

April is Stress Awareness Month

Everyone has stress, so it cannot be avoided, but we can change how we respond to it. Here are a few tips to manage stress:



- **Progressive muscle relaxation** is a technique that involves tensing and relaxing muscles. Tense each muscle group and notice how that muscle feels when it is tensed. Hold this tension for five seconds while breathing in. Then, release and relax that muscle all at once.



- **Mindfulness meditation** approach involves being in a quiet location with few distractions. Being physically comfortable and focusing on a specific word, object, or breathing is helpful.



- **Guided imagery** involves using the mind to create positive images or scenarios. It is a series of steps, including relaxing and visualizing the details of a calm, peaceful setting.



- **Deep breathing** can become part of your daily routine. The technique can be used either standing, sitting, or lying down. Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe gently, and you can count from 1 to 5 and then let it flow gently. Again, counting from 1 to 5. Repeat a few times.



- **3-minute activities** that you love to do. Add one of your favorite activities each day to the calendar, whether walking, reading a book, practicing yoga, or listening to your favorite tune or podcast.

Source: bit.ly/3PYvG8k

Pesto Pasta with Asparagus

Servings: 9

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. asparagus
- 8 ounces whole wheat rotini pasta
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- Pepper to taste
- ½ cup basil pesto
- ⅓ cup sun-dried tomatoes, julienne cut
- ⅓ cup feta cheese

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash hands. Preheat oven to 425 F. Wash asparagus and trim off tough ends.
2. While the oven is preheating, bring a pot of water to boil on the stove. Boil the pasta until tender. Rinse pasta with cool water, drain well, and set aside.

3. Toss asparagus with olive oil, garlic powder, and pepper. Arrange asparagus in a single layer on a baking sheet and roast for 8-12 minutes or until tender. Once asparagus is roasted and cooled, cut into one-inch bite-size pieces.
4. Place tomatoes in a microwave-safe bowl, cover with water, and heat for 1-2 minutes until rehydrated.
5. Combine pasta, asparagus, pesto, sun-dried tomatoes, and feta cheese in a large bowl. Serve warm or cold. Refrigerate leftovers and use within 3-4 days.

Nutrition information per serving: 190 calories; 9 g fat; 235 mg sodium; 21 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 7 g protein.



Debt Repaying Strategies: How Do You Decide?

Do you have multiple debts that need to be paid down? When it comes to paying off debt, do you have a strategy? Debt can be overwhelming and can quickly get hard to manage. If you have loans you need to pay down, take some time to organize your debt and make a proactive plan on how to pay down your debts. Some people choose to pay the bills as they come or as they were set up when the money was borrowed. You may want to pay debt roulette and pay whichever bill comes to your radar now. Consider adopting a deliberate approach to debt repayment, such as the avalanche strategy, which prioritizes paying off the highest interest rate debts first, or the snowball strategy, which focuses on clearing the smallest balances first.

Read more about some debt repayment strategies: go.illinois.edu/FFB2405.