



The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he's always doing both.

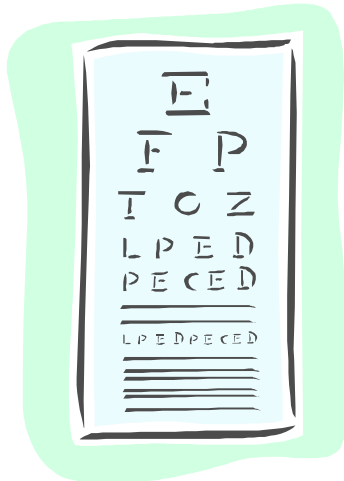
-James Michener

ANOTHER BENEFIT OF YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EAP ACCENTS

Staying Focused

in a Blurry World



When was the last time you felt really focused? Are you seeing clearly when it comes to life goals, priorities and the future? Even

that we don't find ourselves spending time doing things that have little meaning for us. Once we have those priorities, we need to determine the best direction to take to avoid getting off track. Often this requires seriously considering who or what we will follow in the course of our lives. Lastly, we need to be aware of the obstacles that will prevent us from seeing clearly.

tomorrow can be seem hazy at times, let alone a month or year from now. Many of us start out so idealistic, especially right out of high school or college, ready to take on the world. Yet, somewhere along the line, our vision becomes blurred and we lose sight of what's most important to us.

In this issue of *EAP Accents*, we'll examine all of those issues. Hopefully, by the time you're finished reading, your vision will have improved and you'll have the tools you need to see clearly in a blurry world!

Your Employee Assistance Program

1-800-899-3926

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That's not to say the most important things are the same for everyone. In fact, in today's world, with a multitude of opportunities and experiences so readily available, our priorities and desires are most likely very different. However, the method of seeing clearly in this life follows a fairly similar pattern for most of us.

We have to establish priorities so

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company ...a church ...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past ...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude ...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you ...we are in charge of our attitudes.

-Charles Swindoll

What Are Your Priorities?

What are the most important things in your life? Make a list now. List the top five priorities in your life. Are they family, friends, spirituality, work promotion, money, health, etc? Seriously consider these five priorities. How much time to you really spend on each of them? Have you become overworked, unhealthy and unhappy because rather than focus on where you want to go, you just survive? Is the world moving so fast that you don't think you have time to even consider what you really desire or need? Well, you have a finite number of years to live, why not start now and determine what is most important to you.



Establishing priorities and understanding what you really want out of life is not always easy. Sometimes we've spent so long in survival mode that we can't even fathom what's really important to us.

Rule #1 There can be no "buts" when working on priorities. No "I'd work out but I just don't have time". No "I'd really like to see new places and meet new people but I'm in debt." No "I want to put my children first but my job doesn't leave much time for them." At this stage, you simply want to take note of what's most important. You can deal with the obstacles later.

Rule #2 You have to be honest. Don't establish your priorities based on what others think or preconceived notions about yourself. Just because

you were voted "Most Likely to Succeed" in high school, doesn't mean you have to be anything other than what you choose to be...stay at home mom, laborer or CEO. You may choose your family over your job, which might require a less prestigious career but allow you more time at home. Or you might choose a career that makes having children challenging for a time. Just because your friends are having kids or making a certain amount of money, it doesn't mean you have to make those things priorities. Remember the old jumping off the bridge adage?

Rule #3 You have to start where you are now. If you have children, you don't want to suddenly set a priority that excludes them. In the end, you won't be content if you seek happiness at the expense of others. If you want to travel and see the world, but you have small children preventing you from doing so, plan for the time when you can travel. You want to buy a cabin and spend weekends at the lake, but you're in debt. Plan to be out of debt so you can keep that priority. If you'd just like to own your own business, but are afraid to take the risk, get help dealing with the fear so you can see your dream clearly again.

Rule #4 Persevere. Until you're gone, don't give up. Surround yourself with others who will encourage you. Remind yourself daily of what's most important to you and the direction that you're taking to keep your priorities in order.

Determining Direction

Once you have your priorities in order, how do you go about keeping them that way? You define your direction. What is the best path for maintaining your priorities? Maybe you're not even close, at this time, to being able to keep your priorities. Determine what you need to do in order for those priorities to be the most significant aspects of your life.

For example, you may have decided that one priority is to have a job you enjoy rather than one that just pays the bills. If you're not in that position right now, you need to determine the direction that will lead you there. Should you just impulsively dump the job you have? While that might give you a moment of happiness, it will probably cause more difficulty when it's time to pay the bills and you haven't found your dream job. Plan your direction. Determine which job you can do that would be enjoyable. Will you need more education? Will you need to relocate? Will you need your spouse's support? Examine all of the possibilities then chart your course so your direction is clear.

Often, we find ourselves going in the wrong direction because we look for shortcuts. Typically, the things that are most valuable in life have few shortcuts. That's probably one reason they're so valuable to us! Another reason we head in the wrong direction is that we compromise when the trip seems too long. Don't compromise!

Chart your course, determine your direction and keep your priorities in order to avoid living in a blurry world!

Who's Lead are You Following?

Another possible reason that you are having difficulty determining the proper direction is that you're following the wrong lead. Are you a leader, charting your own course, or are you following the lead that someone else has established for you? In most families, parents establish the lead. When we're young, that makes perfect sense. As we grow up, however, if we're still following our parents' lead, we may find our vision to be very blurry. We might be unhappy and discontent because we're living out someone else's dreams.



It's often not easy to break away from another person's picture of you. It may be a best friend or just a person you greatly admire. As well, our lead may come from someone unhealthy, who has led us to substance abuse, addiction, and feelings of worthlessness.

Who are you following? Is your leader worth your allegiance? Is it in everyone's best interest for you to continue following? You can't determine your own direction if you're relying on others to set your course for you.

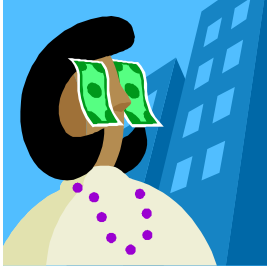
If you find yourself struggling with making decisions and establishing priorities, it may be caused by a lifetime habit of following others. At your **Employee Assistance Program**, we can help you become your own leader and set your own course. Call us today at

1-800-899-3926

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

-Dale Carnegie

Sidestepping Obstacles for Clearer Vision

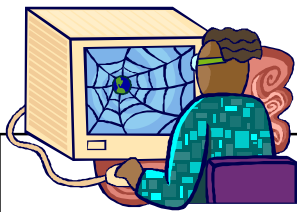


There are a multitude of obstacles that can prevent us from seeing clearly as we struggle to establish priorities and follow a distinctive direction. While all of these obstacles don't apply to everyone, we certainly will find ourselves distressing over some of them at one point or another. The goal is to remember that these are just obstacles.

Let us help you develop a clearer picture of what you want out of life. We're here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Contact your Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-899-3926.

They are short term and they are often removable. Seeing them for what they are allows us to respond in a way that keeps us on track. Obstacles to watch out for include:

- **Visions of other people** - as we previously discussed, allowing other people to chart our life course may prevent us from keeping our valued priorities.
- **Traumatic events** - everyone deals with them: death, acts of nature, health issues, etc. It's how we deal with them that determines how much we'll be blinded by them.
- **Financial challenges** - staying on top of finances and out of debt will eliminate most of these challenges before they even arrive! However, this obstacle is one of the most common reasons people miss out on following their own, clear path.
- **Shortcuts** - these appear to move us faster toward our goal, but often we find them having the opposite result. Get rich quick schemes, the latest and greatest health fads, and other shortcuts keep us from seeing the real picture.



DID YOU KNOW? Your employee assistance program has a section called "Members Only" on the EAP web site. Simply go to www.theemployeeassistanceprogram.com and click on the Members Only link. You can get your password from your Human Resources Department or simply call the EAP at 1-800-899-3926.

Publishing Information

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