

Working With EASE



EASE, your employee assistance program, is a free and 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.easeap.com.



Keep Conflict from Coming Home

There's a reason to resolve workplace conflicts sooner. They can produce collateral damage. Studies show that the longer personal issues at work go unaddressed, the greater the risk of adverse effects on loved ones at home. Don't let your workplace problems turn into sleepless nights, marital problems, a short fuse with your children, or an exacerbated health problem. Instead, 1) schedule private time with the individual you're having problems with; 2) tell your coworker in advance that you'd like to resolve the conflict; 3) calmly address your disagreement without laying blame; 4) take responsibility for your own role in the conflict; 5) work toward a mutually agreeable solution; and 6) shake hands, agree to put hard feelings aside, and move forward.

Trick Your Brain into Motivation

Combine something you love doing with the unpleasant task you've been avoiding and you may perk up your motivation and get more done faster. This tricks the brain into receiving the instant gratification it prefers along with motivation for the chore it rejects. Try it: Find an enjoyable activity you've been putting off as your motivator. Here are some suggestions: Read the latest novel from your favorite author while riding your exercise bike or elliptical, listen to a new CD while cleaning and organizing, watch a movie while folding laundry, listen to language-learning programs as you paint or do yard work, eat lunch at a new restaurant while catching up on paperwork, combine family quality time with thoroughly cleaning one room (and then the next) in your house. This technique will jump-start your motivation, create a feeling of accomplishment, and reinforce your "can do" attitude!

Rediscover Your Living Room

Televisions, video games, and electronic gadgets are fun, but they tend to crowd out family quality time. Instead of just sharing space in your living room, try reconnecting with your family by choosing one evening per week to pick activities that encourage interaction, competitiveness, and fun. Board games are a perfect low-cost option. A deck of playing cards is even cheaper. Charades? Free. Other ideas: Build a giant LEGO® castle, have the kids put on a play, do a group puzzle, make paper airplanes and have a contest to see which flies the farthest. Connect your kids with their heritage by pulling out the family photo album and sharing stories about your childhood that they should pass along. Discover your living room again, and tune in to better relationships.

Recognizing Gang Activity in Your Child

Children as young as 8 years old can become targets for gang recruitment. If you're living in an area with signs of gang activity (graffiti, loitering youths, drug dealing), your children may be slipping into this dangerous world. A key warning sign is sudden and radical changes in dress, behavior, friends, grades, and social activities. Trust your instincts. If new friends seem shady, they probably are. Ask for their names and the phone numbers of their parents. Evasive answers or a refusal to provide information are giant red flags. A recent disinterest in schoolwork and extracurricular activities is another signal that something is wrong. Be on the lookout for new slang, use of street language, strange hand signals, and a shift to an aggressive or menacing demeanor. Does your child suddenly have access to cash and expensive clothing? Start asking questions. Older gang members sometimes recruit kids by buying them gifts or paying them to do small tasks. Also, watch what your child puts on before leaving the house. Members display their gang affiliation by wearing one or two of the same colors. Finally, familiarize yourself with drug paraphernalia and lingo. Gang activity and drug dealing go hand-in-hand. You are your child's first line of defense. If you suspect your child is at risk for gang activity, contact your local law enforcement agency for resources on intervention and prevention.

Don't Be Short on Soft Skills?

Don't let a lack of "soft skills" hold you back from workplace success. Soft skills include self-motivation, demonstrating a positive attitude, punctuality, listening skills, timing (knowing when to act), patience, flexibility, high emotional intelligence, stick-to-itiveness, focus, planning, critical thinking, and a strong team-oriented mind-set. Acquire better soft skills by committing to discovering where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Keep a journal. Track achievements and challenges. Seek out those who display qualities you admire, and model your self-improvement after the things they do well. Ask for feedback or their assessment of you if you know them well, and you'll fast-track soft skills for your career.

Denial and Cost of Clutter

You may see clutter as a sign of creativity or a carefree lifestyle, but all that disorganization has hidden costs. Clutter creates stress by being a daily reminder of "unfinished business." Embarrassment over a messy home may distance you from friends and neighbors. Disorganization eats up precious time by making simple tasks more difficult. To effectively fight clutter, start small and focus on organizing one area at a time. Keep that feeling of freedom from clutter with tidy-ups lasting just five minutes a day.

Increasing Risk of Childhood Stroke

"Kids" and "strokes" are two words that shouldn't go together, but it's a growing hazard among an increasingly overweight and out-of-shape teen population. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, strokes are now one of the top ten causes of childhood death. Risk factors for stroke include high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, and smoking. All these are greatly influenced by lifestyle. A balanced, healthy diet and regular physical activity are the quickest, most cost-effective ways to lower your child's stroke risk.

Overcoming Parkinson's Law

"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion." That's the observation made by the British author and historian C. Northcote Parkinson, writing for *The Economist* in 1955. The few who are able to overcome this productivity-killing phenomenon are able to work so efficiently that they seem to have magical powers. Here's how to join this elite group: Shorten the amount of time required to complete a task and increase the urgency of completion by promising it sooner. You will develop more efficient work habits with this intervention, and you will find more free time in your life. Avoid the stress of acting at the last minute. This is the Stock-Sanford Corollary to Parkinson's Law: "If you wait until the last minute, it only takes a minute to do." Source: *Parkinson's Law*, Ballantine Books, 1969

