

Excellence = MC²

Your Employee Assistance Program

1-800-899-3926

HEALTHY

EXCHANGE

ANOTHER BENEFIT OF YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

VOL. 4, NO. 1

For Your Information

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM WORK TO HOME

Prearrange with family members to allow yourself a "rejuvenation time" upon arriving home. Use this brief interlude to organize your thoughts, look through the mail, exercise, go for a walk, change your clothes, take a shower or hot bath, or partake in a relaxing tea time ritual.



COUPLE CARE

Treat your partner the way you want to be treated. Be respectful if you want to be respected. This approach helps establish the fact that both partners have responsibility in the relationship.



DO YOU KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

Many people recognize excessive sadness as a sign of depression but did you know that symptoms of depression often include headaches, back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, anxiety, sleep problems, shortness of breath, and many other conditions? If you have persistent symptoms that resist treatment, the underlying problem might be depression. Call your EAP or doctor and ask to be examined for depression.

SELF HELP

Growing Through A Personal Crisis



For me, the crisis began with a phone call, "Your mother has lung cancer." A crisis is like a bomb that explodes in your life and shatters it. It is a state of tremendous upheaval, hurt and despair, caused by a specific experience, whether it be the death of a loved one, getting fired from a job, being victimized, the loss of a special relationship, or finding out you or someone you love has a serious illness.

To be alive and to be human is to know crisis; no one is immune. Somewhere, sometime, in some way you will face a crisis or have faced a crisis. If so, you know how it feels and what it can do to you. When a crisis occurs, you may discover that your normal coping skills no longer work. If you could handle the upset by using your normal problem-solving skills you would not be experiencing a crisis – a very rough time, but not a crisis.

*"As bad as it is...a crisis can be survived.
What is more, a time of crisis can be
turned into a time of growth."*

In my profession as a psychotherapist, I help people deal with and effectively move through crisis periods. I know no one is immune to crisis, including myself. And yet, as bad as it is, as terrible as it makes you feel, a crisis can be survived. What is more, a time of crisis can be turned into a time of growth. Through crisis the possibility exists for creating something new and better and you can emerge from crisis a stronger, wiser and more capable person.

You may notice that people who have grown through a crisis often talk about how they have been transformed in some way by the traumatic experience. For example, you may know someone who has suffered a physical crisis where there has been a loss of physical functioning. This person may talk about the fact that they discovered new skills and resources they had never known before. They may talk about growing closer to others or learning to express their caring or needs more openly.

Why do some people emerge transformed by crisis, and show great benefit from the experience, while others remain stifled, bitter, angry, closed or hurting?

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Relationship Conflict: For Women, Silence Is Not Golden



Married women who keep silent during marital disputes have a greater chance of dying from heart disease and other conditions than do women who speak their minds, according to a study published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*. The research, which spanned from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, was the latest to show that the way couples argue and fight affects not only their relationship but also their physical health. “For women,” the study summarizes, “the message is clear. When in conflict with your spouse, it helps to express yourself.”

How to “fight” and be heard

If you want to learn how to better express yourself during conflicts with your partner, you and your partner need to learn how to “fight fair.” Fighting fair means following guidelines that promote a safe and fair fight, where both partners allow each other to express feelings and positions fully. The guidelines below can help:

1. Be specific when you introduce a complaint. Confine yourself to one issue at a time.
2. Don’t just complain. Ask for a reasonable change to help resolve the problem.
3. Do not let counter-demands enter the picture until the original request is clearly understood and there has been a clear-cut response.
4. Do not be sarcastic or intolerant. Be open to your own feelings and equally open to your partner’s.
5. Do not correct your partner’s statement of his/her own feelings. Do not tell your partner what she/he should know or feel.
6. Never assume that you know what your partner is thinking until you have checked out the assumption in plain language. Do not predict how she/he will react.
7. Always be open to compromise. Your partner’s view of reality may be as real as your’s, even though you may differ.
8. Never make labeling statements, accusations or put-downs. Name calling, snide remarks, put-downs or negative facial expressions are unacceptable, unproductive and damaging to your relationship.
9. Forget the past and stay in the here and now. Don’t use “always,” “never” or “should.” What happened last month is not as important as what you are feeling now.
10. Don’t interrupt. Let the other person finish before you speak.
11. No physical violence allowed. This is a firm guideline for fair fighting.
12. Time out is okay. If things get too heated, ask to continue the discussion at another time. Specify the time.

Your EAP is here to help

If you are concerned about a particularly difficult marital or relationship issue, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for FREE and CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. Remember, your EAP can assist you with most-any type of personal, family or work-related concern.

GROWING THROUGH CRISIS...

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Learning how to grow through crisis

Consider the following suggestions to help you grow through a crisis:

1. Take care of yourself. Physical strain always accompanies the psychological strain of a crisis. Tiredness, sleep issues, disturbed eating patterns, heart palpitations, difficulty breathing, headaches, neck or back pain, muscular tension or pain, nausea or stomach ache – many or all of these can accompany a crisis. Pay attention to any symptoms you may be experiencing and practice known health practices to help lessen their impact on your health and well being. Be sure to:

- Eat a nutritious, balanced diet. Limit your intake of caffeine, alcohol and sugar. Avoid use of tobacco or other drug use.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes most days. Consider taking a brisk walk each day. Exercise can dissipate stress energy, lift your mood and provide a wonderful, built-in time for thinking and reflecting.
- Practice some form of relaxation daily. To help your body relax, try deep breathing. Take some time each day to sit for 5-10 minutes and simply breathe. This will lower the amount of tension you hold in your body and improve your state of mind.
- Get adequate sleep. Try to get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.



2. Express painful emotions.

The most common aspect of a crisis that I frequently hear expressed is that the whole experience feels terrible. Many powerful emotions are felt in a crisis – sorrow, anger, anxiety, fear, confusion, helplessness. If not expressed, these emotions will be bottled up in some way and prolong or increase your distress.

People who survive and grow through a crisis come to terms with these powerful emotions. In the early stages of a crisis, it is important to identify the feelings and express them in healthy ways. This expression of feelings relieves some of the intensity so that you can begin to make sense of your feelings and understand what they mean in your life and in this current crisis. Keeping a journal, talking to a close friend, a spouse, your physician, a psychotherapist, or clergy person are all important resources that can be used to express your feelings.

3. Develop a new mental perspective. When I listen to people in crisis the most common comment I hear is, “I never expected this to happen to me.” This feeling is very normal, but suggests that there is a need to gain a mental grasp of the crisis, to analyze all of the components that are contributing to the crisis. Growing through a crisis means adapting mentally and developing new thoughts, beliefs and understandings regarding how you interpret the crisis and how you think about it. To gain a healthier mental perspective, follow these steps:

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GROWING THROUGH CRISIS...

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- Learn everything you can about the crisis. The more you know it, the better you'll be able to deal with it. What happened to cause the crisis? How is this crisis affecting you now? Face the painful facts.
- Analyze how the crisis has shattered your expectations, dreams or goals. Ask yourself: "What's the worse thing that can happen as a result of this crisis? What do I stand to lose because of this crisis? Who or what is in control of the effects of this crisis now?" Identify where the repair work is needed.
- Develop a new mental map. The new map contains revised dreams and goals. Begin by identifying your opportunities. Ask yourself, in light of this crisis: "What are my possibilities and opportunities for growing? For learning? For becoming wiser? Stronger? Healthier? More loving? More productive? What benefits or gains are hidden in this crisis?"

A crisis shakes your stable world, forcing changes upon you that you do not want, changes that can make your life miserable, painful and difficult. You may wonder if you can ever feel good about your life again. But with this change comes an opportunity to learn and improve. The one positive resolution to crisis is growth.

If you are in the midst of a crisis, remind yourself that nothing is permanent and that all things will one day come to an end, including bad episodes. Reach out to family, friends, support groups or clergy for help and support, or seek professional help. The road through crisis is never easy. There will be setbacks and discouragement. Within you are reservoirs of courage, strength and love. Follow the suggestions above and with time you will survive and learn how to grow through crisis. You will emerge ready to resume living, loving, working and ready to move your life forward.

Your EAP is here to help

If you or one of your dependent family members needs help overcoming a personal crisis, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you by providing professional support, counseling, referrals or information. If you need help, why not call a professional EAP counselor today? We're here to help you.

Suicide Prevention

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 75 percent of those who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.

What are the warning signs of suicide?

Warning signs of suicide may include:

- ◆ Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking or writing about wanting to do so
- ◆ Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- ◆ Giving away prized possessions
- ◆ Feeling hopeless, seeing no reason for living
- ◆ Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger
- ◆ Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- ◆ Feeling trapped or desperate – like there's no way out
- ◆ Increasing alcohol or drug use
- ◆ Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- ◆ Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- ◆ Experiencing dramatic mood changes

*Source: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Note: The warning signs above are some typical behaviors which may be cause for concern. This list is not intended to be all inclusive and you should never attempt to diagnose a behavioral health issue.



What to do if you think a friend or loved one is suicidal

Professional help should be sought immediately if a person is experiencing suicidal thoughts. Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. In an acute crisis, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for a referral to the closest possible crisis center in your area. In addition, a caring and professional EAP counselor can provide you with information and support regarding how to most effectively help the person you're concerned about, or provide you with other information about suicide prevention or mental health services. All EAP services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: If you are concerned about an individual who is not covered by your EAP benefit, you can refer him/her to the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**. The Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis.

Surviving A Personal Crisis: Do's And Don'ts

Do's

- Do allow yourself time to talk, be angry, cry, laugh and grieve according to your needs.
- Do allow your children to share in your distress and encourage them to express their emotions.
- Do face reality, even if it is painful: return to the scene, inspect damage, or in the case of the death of someone you love, view the body or attend the memorial service.
- Do spend time with people who care about you, or seek comfort and help from a support group.
- Do spend time alone when you need it.
- Do recognize that everyone expresses things in their own way. Men may find it harder to express emotion and weep. Children may need encouragement and support to express themselves.
- Do express your needs clearly and honestly to family, friends or co-workers.

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DO'S AND DON'TS...

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- Do exercise and make time for recreation and rest. Get adequate sleep.
- Do return to everyday routines and familiar activities as soon as possible – even in small ways. Do things that are active and useful (however, be careful to avoid over-activity).

Don'ts

- Don't hold in your feelings.
- Don't avoid talking or thinking about what has happened.
- Don't isolate yourself or think that you have to handle it all on your own.
- Don't block your feelings by being over-busy or working overly long hours.
- Don't increase smoking, drinking or drug taking.

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1-800-899-3926

Did you know?

Your EAP Website offers:

- Employee/Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Administrator Satisfaction Surveys
- Articles & Newsletters
- Quizzes & Self Assessment Instruments
- Tips on Stress Reduction
- Management and Human Resource Tips

Forgot your password? Ask your Human Resource specialist for the password or call the EAP at 1-800-899-3926.

www.theemployeeassistanceprogram.com

Help For Parents: Is Your Child Using Drugs?

The mood swings and unpredictable behavior of the teen years often make it hard to tell if a child is using drugs...but there are warning signs you can watch out for. If your child exhibits one or more of the following behaviors or moods, drugs may have become a part of his or her life:

- ▶ She's withdrawn, depressed, tired, or careless about her personal grooming.
- ▶ He's hostile, uncooperative, and frequently breaks curfews.
- ▶ Her relationships with family members have deteriorated.
- ▶ He's hanging around with a new group of friends.
- ▶ Her grades have slipped, and her school attendance is irregular.
- ▶ He's lost interest in hobbies, sports, and other favorite activities.
- ▶ Her eating and sleeping patterns have changed, she's up at night and sleeps during the day.
- ▶ He has a hard time concentrating.
- ▶ Her eyes are red-rimmed and her nose is runny – but she doesn't have allergies or a cold.
- ▶ Household money has been disappearing.
- ▶ You have found any of the following in your home: pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, homemade pipes, or bongs (pipes that use water as a filter) made from soda cans or plastic beverage containers.



(Source: Partnership for a Drug-Free America, www.drugfreeamerica.org)

What to do

Some of the signs above, such as depression or decline in school performance, might be explained by other causes. When in doubt, get help. See your family doctor or local clinic to rule out illness or other physical problems.

If you suspect your child is having problems with alcohol or drugs, it is important that you face the problem promptly and get whatever help is needed to stop your child's use. Call your EAP for confidential counseling, referrals and/or information. An experienced EAP counselor can help you assess the situation and help you determine a plan of action. We're here to help you.

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-899-3926

- Personal / Work Stress
- Marital / Family Concerns
- Alcohol / Drug Concerns
- Frustration / Anger / Sadness

**CALL FOR FREE
CONFIDENTIAL
HELP**

All of us experience personal, family or work related problems now and then. Sometimes, even ordinary problems can become overwhelming. It is at these times, your **EAP** can provide free confidential assistance. Employees or family members can call to receive telephone consultation and/or to schedule an appointment with an **EAP** specialist.

Read Healthy Exchange online: theemployeeassistanceprogram.com
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