

Employee Enhancement Newsletter



Dec. 2008 *Helpful resources from your Employee Assistance Program*



Managing Holiday Blues December's On-Line Chat Topic December 17, 2008

Every month you have the opportunity to chat online with a trained counselor. These live chats are held from 6:00PM to 6:30PM CST.

December 2008 At A Glance

AIDS Awareness Month
<http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/>

International Day of
Disabled Persons
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

National Drunk & Drugged
Driving Prevention
Month
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/spotlite/3d.htm>

Safe Toys and Gifts Month
www.preventblindness.org

National Aplastic Anemia &
MDS Week (Dec. 1st - 7th)
www.aamds.org

National Handwashing
Awareness Week (Dec. 7th-13th)
www.henrythehand.com

Source: 2008 National Health Observances, National Health Information Center, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

Celebrating the Holidays

Every day, 36 people in the United States die, and approximately 700 more are injured, in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. Consider the **Take the High Road on the Highway Program** offered by Deer Oaks, your EAP, when celebrating the Holidays.

Take the High Road on the Highway Program will reimburse the participant for a cab in the event he/she is unable to drive due to impairment by alcohol or another substance. This process is simple and confidential.



Why the Holiday Season Can Be So Stressful

- ✓ **Travel.** By car or plane, travel during the holiday is always more crowded and chaotic than at any other time of year.
- ✓ **Shopping.** Jam-packed malls and stores can turn even the most passive person into a monster.
- ✓ **Family Conflict.** Occasional arguments or longstanding tensions are compounded by increased togetherness, activities with relatives you don't often see, alcohol consumption, turf wars, and other sources of stress associated with the holidays.
- ✓ **Taking on too much.** If hosting at your home feels like too much pressure, suggest an alternative venue. If relatives and friends request to visit for extended periods of time, be realistic. If you find yourself scheduling so many activities that you end up with no free time available, you are only going to end up frustrated and/or feeling guilty. Something's gotta give! Set limitations and honor them.
- ✓ **Expecting to be perfect.** Perfection is a nice goal to strive for, but how about something more reasonable, like above average.
- ✓ **The shorter days.** There is minimal daylight available during the holiday season. Many people feel they have to fit as many activities as possible into what little daylight there is, creating stress.
- ✓ **Being alone.** Loneliness is a cause of stress for many people, particularly those who have lost loved ones or who are away from their families during the holidays.

Beat the Holiday Blues

If you are feeling down and disconnected during the Holidays, the following are some suggestions that might help you through these tough times:

- 1.) Volunteer your services to the needy. Helping others can really enhance one's self-esteem.
- 2.) Update your roles. The "old you" may not fit who you are today.
- 3.) Surround yourself with friends or take that long over due vacation.
- 4.) Be good to yourself. Buy some new clothes, decorate the bedroom, or do anything that can help feel worthy.
- 5.) Reframe your negative thoughts to realistic thoughts.

So, as the new millennium continues to unfold, allow this upcoming new year to be a another beginning for you.

SolveYourProblem.com http://www.solveyourproblem.com/artman/publish/printer_35.shtml

Deer Oaks EAP Services, your Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with your children, your finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, call Deer Oaks at: 1-866-327-2400.

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Dealing with Financial Mistakes

If you recently defaulted on a loan or lost money in the stock market, you are in good company. The question is, where do we go from here? The following suggestions were adapted from the writing of psychologist LeslieBeth Wish:

1. First, forgive yourself for your past financial mistakes. Make a list of your positive qualities and lessons you learned from past actions. You might consider sharing the written list with someone you trust. Be sure to add to the list that you forgive yourself for your financial mismanagement (or fears, anger, etc.) If possible, try to also let go of resentments toward others: your partner, family, creditors, and/or a Supreme Being, if it is part of your belief system. Remind yourself that very few of even the most financially-savvy predicted this economic downturn. How would you expect yourself to have foreseen it? People unable to forgive sometimes remain immobilized, leaving them vulnerable to increased consequences from longstanding stress.

2. Consider your resources. List your assets (positive characteristics and skills, education and training/experience, accomplishments, and so forth). Make another list of the things for which you are grateful. These steps can help clarify your situation and give you a broader perspective. People do recover from financial crises. Sometimes a physical relocation or new job may be required, but one constant in life is change! You can do more than merely survive; you can also thrive. Crises are often the catalyst for breaking routines and rising above challenges.

3. Review your expenditures to determine whether you can cut costs in any areas. You may be able to postpone a vacation or luxury purchase until your financial situation improves.

4. Think creatively about your interests and abilities. Try to be open to new opportunities you may not have previously considered. Discuss your thoughts with family or friends, particularly those in other industries, to get fresh opinions.

5. Sometimes, especially when under stress, people have difficulty viewing themselves objectively. Consider seeking support through your EAP. Confidential services are available, including psychological counseling and consultation with financial planners. If additional support is needed, we can refer you to one of our licensed clinicians in the community.

6. Remember the "Three P's" of gaining control of bad situations: **Pro-active:** Anticipate obstacles and develop an action plan for change. Practice implementing your plan and obtain help as needed to avoid being reactive when problems occur. **Persistence:** Keep calling until you find help. Don't passively accept "No" for an answer. **Pinnacle:** Identify who the decision-makers are, and try to make contact. If you have a new draft of a payment plan, a list of ways you intend to cut back on expenses, or other related ideas, you might convince a lender to consider you a good credit risk.

7. Know the symptoms of serious emotional problems and be ready to take action. Watch for increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, arguing, substance abuse or thoughts of suicide. During difficult times, domestic violence, and substance abuse occur more frequently. Seek counseling or medical help immediately for these issues, even if your partner refuses to participate.

8. Work as a team with your partner/spouse. Blame, including self-blame, is not useful. Remember The Golden Rule, and treat everyone else the way you would want to be treated.

Adapted from <http://www.helpstartshere.org/Default.aspx?PageID=1532>

7 Tips to Help You Stop Making Holiday Shopping Mistakes



1. Don't Break Your Budget
2. Don't Use Credit
3. Don't Buy to Impress
4. Use a Christmas List
5. Don't Forget to Shop Around
6. Don't Wait Until the Last Minute
7. Don't Forget to Add Christmas to Your Budget

<http://moneyfor20s.about.com/od/financialrules/tp/Holiday-Shopping-Mistakes.htm>

SOFTWARE & WEB DEVELOPMENT : GETTING PERMISSION TO PUBLISH

The Internet has made it possible for anyone with a computer and modem to become a Web publisher. But, even though technology has made information more accessible to everyone, copyright and trademark laws still apply to Web publishing, and websites are common targets for infringement lawsuits. But it's not hard to stay out of legal trouble if you know the rules.

Source: www.nolo.com

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Matters of the Heart

How Does Emotional Stress Cause Heart Problems?

The exact relationship between stress and heart disease is unclear. But people who live in chronically stressed-out conditions are more likely to smoke and overeat, as well as to exercise less. Additionally, the surge in adrenaline caused by severe emotional stress causes the blood to clot more readily, increasing the risk of heart attacks. British investigators have shown that chronic work stress can produce chronic increases in adrenaline levels, and have related those changes to an increased risk of heart disease.

The type of emotional stress one experiences is important when planning a stress management intervention. In comparing the outcomes of individuals with different types of job-related stress, it was found that people with relatively little control over their own workplace destiny fared far worse than their bosses. (Bosses, of course, tend to have more control over their own lives – and the lives of others. As someone once said, it's good to be king.) A sense of loss of control, therefore, appears to be a particularly important form of emotional stress. Furthermore, this evidence seems to confirm that if some sense of control over one's destiny is maintained, job related stress can be exhilarating rather than debilitating.

What can be done about emotional stress?

Evidence suggests that it may be the individual, and not the stress itself that is the problem when it comes to the impact of stress. Given the same difficult situation, some people will respond with anger, an adrenaline rush, or the fight-or-flight mode, while others will react serenely. For example, 'Type A' personalities may create their own stressful situations. A simple trip to the grocery store could involve bad drivers, poorly-timed traffic lights, crowded aisles, indifferent check-out clerks, and thin plastic grocery bags that rip too easily. "The world is filled with half-brained incompetents whose only purpose is to get in my way," they will conclude. "It's a wonder any of them survived to adulthood."

Reducing stress levels in these cases, then, requires not an elimination of stressful situations (which is impossible), but a change in the way stress is handled. Type A's have to learn to become more B-like.

Essentially, new responses need to be learned, so that the fight-or-flight adrenaline surge is not automatically engaged at the first sign of trouble. Stress management programs have begun to demonstrate some success in accomplishing this end.

Stress management programs often consist of breathing exercises, stretching exercises, Yoga, meditation, and/or massage. There are probably several useful approaches, but they all aim toward the same goal – to blunt the adrenaline response to minor stress.

A recent study from Duke University reported a significant reduction in heart attacks among patients with coronary artery disease who underwent a formal stress management program, which was used in conjunction with a smoking cessation program, a weight-loss program, and control of lipids.

Recommendations

Stress management techniques may be quite helpful in reducing the risk of coronary events, and have the added benefit of being risk-free. Thus, there seems to be little reason not to recommend some form of stress management in people with heart disease, or with risk factors for heart disease. And finally, it should be pointed out that exercise is a great way of reducing chronic stress, and in addition has the advantage of directly lessening the risk of coronary artery disease, and helping to control obesity.

Sources: <http://heartdisease.about.com/cs/riskfactors/a/streshtdisease.htm>;
<http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/ehm584v1>

Chandola T, Britton A, Brunner E, et al. Work stress and coronary heart disease: what are the mechanisms? Eur Heart J 2008; DOI:10.1093/eurheartj/ehm584. Available on-line here: <http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/ehm584v1>.