

# Physician Assistance Program Newsletter

Spring 2010

## Humor Can Be Used as a Diagnostic Tool



- Keep a notebook of funny things and write in it daily
- Adapt material. Use humor from any source – personalize it and change it to suit your situation or the problem at hand

Remember that laughter not only makes you feel better, but the use of humor can be a major tool for insight. George Burns said it best, “You can’t help getting older, but you can help getting old. Chronologically, the clock is going to keep on ticking for all of us, but if we take a lick of humor, we can prevent a hardening of the attitudes. If we savor humor, humor can be a lifesaver.” ■

**If we listen carefully to a person’s humor, it can help us realize his or her fears and worries.**

When a person jokes around, he or she may be indirectly telling us about the things that are bothering him or her.

Humor is an important, often overlooked, tool. The better adjusted you are and the more satisfying your lifestyle, the more readily you will respond to the humor in jokes, cartoons, and everyday situations. Be aware of taking yourself too seriously. It is important to learn to laugh at yourself.

You can learn to share your laughter and help make others laugh. This doesn’t mean telling jokes unless that is one of your talents. It means beginning to share your humorous perspective and giving others permission to do the same. A good sense of humor is something everyone can work on. It doesn’t just happen.

**Here are some suggestions to help add more laughter to your life:**

- Recognize the value of humor
- Don’t worry or analyze why people laugh – just participate
- Think funny – look for the humor in every situation. Learn to laugh at the incongruities in life

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## Improving Doctor/Caregiver Communication



**There is much to be gained by improving communications between family caregivers and healthcare professionals, especially physicians.**

Positive outcomes include:

- Better care for the patient
- Less stress and illness for the caregiver
- More efficient use of physician's time
- Reduced costs for the healthcare system
- More satisfaction for all concerned

In order to reap the benefits, family caregivers and physicians need to gain a better understanding of each other's worlds. Both need to try, as hard as it is, to "walk in the other's shoes." The following guide is offered as a path for doing just that.

### Tips for Doctors from Family Caregivers

- Be open and forthright
- Think about the practicality of the treatments you suggest and consider their effect on the entire family, not just their medical efficacy
- When you prescribe medications, be sure caregivers understand the potential side effects so they know what to expect
- Every now and then, ask the caregiver: How are you? Let them know you understand that illness and disability are a family affair
- Be accessible – especially when a caregiver is opening his or her heart
- Reach out to the caregiver, literally – a simple touch can mean a great deal
- Be sensitive about where you talk to caregivers about difficult subjects – waiting rooms and corridors are not appropriate
- Always explain, as completely as possible, all of the legal ramifications of life-saving actions
- Be prepared to point caregivers toward helpful resources. Living with a chronic illness or disability requires more than medicine has to offer ■

## Legal Services through First Choice Health's PAP

### First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program (PAP)

provides physician families with many benefits including free legal services, which consists of an initial 30-minute consultation with an attorney over the phone or in-person, at no cost.



The First Choice Health PAP offers physicians, their spouse/domestic partner, and their eligible dependent children up to 25 years old, the opportunity to talk with an attorney. You can discuss any questions, including wills, divorce, parenting, buying/selling a home, etc. Should you decide to retain the attorney, you will receive a 25% discount off the attorney's standard hourly fees.

To access this free benefit, please call First Choice Health PAP at (800) 777-1323 and speak with a Customer Service Representative. Please feel free to visit the First Choice Health PAP website at [www.FirstChoiceDoc.com](http://www.FirstChoiceDoc.com) for more information on this service as well as others your PAP has to offer.

We look forward to serving you and your family. ■

**Also on the First Choice Health PAP Website - FREE Legal Forms Available**



One of your benefits as a member of the First Choice Health Physician Assistance Program is availability to over 100 online legal forms period after forms. The categories of legal forms include:

- After a Death
- Bill of Sale
- Borrowing/Lending Money
- Buying a House
- Couples
- Dealing with Junk Mail and Calls
- Demands and Releases
- Family/Pets/Homes
- Home Maintenance and Repair
- Insurance and Identity Theft and Subscriptions
- Personal Finance
- Personal Property
- Wills

Accessing such forms is simple – Just follow these steps:

- Go to your PAP website at [www.FirstChoiceDoc.com](http://www.FirstChoiceDoc.com)
- Click on Work Life Resources tab
- Window will pop-up prompting for a Username/Password – please enter this information or call First Choice Health PAP at (800) 777-1323 for login information
- Once logged in, go to “Living” tab at the top of page
- Drag down and select Legal Forms

This is just one of the many benefits found on the Work Life Resources website. Look for webinars, trainings, assessments, articles for all areas of life. You and your family can access all of these resources 24 hours a day. ■

# Parental Resilience – Exploring your Strengths and Needs

**As a parent, you can pinpoint the factors contributing to your stress, as well as successful coping strategies and personal, family and community resources.**

IN ORDER TO EXPLORE	ASK YOURSELF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What you identify as your coping strengths and resilience</li> <li>• Your strengths in parenting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What helps you cope with everyday life?</li> <li>• Where do you draw your strengths?</li> <li>• How does this help you in parenting?</li> <li>• What are your dreams for yourself and your family?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What you identify as everyday stressors</li> <li>• Stressors precipitated by crises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of frustrations do you deal with during the day?</li> <li>• Has something happened recently that has made life more difficult?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of stress on your parenting skills</li> <li>• The impact of parenting on your stress level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are you able to meet your children’s needs when you are dealing with stress?</li> <li>• How are your children reacting to crisis situations?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether or not there is marital stress or conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your spouse/partner support you in times of stress?</li> <li>• How does your spouse/partner help with parenting?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs that might be identified by a different family member such as spouse, partner or child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are other family members experiencing stress or concern?</li> <li>• How are they dealing with that?</li> <li>• Has anyone in your family expressed concern about drug or alcohol abuse?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term support</li> <li>• Long-term strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you are under stress, what is most helpful to you?</li> <li>• Are there places in the community where you can find help?</li> </ul>

## Strategies and Resources to Promote Parental Resilience

When you as a parent identify and communicate what worries you most, there is an opportunity to explore and learn some coping strategies and resources to begin to deal with the stress. You may not always be aware how your ability to cope with stress impacts your capacity to parent and your children’s development. You can model coping behaviors for your children, since children observe and imitate parents in many ways. Empowering yourself to seek help and take steps to combat stress is part of building both resilience and hope.

Resilient parenting includes helping yourself and all of your family members translate concerns into specific needs that can be discussed and resolved. ■

*Excerpts taken from, “Children Welfare Information Gateway.” (Updated 2008). Promoting healthy families in your community. Retrieved September 11, 2009 from <http://childwelfare.gov/>*

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## PAP Newsletter Spring 2010

### Four Tips for Physicians to Overcome Burnout



**Burnout can be a difficult issue for physicians to overcome. They are trained to solve problems independently and have learned to address personal issues and problems alone.**

It can be seen as a sign of weakness when a physician asks for help or assistance from others. When physicians have nowhere to turn, they may feel helpless and that there are no alternatives but to just quit or give up. Feeling burned out is not a way to maintain a career. The easiest solution may be to change where you work but that still doesn't change the way you feel or the overwhelming feeling of being burned out.

*Here are some tips that may help fight burnout:*

- **Take care of yourself first:** Take the initiative on how to care for yourself. Try to make time to exercise, eat healthy and get enough rest. You can have fun at the same time also. Being in good company of family/friends, enjoying your hobbies and interests are other ways to take care of yourself.
- **Seek our resources:** Take advantage of several different resources that are available to help cope with anxiety/stress. Most physicians don't want to talk about

their own problems with colleagues, so finding a person you trust to talk to and confide in will be of help. On a professional level, you can turn to your PAP program as a resource. Your PAP program can help connect you to a career coach, financial planner, attorney and other resources. Your PAP is a cost-free, convenient and confidential service intended to keep you and your family emotionally healthy.

- **Set boundaries:** A line needs to be drawn at work. And in order



to do that, take a look at your practice. Maybe you're working too many hours in a day/week or your caseload with patients is exceeding a limit you're able to handle. Saying "no" is hard but know that there are others to help. Dr. Larry Vickman, a former physician who is now a consultant on burnout issues, said, "Being a physician should be what you do, not who you are."

- **Take a look at your personal life:** Begin with a self-assessment of your professional values, passions and skills. Burnout and stress often come from dissatisfaction with a combination of these and the high expectations we have for ourselves. By being able to balance your professional and personal life without adding stress or burnout, you will become much happier day-to-day. ■