

Expert tips for maintaining emotional health amid tax season stress

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Let's face it - the IRS D-day of April 15 is a stressful time of year for many Americans who delay plowing through the dreaded tax return process and breaking into their piggy bank to pay Uncle Sam until the VERY last minute.

All of this stress results in negative emotional eating behaviors, which undoubtedly pack unwanted pounds onto America's collective waistline - despite the fact that bikini season looms not far ahead.

TrimTalk.com's Director of Emotional Support, Jay Giacalone-Butterfield, LCSW, notes, "In the spirit of turning a problem into an opportunity, make April's tax season a point of emotional and even spiritual transition to create a new beginning for your self with respect to lifestyle habits - the good, the bad and the ugly. Resolve to make positive changes, and you'll undoubtedly experience many 'happy returns' come next April."

With this in mind, here

are a few of Jay's simple tips on how to undo some of that anxiety and tension among tax payers:

- * Feel your feelings, but act on your goals. Anticipating the tax preparation process or worrying about the money you owe Uncle Sam can understandably make you feel anxious. Know that the tension will decrease as you begin the task or start sorting out the financial logistics logically. Feel the feeling, but know that's all it is...just a feeling. Don't let it own you.

- * Imagery is all-powerful. Imagine yourself working on your taxes easily and effortlessly. Imagine yourself enjoying life in a relaxed, stress free manner rather than plowing through. Visualization is a powerful de-stressing tool that you can use anywhere and anytime. Simply get into a comfortable position either sitting or lying down. Close your eyes and imagine yourself working on your taxes happily, without tension or

upset, until they are completed, then begin! Imagine yourself enjoying a leisurely day, then do it!

- * Just breathe. Try some simple yoga breath work. Breathe inward to the count of 4, and hold that breath for the count of 7. Then, breathe out to the count of 8. Do this numerous times until you feel the tension seeping out of your muscles. This exercise will calm you down both emotionally and physically so you can refocus on the task at hand.

- * Recharge your battery. Rather than treating life like a marathon, plan for scheduled "comfort" breaks throughout your day, while working, doing chores at home...and, yes, while preparing your taxes. Re-energize by taking even just 10-15 minutes to walk outside, stretch, eat a healthy snack, and drink 8 ounces of water. Do this multiple times throughout your day to keep stress at bay.

- * Seek emotional

support. It's important to remember that you are not alone, even if no one is there with you physically. Most of us have friends, family members or even a professional emotional support "coach" just a phone call away. If your feeling stuck in the mental mire, stop what you're doing, pick up the phone and call a favorite person whose positive outlook is contagious.