For Your Information

INCREASE YOUR STRESS
FITNESS
Start each day with a nutritious breakfast. You are much more vulnerable to stress when you’re hungry and lethargic than when you’re well-nourished.

COUPLE CARE
Make time for each other. Scheduling time together on a weekly basis can help keep you close and help alleviate stress in your relationship.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT TIP
Did you know that the average American gains one pound of fat every year between the ages of 25 and 55? That’s about the equivalent of just 100 extra calories a day...or one-half can of soda...half a large cookie...or one thick slice of bread. Solution: Walk briskly for 30 minutes a day. This will burn extra calories and prevent weight gain.

WELLNESS

Optimism Is Good For Your Health

According to the latest research, optimistic people are healthier and live longer than pessimists:

- In 2010, researchers studied the results of 83 scientific studies measuring the impact of optimism on physical health. Whether an individual study looked at overall longevity, survival from a disease, heart health, immunity, cancer outcomes, pregnancy outcomes, pain tolerance, or another health topic, those who had a more optimistic outlook performed better and had a better outcome than those who were pessimistic.

- A 2006 study looked at nearly 7,000 students who had taken a psychological test when they enrolled at the University of North Carolina in the 1960’s. Among the most pessimistic third of the subjects, the death rate over the next 40 years was 42% higher when compared to the most optimistic third.

- In a study of 1,000 men and women aged 65 to 85, after nearly 10 years of follow up, those who described themselves as “highly optimistic” had a 55% lower risk of death from all causes, when compared to those who were termed “very pessimistic.”

Some may believe that optimists are unrealistic people who ignore reality, but numerous studies report otherwise. Far from living life with blinders on, it is optimists who confront trouble head-on while pessimists bury their heads in denial and avoidance. In a study of women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, the women with an optimistic disposition were more likely to acknowledge the seriousness of the disease and took more active steps to cope with it. Several studies have shown that optimistic breast cancer patients have better health outcomes than pessimistic and hopeless patients.

Researchers say several factors may explain the link between optimism, better health and longer life.

- Optimism is associated with living healthier – more physical activity, less smoking, moderate use of alcohol, following their doctors advice more faithfully, etc.

Continued on page 2
ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

Help for Problem Gambling

Approximately two million adults in the U.S. meet the criteria for pathological gambling, and another four to six million are considered problem gamblers, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling. Due mainly to shame, denial and a desire to handle the problem themselves, only one in 10 problem gamblers seek professional help.

What is problem gambling?

Just as some people become addicted to drugs or alcohol, it is possible for a person to become obsessed with an uncontrollable urge to gamble. A person has a problem with gambling if he or she continues to gamble despite evidence that their gambling is causing personal, family, financial, work or legal problems.

Warning signs of problem gambling

Review the warning signs below. If you or someone you know answers “Yes” to any of the questions below, consider seeking help from a professional who is experienced in treating problem gambling:

1. You have often gambled longer than you had planned.
2. You have often gambled until your last dollar was gone.
3. Thoughts of gambling have caused you to lose sleep.
4. You have used your income or savings to gamble while letting bills go unpaid.
5. You have made repeated, unsuccessful attempts to stop gambling.
6. You have broken the law or considered breaking the law to finance your gambling.
7. You have borrowed money to finance your gambling.
8. You have felt depressed or suicidal because of your gambling losses.
9. You have been remorseful after gambling.
10. You have gambled to get money to meet your financial obligations.

Your EAP is here to help

If gambling has gotten out of control for you, recognizing and admitting that you have a problem is the first step toward recovery. There are specific behavior patterns associated with problem gambling. Gamblers who recognize these patterns can cope with their problem and learn to live free of gambling. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can provide you or your dependents with counseling, referrals and/or information to help you recover a life free of gambling. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help you.

Optimism is good for your health

Continued from page 1

- Optimistic people tend to have more friends and a larger social network to rely on during crises.
- Optimists handle stress better, a risk factor associated with high blood pressure, heart disease and other risk factors that adversely affect health and longevity.

More benefits of optimism

By almost every measure, optimists fair better than pessimists, whether it’s work, school, sports or relationships. They get depressed less often than pessimists do, make more money and have happier marriages. Optimists don’t give up as easily as pessimists and they are more likely to achieve success because of it. They see negative events as minor setbacks to be overcome and view positive events as evidence of more good things to come. Believing in themselves, optimists also take more risks and create more positive events in their lives.

What makes optimism so optimal?

According to psychologist Suzanne Segerstrom, optimism is not just about feeling positive. It’s also about being motivated and persistent. In her book, Breaking Murphy’s Law: How Optimists Get What They Want From Life – and Pessimists Can Too, Segerstrom explains that optimists tend to deal with problems head-on. Instead of walking away, they plan a course of action, seek advice from others, and stay focused on solutions. Segerstrom also says that optimists tend to expect a good outcome, and even when they don’t get it, they find ways to learn and grow from the negative experience. Optimists believe their actions shape their destinies. This may be why optimists are more likely to eat right and exercise and are less likely to smoke or engage in other unhealthy habits. When an optimist does get sick, he/she is more apt to research the ailment, seek appropriate medical care and actively participate in treatment – all of which may improve her/his prognosis.

10 tips to increase optimism

So what if you are a pessimist or not as optimistic as you’d like to be? No matter what your outlook is, studies show that optimism can be learned and improved. The following strategies can help you decrease pessimistic thinking and increase optimism:
1. Notice your negative self-talk – Become aware of the negative scripts that you are playing in your mind and constantly play. Self-talk such as, “I can’t do that. I’m not good enough to... I’m afraid to...” Track your thoughts on a daily basis and notice the negative assumptions and conclusions that you draw. Identifying your negative self-talk is essential to change.

2. Capitalize on the power of positive thinking – When you find yourself saying something negative, think of something positive to say even if it doesn’t “ring true” to you at the moment. Segerstrom says that even if you’re not completely “feeling it,” you should “fake it until you make it.” By merely acting more optimistic, you’re likely to be more engaged in the process and the outcome and are less likely to give up after an initial failure. Replace phrases such as “I can’t...” or “That is never going to work” with “I’ll try...” or “Let’s see how that will work out.”

3. Reframe how you define events – Instead of dwelling on a bad experience, analyze it to figure out what good can come out of it. What can you learn from the experience that will help you grow from it? Virtually any “failure” can be turned into a learning experience, which increases your potential for success in the future.

4. Focus on the here-and-now – Avoid dwelling on negative past experiences. If you face a difficult situation, determine the cause, take corrective action and move forward. Too much obsessing about the past can paralyze you, just when positive action is what is most needed.

5. Be realistic and expect ups and downs – Just because you’re an optimist doesn’t mean you’re not going to have bad days. Setbacks happen to everyone. When things go wrong, learn from what went wrong and move forward with a new determination to make things turn out better.

6. Focus on what you can control and let go of what you can’t – Pessimism is impractical because it causes you to spend time dwelling on negative things that haven’t happened yet, while simultaneously preventing you from taking effective action in the present. Recognize the things you can’t control, let these go and focus your energy and thoughts on the things that you can control to affect the best outcome possible.

7. Set and pursue goals – How can you keep from being immobilized by pessimistic thinking? By taking action, even if you think it might be futile. Determine what is important to you and set meaningful goals. Create and write down a step-by-step plan for accomplishing your goal and then take the first step. Even if you’re worried about doing something new, just give it a go. With planning and persistence, your chances of succeeding are greatly enhanced.

8. Be persistent – It’s persistence that paves the optimists path, says Segerstrom. Optimists believe they will eventually succeed, so they keep plugging away at their goals. “Positive expectations fuel motivation and hard work,” Segerstrom explains. “Negative expectations have the exact opposite effect.” Optimists keep going. When they succeed they try harder. When they fail, they try again.
Optimism is good for your health
Continued from page 3

9. Surround yourself with positive people
   - Optimism is a learned habit and can be contagious. Surround yourself with supportive friends who have positive outlooks. Avoid negative people whenever possible, and if you can’t avoid them, develop strategies to help you limit your exposure to them as much as possible.

10. Focus on the positive
    - Keep a diary of all of the good things in your life. Spend a few minutes at the end of your day writing down your positive experiences. This exercise will help you end each day on a strong, positive note.

Your EAP is here to help
Remember, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to help you or your dependents with any personal, family or work-related concern. If you or a family member needs help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help you.

Coping with the Holiday Blues

Feeling sad, lonely or depressed during the holidays is common for many people. If you sometimes feel “blue” during the holidays the suggestions below may help you:

Acknowledging your feelings. If you’re suffering from the recent loss of a family member, if you’re separated from your children or loved ones, or if you’ve experienced a recent relationship breakup, realize that these can cause great feelings of loneliness and sadness. It is okay now and then to take time just to cry or express your feelings. Recognize and accept that both positive and negative feelings may be experienced during the holidays and that this is NORMAL.

Seek support. Seek out the support or companionship of family, friends or others who comfort and nourish you. Reduce time spent with difficult family members and avoid people who are unsupportive. Tap into workplace support services such as your company’s employee assistance program (EAP), which can offer you personalized, professional help.

Be realistic. Take stock of your expectations for the holidays and make sure they are realistic. Try to recognize and reframe unrealistic expectations. As families change and grow, traditions may need to change and grow as well. If necessary, create new holiday traditions. Expect and accept imperfection.

Learn to say no. If you’re really feeling out of sorts, you may want to avoid some festivities because they are out of sync with how you are feeling. Try to tell those around you what you really need, since they may not know how to help you, and ask for their understanding if you decline an activity.

Getting Help

For some people, the holiday blues can lead to more serious depression. If you continue to feel “down” for several weeks, and you experience changes in appetite, difficulty sleeping, unusual fatigue, severe anxiety or persistent unhappiness, contact your doctor or a health care professional. You may be suffering from clinical depression and the sooner you begin treatment, the sooner you can recover.

Excellence = MC²
Your Employee Assistance Program
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

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
Newsletter comments welcome at: Managed Care Concepts
P.O. Box 812032, Boca Raton, FL 33481-2032