



October 2022

## Fall is Here!

It's fall already, with pumpkin patches, apple orchards, and the last stretch of warmer weather activities before winter arrives. Although daylight dwindles, this is an excellent time to get outside. Enjoy!

## Laugh More, and Other Great Stress-Reducing Tips



The lazy days of summer are behind us. With back to school activities, football season, and the fast-approaching holiday season, it's a busy time of year. Here are some great tips to help reduce stress this fall and lead you gently into the winter season.

Get enough sleep. Try going to bed at the same time every night. Late nights with only a few hours of sleep can wear you down both physically and mentally. It's imperative you take the time you need to rest and recharge!

Take breaks. Take a couple of short breaks each day to think about something other than work. Talk with a friend or family

member or maybe watch funny videos. Just a few minutes of mental rest from your daily tasks can help sustain you through a long workday.

Focus on communication. Whether you're talking with family or co-workers, make sure you take your time and be clear about the message you want to convey. Don't sacrifice good communication just to save a bit of time. Rushing can lead to errors, the need for re-work, and cost even more time in the end.

Spend time with friends and family. Studies show spending time with family and friends can help people cope with stress. Having the opportunity to talk about things with trusted people can help prevent you from turning to less healthy coping mechanisms.

Laugh more. Laughter is a great form of stress relief. According to the Mayo Clinic, it stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, increases endorphins, and lowers blood pressure. Plus, there's nothing like adding a bit more joy to your day!

## Staff Spotlight



**Name:** Miranda Haes

**Current Position:** Northeast Iowa Basin Coordinator, Water Quality Bureau

**Years with the State:** 7 months

**My Healthy Choice:** Yoga

"Eight years ago, I took a yoga class at the local rec center. In the past, I've tried some videos (VHS, of course!) that didn't stick, but I've carried a desire for years to try yoga again. After one class, I was hooked! I went from two days a week to nearly every day over the last few years.

This passion allowed me to complete my 200-hour Yoga Teacher Training this last spring. Yoga has helped me not only become more physically healthy, but has assisted in my mental health and overall wellness. Yoga is for EVERYONE! This practice lengthens, strengthens, and brings the body into great physical and mental condition. It's a practice and journey requiring patience, but it's a very loving way to take care of your health.

While there are many videos and classes out there, here are a couple that helped me especially when I was at home due to COVID – [Yoga with Adriene](#) and [Sarah Beth Yoga](#). The great thing about videos is you can do them almost ANYTIME! I encourage everyone to check them out, and if you haven't already, give yoga a try! Namaste."

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## You Can Quit Tobacco . . . and Your Health Benefits Can Help

Giving up tobacco can be very hard, but it is one of the best choices you will ever make. Maybe the American Cancer Society's [Great American Smokeout](#) event on Thursday, November 17, will be the day you start on your journey toward a smoke-free life.

To support you in your efforts, the State of Iowa Wellmark health plan provides free services to help you quit. Learn more with Wellmark's [You Can Quit Tobacco - and Your Employee Health Benefits Can Help](#).



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## Increase Your Skills and Impact with Skills-Based Volunteering

Skills-based volunteering (or pro bono service) is when individuals use their professional skills in volunteer roles. While an accountant could help paint a room for a nonprofit, conducting a review of financial procedures may be more impactful for the organization, especially if the accountant is not a good painter!

Nonprofits spend an average of two percent of their budgets on critical infrastructure, compared to nearly 35 percent spent by the for-profit sector. This creates a large capacity gap that you can help our nonprofits meet! What professional skills do you have, either in your day job or as a hobby? Human resources, graphic design, maintenance, IT, warehouse management, logistics, project management, photography, security, training, and grant writing are all skills nonprofits can use.

Skills-based volunteering allows you to do the work you love most, practice new skills, and use your talents in new ways. It also carries all of the health and wellness benefits of general volunteering! So reach out to your favorite nonprofit to find out how your skills can support them, or search for opportunities on [Iowa's volunteer opportunity database](#).

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## Free Health and Well-Being Seminars Offered Online

Did you know there are a number of on-demand online seminars covering various topics related to health and well-being? The topics are available through the State's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at [www.EAPHelplink.com](http://www.EAPHelplink.com). Use Company Code: IOWA and click on e-learning for a list of available online seminars.

Seminars may be viewed from your computer or any other internet-enabled device during work time if scheduling permits and your supervisor approves. Here is a sampling of course topics to check out, with new seminars added monthly.

- *Self-Care: Better Care of Yourself* - Identify the ways to implement self-care as a part of your schedule and learn the art of slowing down.
- *Open Communication: Powerful Ways to Create It* - Attain the skills to have open and effective communication at work and at home.
- Available October 18: *Navigating Your Holidays* - Learn effective ways to plan, organize, and make the most of your holidays this year.

EAP also offers confidential resources at no cost to help employees and eligible family members address challenges which may impact job performance, well-being, and overall health. For more information on EAP resources, visit the DAS [Employee Assistance Program](#) web page.

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## Are You Prepared for Winter?

As fall winds down and winter approaches, it's time to start thinking about how you're going to stay active and safe in spite of the cold. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Wear footwear that has good traction and insulation when you are walking on snow and ice. Take short steps and check your pace in order to react to slippery surfaces.
- Limit your time outside if the temperature and winds are extreme. Wear layers of warm clothing, cover your head, and cover your mouth to protect your lungs in extreme cold.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Stay hydrated. Despite the cold, activity and sweat can easily cause dehydration. Warm beverages may help you feel warmer, too!
- Keep your hands free, covered with mittens or gloves, and out of your pockets. Don't carry heavy objects that leave you off balance and unable to recover from a fall.



- Reduce the risk of a heart attack by avoiding overexertion when shoveling snow. Push snow instead of lifting it, and pace yourself.
  - Notify a friend or family member of your plans when traveling or if you venture out to an area where cell phone coverage is undependable
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## Do You Know?

- [SEHARC](#) (State of Iowa Health and Recreation Committee) connects you with offers for discounted tickets to area events and hosts fun activities throughout the year. If you are interested in receiving information on these opportunities, complete this [form](#) to be added to SEHARC's mailing list or follow them on Facebook!
  - [DAS Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) provides resources, monthly seminars, counseling services, and more.
  - For more great information, be sure to check out these Wellmark publications - [Wellmark Blue Magazine](#) and [Blue at Work](#).
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**To learn more about how Healthy Employees<sup>SM</sup> Powered by Wellmark is working with the State of Iowa to make the healthy choices easier for you, visit the [Healthy Employees website](#).**

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