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EAP EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



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DEER OAKS EAP PRESENTS:

December On-Demand Seminar

*Stress Buster:
Managing and Taking
Control of Your Life*

Available on-demand starting on December 21st

Holiday Safety for Pets

Pet Treats

Someone brought your dog Fido his favorite pet treats as a gift. Lucky Fido! But be careful when giving Fido his gift because Fido likes his favorite treats so much, he may eat them whole or eat too many at one time. Pet treats, whether biscuits, rawhides, or jerky sticks, are most digestible when chewed into small pieces. If Fido eats the treats whole or eats too many at once, he may not be able to digest them. Unchewed pet treats can get stuck in the trachea (windpipe) or gastrointestinal tract (esophagus, stomach, and intestines), particularly in small dogs.

If a piece of pet treat gets stuck in Fido's trachea, you may see him become frantic and start drooling and choking. Severe tracheal blockages are fairly common, especially around the holidays, and all are life-threatening. So, if you see a frantic Fido drooling and choking, he needs an emergency visit to his veterinarian! If a piece of pet treat gets stuck in Fido's esophagus (the tube that connects the mouth to the stomach that food travels through), he may gulp, start drooling, or bring up undigested food after eating. Fido brings up the undigested food because the piece of pet treat blocks his dog food from getting to his stomach, and there's nowhere else for the food to go but back up. This can go on for days if the blockage is not removed.

If something is stuck in Fido's stomach or intestines, such as a bone or chew toy, the symptoms are different and you may not notice for several days. He may vomit and have diarrhea, be less active, not want to eat, and have stomach pain. If the blockage stays in Fido's stomach or intestines for too long, he may become very ill. The worst-case scenario is when a hole develops at the blockage site, causing a life-threatening infection.

In the cases above, Fido needs a visit to his veterinarian as soon as possible. If he's choking, it's an emergency requiring immediate action. When in doubt, contact your veterinarian for medical advice. Your veterinarian may need to take X-rays, use an ultrasound, or perform other tests to see what and where the problem is. Your veterinarian may use an endoscope (a long tube with a built-in camera and grabbing tools) to remove reachable objects from the esophagus and stomach. Fido will likely need surgery to remove blockages in the intestines.

Ribbons

When decorating and wrapping or unwrapping gifts, keep a close eye on where you leave your leftover string and ribbons. Tigger, your big orange and white kitty, may find

these decorations irresistible because they look like easy-to-catch, sparkly, wiggly prey. If Tigger eats these types of decorations, he may end up with serious stomach and intestinal damage. Swallowed ribbons and string can get tangled in the stomach or intestines. If they are not removed, the ribbons and string can saw through the lining of the stomach or intestines, causing a life-threatening infection. Symptoms may take a few hours or up to several days to appear, and include vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, and decreased activity. If you see Tigger eat any string or ribbon, call your veterinarian and ask for medical advice. Play it safe—collect all ribbons and strings after opening your gifts!



Plants

Many people have festive plants around the house for the holidays, including poinsettias, holly, and mistletoe. Remember to keep your furry family members in mind when you display or dispose of your holiday plants.

Poinsettias

Colorful, large, red and white poinsettias fill your living room and family room, bringing holiday cheer to everyone who sees them. However, your cat, Tigger sees the poinsettias and considers them a great hiding place and a convenient snack when you're late with his dinner.

Unfortunately, what Tigger doesn't realize is that poinsettias have a milky white, latex sap that can be very irritating to his mouth and stomach. According to the National Animal Poison Control Center (NAPCC), symptoms of poinsettia toxicity include drooling and, sometimes, vomiting and diarrhea. Fortunately for Tigger, the symptoms associated with poinsettia toxicity are not too bad. However, if Tigger snacks on your poinsettia leaves, you can help him by

picking up his food and water dishes for a couple of hours to let his stomach settle.

Mistletoe

If your pets eat mistletoe, what should you expect? The NAPCC states that the major toxic chemicals in mistletoe are lectins and phoratoxins. These chemicals affect the heart, causing low blood pressure and slowed heart rate. Fortunately, severe mistletoe toxicity is uncommon, and usually occurs only if your pet eats a large amount. The symptoms of mistletoe toxicity include gastrointestinal upset (vomiting and diarrhea in dogs and cats; colic in horses), difficulty breathing, slowed heart rate, low blood pressure, and odd behavior. If you suspect your dog, cat or horse ate mistletoe, call your veterinarian for medical advice.

Holly

The beautiful holly decorating your house isn't very harmful, but you should still keep your pets from eating the berries and leaves. The main toxic culprit in holly leaves and berries is a group of chemicals called saponins. In dogs and cats, these chemicals cause drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and decreased activity. In horses, diarrhea can occur. In the three cases above, it's a good idea to call your veterinarian. Your veterinarian can give you advice on what you can do at home to make your pet more comfortable and help you decide if you should bring your pet in for a visit.



Human Treats

Fido, being the big dog he is, decides that eating the bones and leftovers from the trash can isn't enough for his holiday dinner. So, he table surfs in the living room and eats some of the chocolate-covered caramels in the candy dish along with several sugar-free red and white mints.

Can the chocolate and mints hurt him? It depends. Chocolate toxicity depends on the type and amount of chocolate Fido ate, his body weight, and if he's extra-sensitive to the toxic compound in chocolate called theobromine. Theobromine toxicity can cause a variety of symptoms, from mild to severe, including vomiting, diarrhea, fast heart rate, restlessness, hyperactivity, increased urination, muscle spasms, and seizures.

The seemingly harmless sugar-free red and white mints you bought for your diabetic Uncle Ralph can cause life-threatening problems for Fido if the mints contain xylitol. Xylitol, an increasingly popular artificial sweetener, is found in food items such as candy, gum, and baked goods, as well as personal hygiene products such as toothpaste and mouthwash.

Symptoms occur quickly after dogs eat items containing xylitol. Vomiting is generally the first symptom, followed by those associated with the sudden lowering of Fido's blood sugar (hypoglycemia), such as decreased activity, weakness, staggering, incoordination, collapse, and seizures. Some dogs develop more severe complications, including liver failure, bleeding disorders, and death. If you suspect Fido has eaten chocolate or items containing xylitol, consider it an emergency and call your veterinarian immediately.

Alcohol is another potentially harmful human treat. Fido and Tigger decide they need some holiday cheer and drink the entire glass of Aunt Susie's eggnog that she left unattended on the coffee table. Although it may seem funny at the time, pets that consume alcohol can develop serious problems depending on how much they drink. The most common symptoms in pets associated with the consumption of alcoholic beverages are vomiting, diarrhea, incoordination, weakness, decreased activity, difficulty breathing, and shaking. In severe cases, coma and death from respiratory failure occur. If you see Fido and Tigger drinking an alcoholic beverage, call your veterinarian.

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2010, November 19). Take the "oh no!" out of your and your pets' holiday "ho-ho-ho!". Retrieved October 24, 2016, from <http://www.fda.gov/>

Grounding Techniques to Help Control Anxiety

When faced with a stressful or dangerous situation, the mind and body react naturally by shifting into a heightened state of readiness—the fight-or-flight response. That can be a good thing if you need to react quickly to danger. However, sometimes the mind and body overreact and enter a frozen or detached state, leaving you unable to think clearly or take appropriate action. Sometimes, too, anxiety disorders or long-lasting reactions to trauma can result in high-alert reactions when they're not needed, which can interfere with daily life and leave you exhausted. Anxiety can also cycle in a deepening spiral, with an initial anxious response triggering even greater anxiety or panic.

Grounding techniques—practices that help distract from fears and unwanted memories—offer a way to control unhelpful anxiety responses. They can help you pull out of a frozen or detached state so that you can think more clearly and choose how to act. They can help you break free from an anxiety spiral, giving you a greater sense of control and confidence.

Here are a wide range of grounding techniques to try when your anxiety feels overwhelming or out of control. Try one, two, or a few of them until you find something that works for you.



Physical and Sensory Grounding Techniques

- Put both of your feet on the floor or ground. Stomp them several times, shift weight or wiggle your toes, paying attention to the sensations in your toes, feet, and legs.
- Press or rub your palms together, noticing the pressure, warmth or coolness, and sensations of touch.
- Touch or pick up a small item that's within reach. Notice its texture and weight and whether it is warm or cool.

- Tap your fingers in your lap. Pay attention to sensations in both your fingers and your lap, and to the rhythm you are tapping. Try alternating left and right taps.
- Put your hands in water (if available), focusing on what it feels like on different parts of your hands.
- Hold a piece of ice (if available) in your hand, noticing the sensation of coldness and the feeling of the water on your skin as the ice melts.
- Dip your face in cold water and hold it there for a few seconds, or splash cold water onto your face. The sensation of the cool temperature on your skin can help interrupt an anxiety spiral.
- Breathe deeply and slowly. Place a hand on your belly, and feel it move with your breaths.
- Savor the taste of food or drink in your mouth or the scent of a spice, herb, or bar of soap.
- Listen to the sounds around you, whether it's from traffic, bird songs, the wind, or conversation. Identify the sounds in your mind, and let them remind you of where you are.
- Move your body by stretching, jumping up and down, walking, or jogging (even if it's just a few steps). Pay attention to how your body feels as you move and the sensation as your feet touch the ground.

Mental Grounding Techniques

Focusing your mind on a mental task can help you pull out of an anxiety reaction:

- Name each member of your family, their ages, and something special about each of them.
- Look at an object, and name its color as precisely as you can (not just red or blue but maroon, crimson, turquoise, or royal blue).
- Play a memory game. Remember as many details as you can about a familiar place, or look closely at a photograph, then turn it over and try to recreate it in your mind with as much detail as possible.
- Count backward from 100. Try it by ones, sevens, or another number.
- Spell your name or the names of people you know backward.

- Recite something, a poem or passage from a book that you know well, or the words to a favorite song.
- Think of an ordinary activity, and describe to yourself each step it requires.
- Play a category game. Choose a category, like animals, sports teams, rivers, or vegetables, and name as many things as you can in that category in a minute or two.

Soothing Grounding Techniques

- Picture the face of someone you love, or imagine their voice and what they might say to calm you.
- Call a favorite place to mind—what it looks like, its sounds and smells, what it feels like to be there.
- Touch something comforting, such as a soft or smooth fabric on your bedding or an item of clothing.
- Spend a few quiet minutes with your pet, or imagine what it would be like to be sitting with it.

Seek help.

A professional counselor can help you find strategies for dealing with your anxiety, including ways to use these and other grounding and calming techniques. A counselor can also help you identify the root causes and triggers of your anxiety and can guide you to effective treatment.

For More Information

30 Grounding Techniques to Quiet Distressing Thoughts, Healthline
<https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques>

Fighting Stress? Ask the Coach

Question: My stress level seems through the roof these days. I don't know of any good techniques to calm myself down in a stressful situation.

Answer: Many people lead very busy lives. Finding healthy ways to reduce stress can make you feel more in control of your reactions when faced with tense situations. People with weakened immune systems might also be able to fight infections better when they have lower stress levels. Here are some tips to help:

- Find ways in your daily routine to take a moment for you. Go for a short walk, take a couple of deep breaths, or close your eyes and count back from 10. Small approaches such as these can improve your outlook, calm you down, and re-set your mind.
- Decide what techniques work well for you. Do some experimentation. Try different time lengths, deliveries (self-guided or guided), and approaches. Some

Grounding Techniques: Step-by-step guide and methods, Medical News Today
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/grounding-techniques>

Grounding Techniques, Therapist Aid (Woody Schuldt, Licensed Mental Health Counselor [LMHC])
<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-article/grounding-techniques-article>

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Source: Morgan, H. (2022, June 6). Grounding techniques to help control anxiety (E. Morton & B. Schuette, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

approaches you could try include gratitude, relaxation, stepping back and taking stock, or visualization.

- Train your brain, and practice techniques for stress relief on a regular basis. Don't wait until you are in a stressful situation to try to figure out what to do. Come up with a practice plan. Practice daily when you have two to three minutes of quiet time. Practicing on a regular basis will allow you to use your techniques effectively in the moment when you really need it.
- Expand your knowledge of stress reduction. Take a yoga class, explore a mindfulness app, listen to a podcast on handling stress, or pick up a book to enhance your skills in addressing various situations in your life.

Source: Workplace Options Wellness Team & Schuette, B. (Ed.). (2018). Ask the coach. News to Live Well (Quarter 2 ed.). Raleigh, NC: Author.