, preserve, and protect. It embodies a deep-rooted responsibility (kuleana) to care for the land (mālama ʻāina), ocean (mālama kai), and people.

The news can seem grim sometimes. Predictions of “worse to come” are often met by those who deny anything has or will change. But change is part of life. Most people in Hawaii know how to prepare for hurricanes, but the recent floods are an example of how fast things can change.

As Hurricane Season approaches, and reports suggest Hawaii may face added challenges due to its distance from the mainland and shipping constraints, consider preparing earlier and more thoroughly than usual. One approach that has always made sense: add a couple of items to your grocery list each time you shop, over weeks and months, without stretching your budget.

It's also worth considering that experts say that the effects of the current trade situation and Iran War will take some time to show up directly in our wallets, though we're already seeing signs of it as gas prices rise. Being wise about this is like having a fire extinguisher handy. You know how to use it if needed, but you're not carrying it around in fear all the time. So, consider what you can do NOW to proactively care for yourself and your family.

Health: Is there something you've been putting off that needs attention? Do you have extra medications in your go-bag?

Local produce and food: Support our local growers and vendors. Buy locally whenever you can.

Electric bill: Reports suggest that rising oil costs, if and when they fully arrive here, will likely push electric bills even higher. Pay attention to your bill and turn off appliances and lights that aren't necessary.

Travel: Plan travel very carefully. It's always a little complex, but perhaps more so right now. Think through your personal needs for safety, comfort, food, and finances before you go.

Bus: We are extremely fortunate to have one of the best bus systems around! Use it. Yes, you'll see the full spectrum of people on any ride, and the philosophy here is simple: riding the bus is always an adventure and always a story. Sometimes fun, sometimes silly, sometimes a little annoying and sometimes, well, you know. But with gas prices rising, grab a mask and use Da Bus.

Bottom Line: Ask anyone who has experienced being unprepared, especially after the recent Kona Low storms, what they would tell you about thinking ahead. Stay safe, stay smart and look out for yourself and others.

Articles On Our Website

Did you know about all the resources available to you from your EAP's website?

Here are a few examples:



5 TIPS FOR WORKING FROM HOME STRESS-FREE

When I started my home-based stress management business, my wife was still working outside...

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PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

Like any major life transition, retirement evolves better with planning...

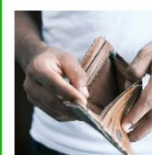
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EAP and PAP provide free short-term confidential counseling and work/life services, provided to you by your employer, that can assist in identifying and resolving issues that may be interfering with your job or personal life. Access to our experienced counselors and work/life services is available across the Islands and can be contacted by phoning or emailing our Honolulu office.



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