

Member Assistance Program Newsletter

Volume 6; Issue 2

Signs of being overly stressed

- Lack of joy from previously pleasurable activities
- Easily frustrated or annoyed by simple tasks or behaviors
- Too much or too little sleep and a lack of energy
- Trouble with concentrating and decision making
- Mood changes
- Using drugs or alcohol to relieve stress
- Eating more, or eating less
- Distracted from completing smaller daily tasks

What can help?

- Make certain you're getting enough sleep on a regular basis. Studies show that at least 40% of people don't get the recommended amount of sleep, every night.
- Realize that alcohol is a depressant and can contribute to stress rather than lighten it.
- Exercise helps to relieve stress, try increasing your daily amount.
- Manage your time effectively. Too many demands equals too much stress.
- Simplify your life.
- Talk to somebody. A person separated from the issue is much more likely to see things clearly than a person that's stuck in the middle. Your MAP has access to more than 3,000 counseling professionals and Work Life Resources who deal with people being overstressed on a daily basis. Call if you're interested in taking the first steps for yourself. **(888) 298-2559**

Seeing is Believing and Believing is Seeing!

A Series: Managing the Stress of Modern Living



Increasingly, people are becoming more aware of how their positive or negative thoughts influence their stress levels, emotions, behaviors, and relationships. We've all learned that it isn't easy to let go of the traditional *black and white* way of thinking that we've been raised on, or to adapt to newer ways of thinking with awareness, flexibility, and a sense of satisfaction. The message often quoted within the MAP, "**Don't Believe Everything You Think,**" is a powerful reminder that in any given moment you have the ability to edit the opinions and decisions you've accumulated over the years. Just as the history in text books sometimes needs to be rewritten and updated based on new information that's been uncovered over the years, we also need to realize that just because we've always done something one particular way this doesn't mean that

it will always be the best way to continue completing a task. The sooner we're able to minimize the pessimistic feelings that occur from living in the modern day, the sooner we'll be able to lessen the stressors that stem from negative thoughts. ■

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Give Until It Heals

According to results from a study on the health benefits of volunteering, you are more likely to have greater life-satisfaction, a lower rate of depression and heart disease, as well as a lower mortality rate if you simply volunteer 40 hours of your time per year (less than one hour per week). Interestingly, the health benefits continue to increase, up to 100 hours per year (less than two hours per week). You can pride yourself in a job well done and take satisfaction in knowing that you're making a difference in someone's life.

So if you'd like to share your skills for reading, music, dog walking, wildlife preservation, hiking, tutoring, bereavement, cooking, helping the elderly to doctor appointments, camping, teaching life skills, sign language, gardening, swimming, or some other specialty talent that you possess, there's never a bad time to help others find the benefits and joys of your interests.

For more information and hundreds of volunteer options to pick from, go to www.FirstChoiceEAP.com. On the left side of your screen, click on the "Work Life Resources" button. This will take you to a username and password pop-up box; the Username is **firstchoice** and the Password is **health2005**. Finally, look for "Locate Resources" on the right side and click on "Volunteer Opportunities." ■

Eliminating Negativity

Have you ever noticed that there are some people that have such low self-confidence that they find themselves apologizing even when they haven't done anything wrong, or they feel like they're lacking some secret ingredient that everyone else knows about? Some can't forgive themselves for their mistakes, regardless of how great or inconsequential the mistake may have been. All of these scenarios have two things in common; negative thinking and self-doubt.



Negativity is highly contagious and starts simply enough by poisoning a person's thoughts, and then it just spreads everywhere; affecting their actions, beliefs, and self esteem. Once a person adopts their self-imposed limitations long enough and firmly enough, they eventually come to believe that those thoughts are true.

In order to help avoid the full-bore effects of negativity, remind yourself that most negatives in life can potentially create positive changes in your life if you let them. Everyone makes mistakes; they're a part of maturity and development. Learning from a mistake adds wisdom to a person's life and makes it seem more worthwhile. Its important to realize that the only failure in life is when a person stops trying.

Take a look at the following negative statements that we often hear from people who are filled with self-doubt. If you've ever found yourself making similar claims, make it a priority to remove that negativity from your mind. It's only there to hold you back from success. Review the positive statements as motivation on how to view things to your advantage. ■

Negative: What others think of me is more important than what I think of myself.

Positive: *I'm proud of my own values and definition of success, which help guide me in all I do.*

Negative: I find myself apologizing, even when I've done nothing wrong.

Positive: *Instead of constantly saying, "I'm sorry", listen and say, "I understand."*

Negative: I bend over backwards to please other people rather than myself.

Positive: *It's not up to me to make everyone happy. My happiness is important too.*

Negative: I never think I've done enough, or done it well enough.

Positive: *I'm satisfied knowing that I did my very best. I work hard and deserve credit.*

Negative: Deep down, I know I am not as good as other people.

Positive: *I'm very good at what I do and have my own self-worth.*

Negative: I'm afraid people will find out I am a fraud.

Positive: *My successes are genuine. If I value them, I know others will value them too.*

Healthy Communication

Before stepping into any binding agreement, it's vital to recognize the importance of healthy communication between all concerned parties. More than just work situations and marriage proposals are compiled of partnerships which need to grow from faith and reliability, and the best way to gain that trust and consistency is by communicating effectively from the beginning.

Neither pride nor arrogance has a place in any healthy relationship so the need to always be right during communication can only be detrimental. Good relationships flourish when both parties experience the other with reliability and loyalty in their communication. Below are a few ways to enhance these skills.

Focus on the present and leave the past where it belongs.

There may be a relevant connection, but piling your criticisms on someone all at once will only build a defensive wall between the two of you. A good rule of thumb is to consider anything older than a week as a missed opportunity for communication. This will help you to establish a timeline for your new discipline, and prohibit you from procrastinating on issues that you know are time sensitive.

Listen to what's being said rather than using the time to think up your next response.

Always show respect and concern for what others are saying, so you don't give the impression of trivializing their feelings. Try to see the other person's point of view, and be sure they're aware of the reasons behind your actions if it's possible to share. If you're traveling down the wrong path, don't be afraid to admit that you've made a mistake; it shows a great deal of character, especially if you can do it with some humility.

Be wary of whispering.

The idea that secrets are being kept is enough to weaken an organization or relationship. "Whisper" is easily translated to "Rumor" or "Gossip" by those not included in the conversation, and raises feelings of uneasiness, and a lack of trust.

The strongest bonds can quickly turn fragile when someone feels that they're being singled out.

When confronting or defending your actions it's helpful to use "I" comments rather than "You" comments. For example, "How could you do that?" is a lot more threatening than "I get frustrated when that happens."

If you have questions or need more specific assistance in dealing with communication issues, you're welcome to give us a confidential, cost-free call, anytime. As always, we're available 24/7 at (888) 298-2559. ■

Member Assistance Program



Peace of Mind.

www.FirstChoiceEAP.com



Online Work Life Resources

Our self-serve menu of learning tools, information and state-of-the-art resources on topics and stages from infancy to adolescence to adulthood to senior living is available 24/7 at:

www.FirstChoiceEAP.com

At the Work Life Resources page enter the following:

Username: firstchoice
Password: health2005

One Union Square
600 University Street Suite 1400
Seattle, WA 98101
www.FirstChoiceEAP.com

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Welcome New Groups!

Allez Physionix, Ltd.
Anderson's Fabrication
Best Western Wesley Inn
Camp Korey
Chatsubo.net
Craft Brewers Alliance
Dr. Andrew Lewis DDS
Experience Music Project
Fix Design

Generations, LLC
Halo Source
James Reed Direct Inc.
Jetstream Services
Meridian Owners Association
Moeller Design & Development
Mushroom, Inc.
Northwest Protective Services
Power Vac LLC

Prime Equity Funding
Print Source Seattle
Randy's Ring & Pinion
Roman Meal
Selkirk Real Estate LLC
Solar Building Maintenance
Summit Water & Supply Company
The Sleep Train, Inc.
We-Design, Inc.



What People Are Saying:

"You offer a valuable service and it's really great to have it available when needed!"

"After a difficult event at work adding onto regular life stressors, this really helped me get through it, and motivated me to start seeing someone."

"I am really appreciative of this service. I only wish I had not allowed myself to wait so long before I received help."

"Thank you for offering this program. The counselor gave me great solutions to help me become more effective at my job!"

"The problem is still ongoing--or should I say it's resurfaced. This time I knew who to contact."

If you have questions or comments about an article that you see in this or any MAP newsletter, please feel free to send us your feedback and opinions to feedback@FirstChoiceEAP.com. Team MAP thanks you for your feedback. ■