

**Excellence = MC<sup>2</sup>**  
Your Employee Assistance Program  
**1-800-899-3926**

# HEALTHY

## EXCHANGE

ANOTHER BENEFIT OF YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

VOL. 1, NO. 1

## For Your Information

### ◆ WALK AWAY STRESS

If you're feeling stressed out, take a walk. A recent University of Illinois study reports that short walks (10 to 15 minutes) can make people feel more calm and relaxed. Numerous studies have concluded that brisk walking can relieve tension, boost energy and improve your mood.



### ◆ BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

If you frequently find there are not enough hours in the day to get things done, learn to say "no" to extra projects, social activities and invitations you don't have the time or energy for. Manage your time based on what you have identified as "most important in your life."

### ◆ ANGER MANAGEMENT TIP

Before you blow your stack, count to ten. When something angers you, give your body time to defuse before you react. Take three or four deep breaths. Ask yourself: "Will this really matter one year from now?"



## RELATIONSHIPS:

# What Makes A Marriage Work?

Periods of conflict, frustration or anger are an inevitable part of every marriage or long-term relationship simply because they are in the fabric of all human relationships. Why are some couples able to work through their disagreements or frustrations and survive and thrive, while others end up in a vicious cycle of negative feelings, emotional distancing and deterioration that leads to divorce?



## STAYING TOGETHER

Contrary to popular belief, it's not how much you love each other that will best determine the future of your relationship, but how you handle conflicts and disagreements. Couples that stay together disagree about just as many things and the same things — money, time, housework, sex, priorities, the kids, etc. — as couples that divorce. The difference is that those in successful marriages know how to manage conflict in a constructive and positive way.

Researchers from two major research labs in the United States have found that the likelihood of divorce can be predicted by studying how couples handle conflict. Disagreement isn't predictive of divorce. Fighting isn't predictive of divorce. Criticizing, stubbornness, withdrawal and arguing that includes put-downs, accusations and

rejections is predictive of divorce.

Over time, these negative patterns of dealing with conflict steadily erode all of the good things in the relationship, ultimately leading to a relationship overwhelmed by negative feelings.

## HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS CONSTRUCTIVELY

By learning to resolve conflicts and manage disagreements constructively, you can limit negative encounters with your partner and strengthen the positive side of your relationship. Follow these guidelines:

### 1. Eliminate negative communication styles

Are you or your partner guilty of any of the

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# GRIEF — Helping The Recovery Process

Studies show that those who openly grieve heal much faster than those who repress or avoid their feelings. Running away from grief postpones sorrow; clinging to grief prolongs pain. Neither leads to healing. The grieving process is nature's way of helping us heal. If you've had a recent loss, keep the following in mind:



Talk about your sorrow. Seek comfort from those who will listen and accept your feelings.

Forgive yourself. Work through any guilt or "should haves" by acknowledging them and expressing your feelings.

Take care of yourself. Exercise, maintain a balanced diet, get plenty of rest and make time for relaxing activities that clear your mind.

Start something new in your life. When you're ready, find interesting things to do, like taking a class, volunteering, joining a book club, traveling or adopting a pet.

Get help. If you are in great distress or feel very depressed, talk to your family doctor, who may want to refer you to a counselor.

## Helping Those Who Are Grieving

If you know someone who is grieving, these suggestions may help.

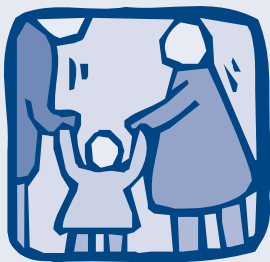
Reach out and listen. Ask about the deceased and allow the person to talk freely.

Offer to help. Offer to do simple tasks at home or work.

Include the grieving person in your social life. Grieving people don't necessarily want to be alone, but they may need encouragement to rejoin social situations.

Pay attention to these signs. Signs of weight loss or gain, substance abuse, depression, prolonged sleep disorders, physical problems and talk about suicide require immediate attention. Suggest the grieving person talk to his or her doctor or a counselor.

## Helping A Child Grieve



It is difficult to help a child to understand death. There are no simple formulas for accomplishing

this task. Helping children is especially hard when parents are upset and have their own difficulties dealing with the death of a loved one.

### 3 Keys to help a child cope with death

Grief experts have identified three keys to help a child cope with death, accept the loss and move forward with their life:

1. The child receives prompt, accurate information about what has happened and is allowed to ask all sorts of questions, which adults answer as honestly as possible, acknowledging that they do not know the answer if that is the case.
2. The child is allowed to participate in the family grieving, both publicly and privately.
3. The child has easy access to a trusted parent or other adult who can be relied upon for comfort and a continuing relationship.

Follow these suggestions to help a child through the grieving process:

- Immediately after the child has been informed of the death, let them know that you will be there to help them; that they

are free to talk about how they feel; that they can ask questions and you'll try your best to answer them.

- Continually reinforce the message: "You're feelings are important to me, and I will find time to listen to them."
- Recognize that everyone deals with hurt and confusion in their own way and children need the leeway to grieve in whatever way they can, and at their own pace. If the child expresses feelings or actions that differ from your own, respect the differences. **Most Important:** It is the recognition, acceptance, and validation of each emotion as it occurs that lets the child move from one emotional state to another so that grief can be completed.

### YOUR EAP IS HERE TO HELP

Remember, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to help you or your dependents with personal, family or work-related concerns, including issues related to loss and grief. EAP services are FREE and strictly CONFIDENTIAL. If you need help, why not call a professional EAP counselor today at 1-800-899-3926? We're here to help.

## RELATIONSHIPS

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communication styles below?

- \_\_\_\_\_ criticizing your partner's opinions, feelings or desires
- \_\_\_\_\_ putting down the thoughts, feelings, actions or worth of your partner
- \_\_\_\_\_ name calling
- \_\_\_\_\_ insensitivity
- \_\_\_\_\_ stonewalling
- \_\_\_\_\_ making accusations
- \_\_\_\_\_ avoiding disagreements or important discussions
- \_\_\_\_\_ disregarding
- \_\_\_\_\_ withdrawing from conflicts
- \_\_\_\_\_ bringing up past hurts

These negative ways of interacting sabotage any attempts at constructive communication, erode positive feelings and are devastating to a relationship.

### 2. Learn how to listen

Constructive and positive communication begins with genuinely attempting to understand the other person's point of view, needs or feelings. First, listening to understand focuses attention on the issue at hand, not on individual personalities. Second, caring to listen to what your partner thinks and feels is a way of showing that you care about him/her. For more effective listening you should:

- **Listen for understanding** — Give your partner an opportunity to communicate his/her thoughts, feelings, needs or desires regarding the issue at hand. Listen for understanding, rather than spending time preparing for what you're going to say next.
- **Ask questions** — Guard against assuming that you know what your partner meant or felt by asking questions to assure your understanding. Ask questions such as, "Do I hear you correctly?" or "Is this what you are saying?"
- **Summarize** — When your partner is finished speaking, repeat what he/she said — in your own words — to confirm with your partner that you understand.

## Are You Experiencing Job Burnout?

- ✓ Are you regularly experiencing fatigue and low energy levels at your job?
- ✓ Have you become more cynical or bitter about your job, your boss or your company?
- ✓ Are non-work relationships (marital, family, friendships) affected by your feelings about work?

Job burnout is a physical and emotional response to work that leaves you feeling fatigued, drained, frustrated, unmotivated, powerless and hopeless. It is brought on by experiencing prolonged and constant high levels of stress. It is important to take time to recover and heal from burnout because these stress reactions can result in levels of depression and unhappiness that eventually threaten your job, your relationships and your health.



### EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF JOB BURNOUT

How do you know if you, a loved one, or someone who reports to you is suffering from job burnout? Review the early warning signs below:

1. Emotional and physical exhaustion
2. Increased cynicism, negativity, and irritability
3. Apathy, not caring about your job
4. Anxiety and reluctance to go to work
5. Declining work performance, excessive absences or lateness
6. Difficulty sleeping, weight loss or gain
7. Frequent headaches or gastrointestinal problems
8. Easily angered at seemingly inconsequential things
9. Edginess and quickness to blame others
10. Mood swings, feelings of helplessness and depression

### BEATING BURNOUT

Learning how to deal with and manage stress is critical to preventing or overcoming job burnout. The first step toward coping with burnout is defining the problem. Is the situation itself stressful? Is there something about your situation that you can change? Changes in both you and your environment can help prevent burnout.

**CONTACT YOUR EAP:** If you are suffering from symptoms of job burnout — or need help with any other work-related issue — contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help.

### 3. Improve your speaking skills

By learning to speak without attacking your partner's thoughts, feelings, actions or worth, you can keep disagreements from escalating into full-blown and nasty arguments. To improve your talking skills you should:

- **Make "I" statements** — Avoid starting a sentence with "you." It sounds like an accusation or an invitation to fight (which it usually is). Instead, put yourself on the line by sharing how it is for you. Say, "I think..." or

"I want..." or "I feel..."

- **Use "Feeling" words** — Communicate clearly to your partner by using feeling words like "sad," "happy," "excited," "angry," "worried," etc. Remember to start the sentence with an "I" as in, "I was upset when you forgot about our date."
- **Focus on issues, not personalities** — Deal with specific issues on which

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## RELATIONSHIPS

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decisions and compromise action can be worked out. Be specific when you introduce a complaint. Confine yourself to one issue at a time.

By avoiding negative communication styles and improving your listening and talking skills, you can learn to resolve differences without negative consequences and, in fact, grow stronger and closer by solving them together.

## GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

If you are concerned about a particularly difficult marital or relationship issue, or if physical abuse, substance abuse or depression are involved, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for counseling, referrals or information. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

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Your Employee Assistance Program

**1-800-899-3926**

Have you checked out your EAP Website? You'll find articles and quizzes on a variety of topics designed to help you be healthier! In addition, you'll find tips on how to make the most of your Employee Assistance benefits. Visit the website today.

[www.theemployeeassistanceprogram.com](http://www.theemployeeassistanceprogram.com)

# Debt Problem Danger Signs

Are you in financial trouble or "stressed out" because your debt is growing out of control? Review the debt problem danger signs below.

## WARNING SIGNS OF OVER-SPENDING AND TOO MUCH DEBT

- ✓ Charging inexpensive items.
- ✓ Charging items you might not buy if you were paying cash.
- ✓ Charging more each month to accounts with outstanding balances.
- ✓ Charging items you don't need, and then feeling guilty.
- ✓ Charging items on a delayed payment plan.
- ✓ Assuming your credit cards entitle you to a particular standard of living, regardless of your actual income.
- ✓ You only shop at stores where you can "charge it."
- ✓ Medical insurance is too expensive to afford.
- ✓ You are reluctant to open bills from creditors.
- ✓ You let payments "slide" until the next paycheck.
- ✓ Discussions of monthly bills become arguments.
- ✓ You write checks today on funds that will be deposited tomorrow.
- ✓ You dip into your savings account for items and never replenish the supply.
- ✓ You have no savings account.
- ✓ You've applied for more credit cards to enable you to pay off other credit card balances.
- ✓ You have no budget.



If these warning signs apply to you, consider calling the Consumer Credit Counseling Service at 1-800-873-2227. Their services include:

- An assessment of your financial situation
- Developing a spending plan and setting financial action plans that meet your goals

To strengthen your resources of support you may want to include the professional counseling of your EAP specialist who can assist you with the emotional and relational stressors that may be associated with your over-spending.

\* Warning signs provided by Consumer Credit Counseling Services

## 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](http://theemployeeassistanceprogram.com)  
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