

July 2020

# EAP NEWS

A worksite newsletter for employees provided by your Employee Assistance Program.



## EAP Support for Employees

The "2020 Stress in America" survey was just published by the American Psychological Association. It shows the pandemic has "altered every aspect of daily life, from health and work to education and exercise." The EAP can provide guidance on COVID-19 related questions and assistance with challenges in your work and daily life.

## Remote Worker Dieting and Fitness Tips

If you are working remotely from home, consider how your job can interfere with a healthy diet and personal fitness. Distractions, hunger (or ignoring hunger), postponing meals, interruptions, deadlines, focus, stress, and how tired you become can each influence decisions about diet and fitness. For example, while wearing earphones on a call, you wander into the kitchen and engage in unconscious eating. Under a high-pressure deadline, you skip exercise. Too busy to eat dinner, you go for the late-night ramen noodle cup. Here are five ways to be a healthier remote worker: awareness, setting boundaries, creating structure, planning, and preparation. Working from home can be satisfying, but use awareness to create the right environment. Manage this environment with boundaries where distractions and unhealthy food temptations are not present. Create structure by arranging your day so snacks, meals, and chores are predictable, not intrusions. Plan a schedule in which health and fitness behaviors remain central to your well-being. Finally, prepare your workplace and do the groundwork daily with "pre-flight" tasks to make your day a healthy and productive one. Get a water bottle in place, flip the switch on your eight-hour Crock-Pot recipe, make a sandwich ahead of time, set up healthy snacks, and lay out your exercise clothes to allow a smooth transition from your job to your workout.

## Questions to Bring to a Professional Counselor

If you decide to see a professional counselor, maximize the benefits of your first visit by answering these questions before you go: 1) What is causing stress and tension in your life? 2) How does the tension affect you, your family, and your job? 3) Are these stress or tension issues short term or long term? 4) Who in life represents your support group? 5) What are you willing to change or give up to have less stress or tension in your life? 6) When you have successfully reduced stress and tension on your own, how have you done so? 7) What has not worked? 8) If counseling is successful, how do you envision life afterward?

## Try a Formula to Solve Problems

An orderly plan for solving problems can help you arrive at a more satisfactory solution. Unless you are a scientist, social worker, or philosophy major, you may not have studied the “problem-solving process.” There are many variations, but the main advantages are increased focus, better deliberation, and less guessing that can lead to a harmful solution or none at all. Apply these steps to personal or work-related problems: 1) define your problem—but be sure not to confuse symptoms (that which is undesired) with the problem (that which causes what is undesired); 2) brainstorm solutions; 3) analyze the solutions and pick the best one; 4) implement the solution; and 5) review the results. Each step may have sub-steps. Use a team or family group of those who have a stake in the solution for even greater impact.

## Talking with Your Children About Culture and Diversity

*Extract Courtesy of Theo Koffer, Mindful.org*

Often, we feel the urge to shield our kids from the harsh realities around us. But sometimes the best gift we can give them isn't "safety," but a set of tools to deal with difficult feelings and the true nature of the world. Children and young adults are more perceptive than we think. They know what's going on, they hear about it at school, and as much as I wish it were possible to shield kids from all the darkness in the world, I've come to realize that the real gift we can give our kids is not the gift of "safety," but rather a complete set of tools to deal with the true nature of the world around us.

We need to teach our kids that it's possible to live with their difficult emotions—anger, fear, sadness, discomfort—and still go forward demonstrating compassion, kindness, and hope. Instead of reacting in fear or anger, we need to impress the important value of an inclusive, diverse, and accepting community. Don't fear the other—embrace him. Learn about him. Understand the multitude of factors that might make his worldview different than yours. The root of terror is fear, hate, and ignorance. Our differences don't need to create a huge divide. Exposing children to different cultures, races, sexual orientations, genders, religions, and languages can help turn fear and ignorance to understanding and compassion.

Start the Conversation. Make it a point to eat as a family at least once a week and ask your children to share one thing that worries them. Get specific. What circumstances make them feel uncomfortable, scared, angry, or sad? Be willing to listen to their viewpoint. Sit through these emotions together. Don't label them, don't judge them—just providing a safe space for the discussion is good medicine. You can suggest taking five mindful breaths as a useful tool to reduce reactivity.

Continue the Conversation. Maintain a continuing conversation. Be sure to let your teens know they can come to you about issues that matter. Talk to them about the importance of diversity and acceptance. Explain to them that you can disagree respectfully and without hate. Would it be nice if our politicians demonstrated this? Sure, but just because they don't doesn't mean it's a lost cause. Talk to your teens. Use the name-calling as an example of what not to do, ask them how they might better handle a disagreement, or role-play. Not only will you be setting a good example, you'll probably learn a lot about your kids' lives, friendships, and opinions.

Information in FrontLine Employee is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health or legal professional. For further help, questions, or referral to community resources for specific problems or personal concerns, contact a qualified professional. Add "http://" to source links to follow. Link titles are always case sensitive.

## July Webinar



### The Sandwich Generation: Multi-Generational Caregiving

This webinar will review the phenomenon of the sandwich generation and how we can better manage the needs of our changing families. We'll discuss ways to have productive conversations with aging parents about their needs, ways to troubleshoot burn out as a caregiver and how to keep your own family running smoothly.

**Log-in** any time this month to watch the webinar and ask the expert questions!



### College Corner

College Planning USA offers our thoughts to all who have been impacted by COVID-19.

Still faced with uncertainty as to “if and when” college will start in the fall, many colleges are coming up with contingency plans. This can add to an already stressful situation.

For instance, if a true second wave of COVID-19 sweeps through the nation (although we are not truly sure if the first wave is over), will students be shuttling back and forth from campus to home, waiting for another “all-clear” sign? Another thing to consider, will on-line learning work for a student who needs more face-to-face time with educators? Students can quickly get stressed out about grades. If the “on-line thing” isn't working for the student, pressures and stress can grow exponentially.

Students, and their parents, will need to learn how to cope with the stress and take action to minimize the impact. Your Employee Assistance Program is here for exactly that reason.

The EAP and College Planning USA are here to help manage your stress. Go to <https://ibhcollege.com/> to learn more about the college planning program, and to book a free consultation. And if college debt is weighing you down, there's help for that too.

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