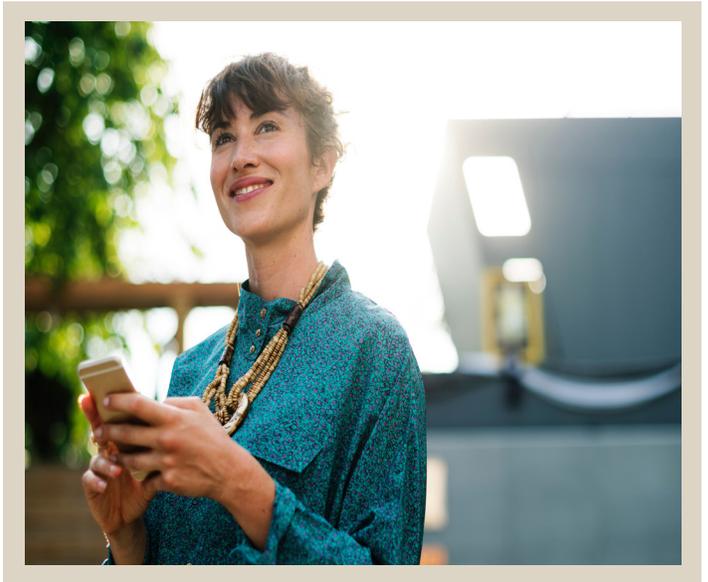


Wellness Wednesday

How To Stop A Bad Moment From Destroying Your Whole Day

You're going about your day when something unfortunate happens — you get a parking ticket, maybe, or find out your boss removed you from an exciting project — and your mood shifts for the worse. A stream of negative thoughts floods your brain, and before you know it, you're completely overwhelmed. No matter what else goes right after that, your day feels ruined.

If this scenario sounds familiar, you're not alone. Lynn R. Zakeri, a licensed clinical social worker, says it's normal to get hung up on a negative experience. "We ruminate on things that we don't have control over, on things that make us uncomfortable, on things that hurt our feelings," she said. Even something as minor as receiving a "K" text from a friend can derail your mood if you let it. "The small things take up so much space in our brains."



Why This Happens

Josh Klapow, a clinical psychologist and co-host of radio show "The Web," said we tend to associate negative experiences with situations in which "we lose something, are rejected, are threatened [or] have our vulnerabilities exposed." From an evolutionary standpoint, he explained, many of us are hard-wired to seek out negativity so we can learn to protect ourselves from it.

But the more time we spend focusing on how to avoid negative events, "the more we train our brains to seek out the negative interpretation of a situation first and the positive second," he said. This phenomenon is often referred to as negativity bias, which is the idea that negative events tend to have a greater psychological effect on us than positive ones.

Negative thinking can have a domino effect. A negative experience can cause you to view the world through a different lens, Klapow said, one colored by emotions like fear, sadness, guilt and anger. "The next event or situation then has a greater chance of being interpreted through this filter. Each time this happens, it creates an emotional self-fulfilling prophecy." This experience is universal and, to some degree, inevitable, but it doesn't have to be regularly occurring. "We can't always control feeling bad when something negative happens," he said. "However, we can absolutely control how long we feel bad and how we interpret the situation."

How to bounce back

There are a few strategies that can prevent a bad moment from derailing your entire day. Below are a few strategies to try the next time your brain is stuck in a negative loop.

1. Observe your emotions.

"After a negative event, know that you will be primed to feel and perceive information as negative," Klapow said. That's why it's crucial to develop a response technique that doesn't perpetuate those feelings. First, acknowledge your emotions. "It's OK to say, 'I'm angry, hurt, scared, frustrated,'" he said. Then, instead of dismissing your emotions or letting them consume you, try to take an observational approach. "Get curious about why you are feeling this way." Talk yourself through the experience, he suggested, and ask yourself what you learned.

2. Remind yourself that you might be interpreting the situation incorrectly.

Simon Rego, the chief psychologist at Montefiore Medical Center at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, said everyone has a tendency to distort neutral situations into negative experiences. This is a kind of cognitive distortion, in which your mind convinces you of something that may not be true, and it can reinforce your negative thoughts in the process.

Instead of asking your boss why you were taken off that big account, you might jump to the conclusion that it's because you're incompetent. Rego said other common examples of cognitive distortion include overgeneralization, thinking in black and white terms, mind-reading, minimization, personalization and fortune-telling. Keep in mind that it's not wrong to think negatively, he said — it can even be appropriate — but it's important to examine your behavior to understand why you're thinking the way you are. "Once we're aware of our tendencies," he said, "we can learn skills to help us recalibrate to perceive situations more rationally or objectively."

The first step is acknowledging that you may view certain situations problematically, he said. From there, you can evaluate your thought patterns and start to generate alternatives to the stories you tell yourself. "What else could it be? What would I say to a friend? What is the best-case scenario?" said Rego. "These questions can get you out of being locked into a view." And the more you practice putting yourself on trial, he added, the quicker you can course-correct in the future.

3. Concentrate on the facts.

When you feel overwhelmed, this simple exercise can put things into perspective. Fold a piece of paper, then write down all the facts of the situation — the things you know for sure — on the left side, Zakeri said. On the right side, write down all your worries, assumptions and fears, then direct your attention back to the facts.

Similar to checking your cognitive distortions, this practice can help you view the situation from a place of logic instead of emotion. "Take control back from the experience rather than it controlling you and your day," she said.

4. Create a positivity practice.

Getting more control over your emotional responses is as much about cultivating positivity as it is diffusing negativity. Klapow recommended taking a few minutes each night to write down three things that went well during your day, no matter how small. Go an extra step and write down why you think those things went well — for example, Klapow said, "maybe you got a promotion because you have been working hard." The trick, he said, is to force yourself to think positively at least once every day. "This will help shift your baseline pessimism slowly over time. It is called learned optimism," he added.

5. Get out of your head.

Sometimes the best way to get over a negative experience is to switch gears. Dive into a work task, turn to a creative outlet, go for a run, call a friend to check in or offer to help a co-worker or loved one with a project. Engaging in an enjoyable activity or shifting your focus to others can help diminish your feelings of negativity and put the situation into perspective.

6. Finally, check in with yourself.

Everyone falls prey to negativity sometimes, but it's important to examine yourself to make sure you're not dealing with a bigger issue. "If you're experiencing emotional distress at a high frequency or intensity," Rego said, "if it's causing a disability or impairment in your social or occupational or family functioning or if it's so intense, it's stopping you from living a full life, you may need to reach out to a mental health professional."

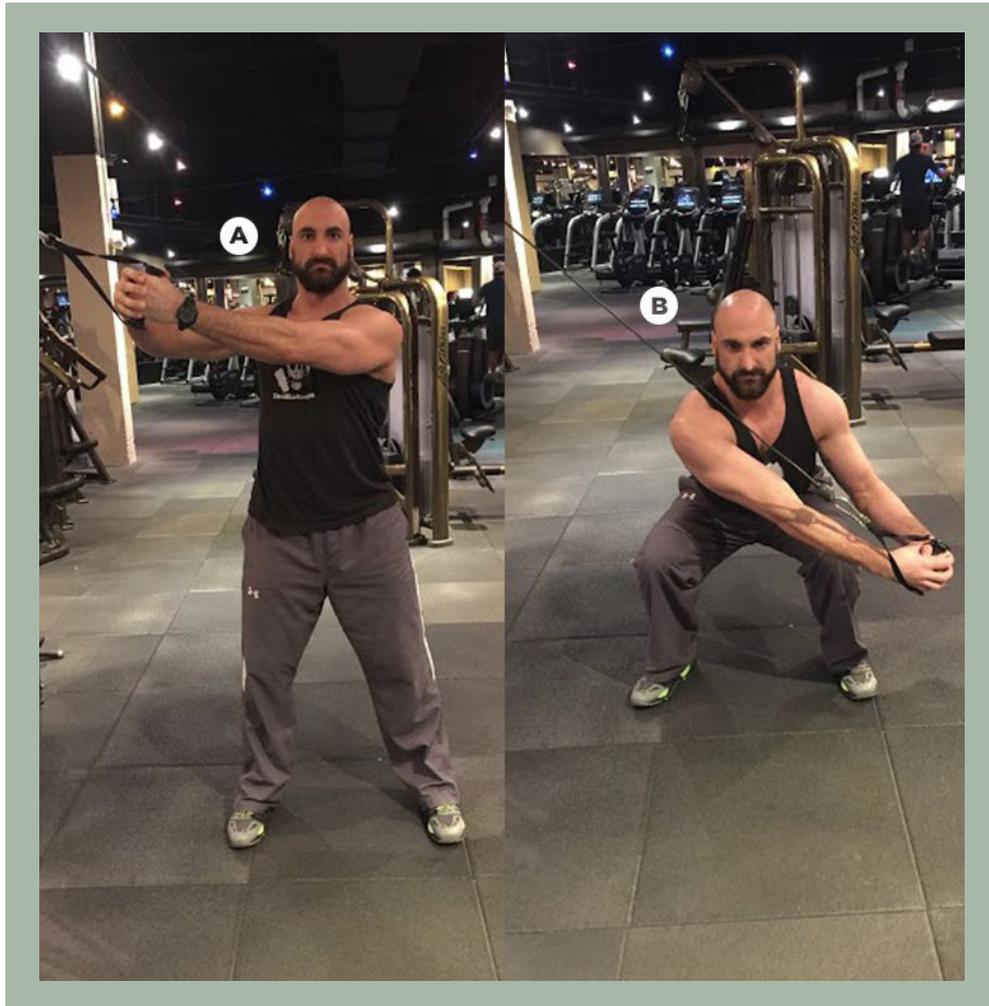
Fortunately, there are plenty of resources and treatment options available, and you don't have to suffer alone, said Rego. To gather information or search for mental health professionals, he recommended checking out the websites for the Anxiety and Depression Association of America and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.

Article source: <http://bit.ly/2GGXI2a>



This Week's Exercise

SQUAT TWIST

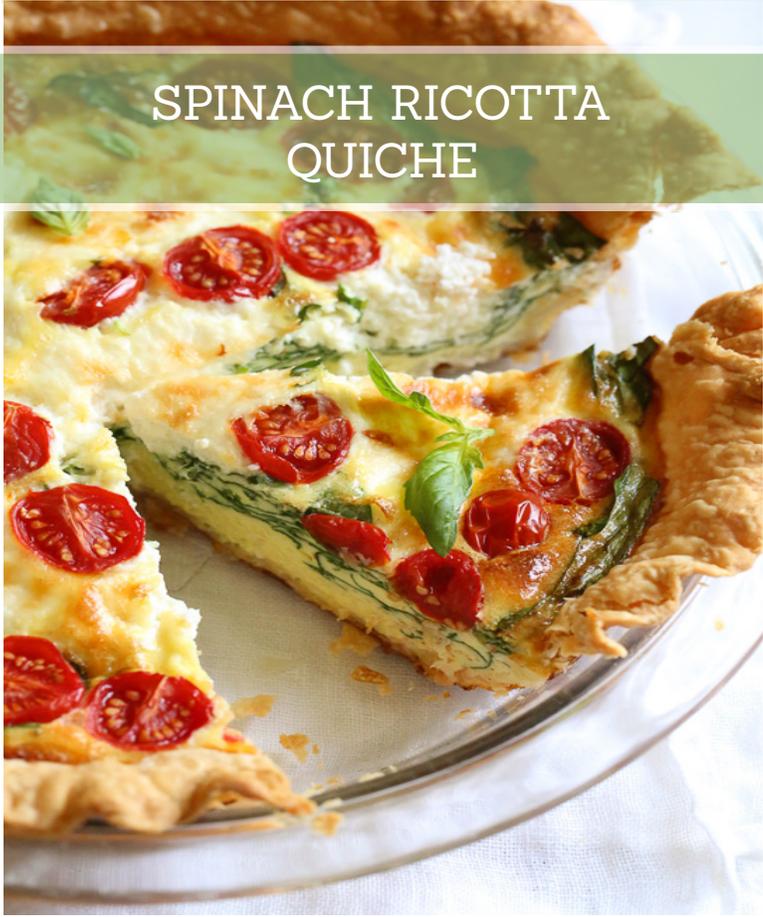


Try it: Just twisting your body isn't enough to fully engage those sexy muscles, says Graham Smith, C.S.C.S., personal training manager at DavidBartonGym Boston. This move creates a full contraction of the obliques by adding a downward diagonal direction to the twist, he says.

Try it: Attach a handle to the top pulley of a cable station. Stand next to the station with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent, keeping you pelvis fixed as you rotate your spine to grab the handle (A). Then, keep your arms straight while you rotate them down and away from the cable tower, lowering into a controlled squat (B). That's one rep. Complete all reps on one side before switching to the other.

Source: <http://bit.ly/2IEWAC4>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



SPINACH RICOTTA QUICHE

Ingredients

refrigerated Dough for 1 (9-inch) pie crust
7 large eggs, beaten
2 cups chopped fresh baby spinach (1 1/2 ounces)
2/3 cup skim milk
6 tablespoons grated parmesan
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 cup part skim ricotta
1/3 cup part skim shredded mozzarella
3/4 cups halved grape or cherry tomatoes

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Roll the dough out on a well-floured work surface until it's approximately 11 to 12-inches in diameter.
3. Transfer it to a 9-inch metal or glass pie dish. Using your fingers, press it firmly into the bottom and sides of the pie plate. Trim off any excess, leaving about 1/2-inch overhanging. Then fold/crimp the overhanging dough.
4. Prick the bottom of the pie crust with the tines of a fork. Transfer the pie crust to your pre-heated oven and bake for 10 to 15 minutes, until par-baked.
5. Meanwhile in a large mixing bowl combine eggs with spinach, milk, 2 tablespoons parmesan cheese, basil and salt; mix well. Pour mixture into the par-baked pie crust.
6. In a small bowl combine ricotta with mozzarella and remaining parmesan.
7. Dollop the ricotta all around and top and place tomatoes around the cheese.
8. Place foil on the edges of the crust to prevent burning.
9. Place quiche on cookie sheet and bake on the middle oven rack for 50 to 55 minutes, or until top is browned and a knife inserted in center comes out clean.
10. Let cool before serving.

Nutrition Information

Yield: 8 servings
Serving size: 1 slice

Amount Per Serving:
Freestyle Points: 5
Points +: 6
Calories: 225
Total Fat: 13g
Saturated Fat: 6g
Cholesterol: 178mg
Sodium: 366.5mg
Carbohydrates: 15.5g
Fiber: 0.5g
Sugar: 1g
Protein: 12g

Recipe source:
<http://bit.ly/2ki4jaB>