

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.



Back-to-School Checkup

School's back in session! Take time to make sure everyone's on course for a fun and productive school year. Chat with the kids and listen carefully for school frustrations. Tackle those frustrations now before they snowball into bigger problems. Do they have enough time to get homework done? What about sleep? These are the two biggies that lead to problematic grades. Is getting out the door on time getting crazy? Hold a family meeting and get everyone contributing to the fix. Hold your students accountable not just for performance but also for asking for help early when needed.

Motivating Someone to See a Therapist

Talking someone into seeing a therapist is not an easy task. Still, many clients are first prompted by a loving friend. Pick a private moment when you won't be interrupted or rushed for time. Expect defensiveness and even anger from your friend. Choose your words carefully. Begin with, "I've noticed that ...". Describe the behavior or issue that concerns you. Avoid the classic, "You have a problem." Emphasize your concern for your friend's well-being, and help remove roadblocks by offering to babysit, accompany your friend to the appointment, etc.

Your First Impression with Customers

Being seen as a positive employee is a top priority for making a powerful first impression. Master your first impression routine. Your general appearance and appropriate dress are the first things others notice. Clean and crisp conveys professionalism and competence. Smile and make eye contact, and master the ability to project a warm, pleasant demeanor, even on your worst days. As you're introduced, repeat the name of your acquaintance, and to make it stick in your memory, look quickly for an opportunity to use it again. Use positive language like "absolutely" and "I'd be happy to take care of that." Key: Humans are social animals first and customers second. Engage with them in that order.

Fire Danger! Check Your Power Strips

Check electric power strips often. This past June, famous country singer Trace Adkins' house, including all his memorabilia, burned to the ground due to a faulty electrical power strip in his workshop. The biggest culprit contributing to fire is overload. If your power strip has a jumble of extension cords snaking from it to large appliances or office equipment, chances are you're looking at a fire hazard. Are you exceeding the maximum wattage? Better find out. Look for burn marks or discoloration. Is the power strip feeling hot to the touch? If in doubt, replace it. Learn more at: <http://tiny.cc/power-strips>.

Protecting Your Reputation at Work

Your workplace reputation is a valuable asset, but it is not a "renewable resource." Once tarnished, it can take years to recoup. How you handle yourself emotionally at work is a key facet of your reputation that can overshadow your skills, abilities, and accomplishments. How do you handle anger, disappointments, conflicts, or even frustrations with management? Do you remain cool in the face of challenges? Most of us can't display the same emotions to coworkers and managers that we display at home with family members. If you blow up with coworkers, it's unlikely they'll simply think, "Oh, that's just Bob being Bob." To stay cool, consider whether you are sitting on anger or stuffing conflict. Plan a sit-down meeting with whomever you need to clear the air with. Your employee assistance professional or a good friend can help you plan for it. Need coaching? Ask yourself: "Are my relationships at work uplifting or am I surrounded by others who are negative?" "Am I getting too negative in my communications?" "Am I getting careless about what I say or whom I say it to?" "Are my emails lacking common courtesies or am I sounding snappy?" Your reputation is a resource for both you and your employer. Protect its value and it will serve you well.

When Turbulent Markets Tumble Your Portfolio

Turbulent financial markets are frightening news, especially if most or all of your nest egg is at risk. How you cope with the stress of potential losses to your portfolio can have a significant impact on your financial well-being. Nearly every financial guru supports one key rule: Do not get caught up in the hysteria. Pull yourself away from the up-to-the-minute financial news to reduce your stress and to prevent yourself from acting on impulse. Talk to a trusted advisor or fee-based financial planner. Almost every fund has a financial advisor offering free advice to investors, but you have to ask effective questions to get solid answers. There are no stupid questions when it comes to your investments. To work more effectively with those advising, get a list of key financial questions from the Securities and Exchange Commission at <http://tiny.cc/good-questions>.

When Your Spouse Shuts You Out

"He won't talk to me." "She won't open up about her feelings." A spouse or partner feeling emotionally "shut out" is a common complaint heard by marriage counseling professionals. It can feel like your partner has simply given up on your relationship. Emotional unavailability is often a sign of lingering anger over some past incident, or it can be fueled by frustration or fear of addressing ongoing couple problems. Your partner may feel overwhelmed by unresolved issues, feel too hurt to discuss them, or think there's no way to solve the problem. Ready to break the deadlock? Ask your partner to agree to a time when you can talk things out. Caution: Avoid pointing a finger or levying accusations. Instead, prepare to listen—mostly listen. Ask gentle, probing questions and encourage complete honesty. Your partner may hold back, doubtful that his or her feelings will be heard or respected. Be patient and commit to a long-term promise to work toward mutually agreed-upon goals. Don't dismiss the idea of couples counseling. It can work. Your employee assistance professional can guide you to community resources.

Lifting Weights and Quitting Smoking

Lifting weights for exercise may be able to help you quit smoking, say researchers. A recent study found that three months of pumping iron helped curb cigarette cravings and made participants twice as likely to kick their smoking habit. As a bonus, the smokers also shed pounds and body fat on their way to a nicotine-free lifestyle. These results didn't require hours in the gym. Participants spent just two hours a week exercising. Talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program. Source: <http://tiny.cc/smoking-weights>.



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