

**EASE, Inc., your employee assistance program is a free, confidential counseling service which provides:**

- 24 hour a day access to licensed counselors at: (800) 654-9778
- Free individual, couples or family counseling for employees and their dependents
- Information and resources on our Web site: [www.easeeap.com](http://www.easeeap.com)

### Is Shopping Season Giving the Signal?



**Pay attention** to your shopping behaviors over the coming weeks. You may discover clues to whether you suffer from compulsive shopping disorder. One strong indicator is the role that shopping has in your life. Do you experience a euphoric feeling while shopping; feeling driven to shop in response to unwanted feelings or moods? Is this followed by remorse, guilt, or perhaps depression that is relieved by going back to the stores for more shopping? Prior to shopping, do you experience a “drive” or temptation to shop and then relief when you finally arrive to begin shopping? If this description seems to fit your buying patterns, talk to a mental health professional or employee assistance counselor. There’s a way out of this baffling cycle and a way to get the relief you really want, by learning to control your behavior.

### Putting the Earth On Your Gift List



**If you celebrate** the holiday season, you can put planet Earth on your gift list by considering gifts produced using materials or methods that emphasize less waste, reused or recycled raw materials, energy conserving production methods, preservation of natural resources, or reduced emissions. Soy ink and recycled paper are two of the most well-known earth-friendly production materials. Fact: The United States and Canada now recycle one-third of all waste materials—a significant increase from 15 years ago.

### Making Holidays More Positive



**You may have personal** reasons that make the holiday season a difficult time of the year. Don’t feel guilty or obligated to apologize. Plan ahead for limiting the effects of what is promoted by the media. Avoid overspending that will make you feel worse. Have a plan, shop ahead, shop sales, compromise, and stick to your budget. Avoid piling on too many social events and overindulging in food and drinks. Volunteering is a powerful and positive distraction, and it’s one of the most recommended coping strategies. It doubles as a source of support as you pitch in with others to lend a hand.

### Don’t Let Depression Discount Retirement



**Major depression** is a highly treatable illness. Unfortunately, most people who suffer with it will wait years before seeing a doctor and agreeing to try medication and/or counseling to treat it. Don’t let that happen to you, especially if you are feeling the urge to retire because of depression’s effects on your productivity and attendance. Seek treatment first. Research indicates that depression can get worse and that people with depression are 40 percent more likely to retire prematurely. Go for treatment before going out the door.

## Can Gratitude Pay Off



**If family dysfunction** exists in your home, are there still plenty of positive things about your family relationships? If your job is stressful, are there coworkers you really do admire and enjoy? Is your health fairly good? These are all anchors for practicing gratitude. We live in a culture that places great emphasis on getting rid of problems. The promise—focus hard on the problems and happiness will be revealed. But there's another approach—encouraging people to focus on gratitude—finding what to appreciate and feeling thankful for it. The strategy suggests that achieving more and finding solutions to life's problems are more swiftly accomplished when we expect good things to come to us. There's nothing new about the strategy, but what is getting attention is how this happens when we practice experiencing gratitude. In other words, when the switch "turns on," the things we want begin to flow toward us. The gratitude approach to life improvement is not about fooling ourselves into thinking our problems don't exist. Instead, feeling grateful nourishes us, prepares us, and facilitates our ability to spot opportunities and solutions as they present themselves. We are less likely to overlook or dismiss "the knock at our door." This approach also energizes and creates excitement about the future. Would the gratitude approach be a useful switch for you?

## Sexual Harassment is More Than You Think



**Sexual harassment** is a serious, legally costly, and emotionally damaging behavior that can occur in any workplace. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, approximately 85 percent of victims of sexual harassment are women and 15 percent are men. Many types of behavior other than inappropriate comments or touching of another person may constitute sexual harassment. Some behaviors considered sexual harassment might be based on no sexual interest in the other person. Examples include asking questions about a person's sexual activities over the weekend, making jokes of a sexual nature, praising a person's physical attributes, suggesting that someone is attractive and shouldn't have trouble getting a date, and discussing sexual matters within earshot of others. A key to preventing sexual harassment is recognizing and avoiding behaviors that can be considered sexual harassment, combined with stopping any behavior that another employee says is offensive or unwanted and then not doing it again.

## Delegating: Not Just For the Boss



**Delegation** is a skill for managing work that has big payoffs, but it can be tough to master. Your first reaction may be that delegating is something others do to you, rather than seeing it as a productivity enhancer that anyone can learn to use. Delegating can help you achieve goals, manage stress, improve work/life balance, and boost energy. Resistance to using delegation comes from fear, mistrust, or anxiety about letting go. What are your excuses for not delegating? The most popular are "I can do it better myself" or "I don't have time to teach anyone else how it's done." Surprisingly, one of the most overlooked ways to delegate is simply to ask. If you struggle asking for help, it's easy to feel resentment toward those who don't recognize your needs and pitch in. "If they wanted to help, they'd say so," the thinking goes. Other ways to delegate include asking your team to share the load, asking for volunteers, asking permission from supervisors to share work, or breaking the work into manageable parts that can be tackled by various team members. Is delegating a skill that you can practice more next year?

## Find Hidden Cash With Cutbacks



**Amaze yourself** by discovering the enormous amount of money that slips through your fingers. Use your online check register (offered by most banks today) to review your expenditures over the last three months. Everything will be there except cash disbursements. Add up all amounts under \$25. Identify purchases that you can eliminate next month—cigarettes, coffee, bottled water, alcohol, vending machine purchases, "impulse" buys, fun clothes, interest charges, late fees, and online fees, etc.