

Employee Assistance Program



Southwest Florida Employee Assistance Program

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For a Healthy Mind and Body...Focus on Mind/Body Health

Cold and flu season...the holidays around the corner...back to school and work. There's a lot to be stressed about at this time of year, but it helps to know how your mind and your body can work to support each other.

Did you know:

93 percent of Americans say that perceptions, thoughts, and choices affect physical health (APA national poll, 2005)

Two-thirds of all office visits to family physicians are due to stress-related symptoms (American Academy of Family Physicians)

58 percent of Americans believe that one can't have good physical health without good mental health (APA national poll, 2005)

High levels of hostility have been found to predict heart disease more often than high cholesterol, cigarette smoking, or obesity (Health Psychology, November 2002)

More than 1/3 of Americans say they have had an illness that was primarily caused by stress (APA national poll, 2005)



Research supports the idea that having a positive outlook can extend one's life (Emotional Longevity: What Really Determines How Long You Live, Norman B. Anderson and Elizabeth P. Anderson, 2003)

Increasingly, we're discovering the mind/body health connection. But even though we know the two are linked, Americans are still more likely to seek help for the mind only in cases of depression or suicidal thoughts. People turn to diet after diet rather than deal with the emotional issues that lead them to overeat. They'll treat the physical ailment that may have been forestalled if they'd sought help for the stress that preceded the illness.

Here are some groups who want to change that thinking:

- American Council on Exercise
- American Institute of Stress
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Public Health Association
- Association for Community Health Improvement
- Health Enhancement Research Organization
- International Association of Fire Fighters
- International City/County Management Association
- The Mind/Body Medical Institute
- National Association of County and City Health Officials
- National Athletic Trainers' Association
- National Civic League
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Fitness Therapy Association
- National Women's Health Resource Center
- Partnership for Prevention
- Yoga Alliance

"58% of Americans believe that one can't have good physical health without good mental health"



This information was printed by the American Psychological Association Help Center. For more information please visit their website at:

<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/>

~~~~~NEWS FLASH!!!~~~~~

We are proud to announce the arrival of our Southwest Florida Employee Assistance Program web site. You can find us at <http://www.swfeap.com/> Please look for us on the web, and if you have any questions or comments, use the "contact us" page to let us know what you think. We have information on our program, and some interesting links to various websites that we hope you will find helpful.

Job Stress

Jobs and careers are an important part of our lives. Along with providing a source of income, they help us fulfill our personal aims, build social networks, and serve our professions or communities. They are also a major source of emotional stress.

Stress at work

Even "dream jobs" have stressful deadlines, performance expectations, and other responsibilities. For some, stress is the motivator that ensures things get done. However, workplace stress can easily overwhelm your life. You may continually worry about a particular project, feel unfairly treated by a supervisor or co-workers, or knowingly accept more than you can handle in hopes of earning a promotion. Putting your job ahead of everything else can also affect your personal relationships, compounding the work-related pressures.

Layoffs, restructuring, or management changes can heighten anxiety about your job security. In fact, a Norwegian study showed that the mere rumor of a factory's closure caused rapid increases in workers' pulse and blood pressure. Research in the U.S. has found that workplace injuries and accidents tend to increase in organizations that are being downsized.

The body reacts

Along with its emotional toll, prolonged job-related stress can drastically affect your physical health. Constant preoccupation with job responsibilities often leads to erratic eating habits and not enough exercise, resulting in weight problems, high blood pressure, and elevated cholesterol levels.

Common job stressors such as perceived low rewards, a hostile work environment, and long hours can also accelerate the onset of heart disease, including the likelihood of heart attacks. This is particularly true for blue-collar and manual workers. Studies suggest that because these

employees tend to have little control over their work environments, they are more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than those in traditional "white collar" jobs.

Your age is also a factor. A University of Utah study found that as stressed workers get older, their blood pressure increases above normal levels. Interestingly, many of the study's over-60 workers reported that they did not feel upset or unduly pressured by their jobs, even though their blood pressure levels were significantly higher.

A loss of mental energy

Job stress also frequently causes burnout, a condition marked by emotional exhaustion and negative or cynical attitudes toward others and yourself.

Burnout can lead to depression, which, in turn, has been linked to a variety of other health concerns such as heart disease and stroke, obesity and eating disorders, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. Chronic depression also reduces your immunity to other types of illnesses, and can even contribute to premature death.

What you can do

Fortunately, there are many ways to help manage job-related stress. Some programs blend relaxation techniques with nutrition and exercise. Others focus on specific issues such as time management, assertiveness training, and improving social skills.

A qualified psychologist can help you pinpoint the causes of your stress, and develop appropriate coping strategies.

Here are some other tips for dealing with stress on the job:



Make the most of workday breaks. Even 10 minutes of "personal time" will refresh your mental outlook. Take a brief walk, chat with a co-worker about a non-job topic, or simply sit quietly with your eyes closed and breathe. **If you feel angry, walk away.** Mentally regroup by counting to 10, then look at the situation again. Walking and other physical activities will also help you work off steam. **Set reasonable standards for yourself and others.** Don't expect perfection. Talk to your employer about your job description. Your responsibilities and performance criteria may not accurately reflect what you are doing. Working together to make needed changes will not only benefit your emotional and physical health, but also improve the organization's overall productivity.

To take the *Stress Smarts* quiz go to <http://apahelpcenter.org/quiz/>

This information was printed by the American Psychological Association Help Center.

<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/>

Why Worry?

"The type of worrying you should control and get rid of is needless worrying..."



Can you stop all of your worrying? Of course not. If your son or daughter is extremely late coming home one evening or a loved one is in a car accident and you're en route to the hospital, it wouldn't be normal if you were worry free.

The type of worrying you should control and get rid of is needless worrying: anxiety over possible future events in our lives that we cannot change, or that have no strong evidence of happening. Even then, there are things you can do to reduce the stress worrying causes.

These five steps will help you with any type of worrying:

Step one: Describe exactly what you are worried about. There's a saying that "the devil we do not know is always worse than the devil we do." The first step in problem solving is to make sure you have a clear picture of the problem. Also, by writing down or thinking out loud about your "worry" as if it's a problem you plan to solve, you get a sense of control. This feeling of control is an important key to reducing distress.

Step two: Make two lists. One, of all the things related to your worry which you can do something about. The second, of all the things completely out of your control.

Step three: Brainstorm and research. Ask other people for advice. So many of the problems in our life have been solved already by other humans we know. Hook up with a support group. Use search engines to find sites about the problem. You name it, there's information about it out there. All you need to do is look for it and ask about it.

Step four: This is the most important step of all. DO SOMETHING!!!

Step five: Stop thinking about the things that are out of your control. This is the hard one. If you're doing all you can to prevent the outcome from happening, the energy you spend worrying further is "worse than useless."

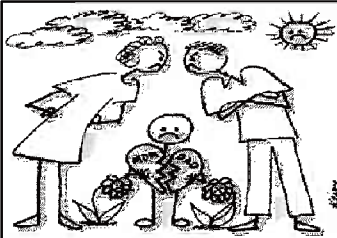
Children and Divorce

Divorce is one of the most difficult and painful experiences of your life, for everyone involved. During this stressful period, the feelings and concerns of the children can be lost in the maelstrom of the parents' emotional trauma. If a divorce is handled with the best interest of the children in mind, the children will be more resilient, and will learn that difficult situations can be resolved.

Children are often frightened or confused by the divorce. They sometimes believe they are responsible for their parent's problems, and, inversely, that they can bring their parents back together, if they just figure out what to do. If children are not kept informed of what is happening to them and their situation, they may create their own answers to the unspoken questions—answers that can be far removed from reality.

Depending on your child's age and temperament, you may notice your child exhibiting one or all of the following feelings/behaviors:

- Insecurity
- Sadness
- Anger
- Embarrassment
- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from the family



Some of the following suggestions may help:

Communication is vital. Talk to your child about the divorce and how it makes you both feel.

Avoid negative talk about the other parent.

Let your child know that you still love him/her very much.

Make sure your child knows that this is not his/her fault.

Avoid making children the "go-between" between you and your ex-spouse.

Do not punish your child by withholding visitation with the other parent because you are angry with your ex-spouse.

Take care of yourself. If you aren't a good "you", you may have a hard time being a good parent. If you or your children find it difficult to cope, contact your EAP and come and talk with one of our counselors.

Quotation Corner

"You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair."

-Martin Luther King



**WWW = WEB PAGES
WORTH WATCHING**

Southwest Florida EAP

For information on our program, with links to other sites.
<http://www.swfeap.com/>

The Way of the Worrier

Excerpt from Dr. Leahy's book
The Worry Cure

<http://www.cognitivetherapynyc.com/inthernewsDetail.asp?id=194>



What can the EAP do for you?



Just call

1-800-226-7930

Confidential assistance to help you solve personal problems

Free to all employees and their families

Links to local agencies for other assistance

24/7 phone access to a professional counselor.

Help you resolve issues such as:

Marital

Family

Stress

Financial

Legal

Anxiety

Depression

Etc...