

# City of Milwaukee

## Employee Assistance Program

### Happy Hormones and Mental Health

Happiness is something that everyone desires. It is not only a pleasant feeling but also essential for our overall well-being. How happiness is defined varies from person-to-person. However defined, there are key contributing factors:

- Having the freedom to make your own choices and life path
- Maintaining positive meaningful relationships with others
- Keeping a positive/pragmatic attitude even when upset or challenged by life events
- Achieving goals you've set for yourself
- Keeping fit/healthy both mentally and physically

While these factors play a major role in lasting happiness, what can one do everyday to boost happiness? The answer lies in our body's production of hormones.

Our body produces certain chemicals known as *happy hormones* that can help us experience feelings of joy and contentment.

- **Regular exercise.** We likely know the positive impact regular activity has on our physical health. Regular exercise also benefit mental health. When we engage in physical activity, our body releases endorphins, which are one of the happy hormones. These endorphins act as natural painkillers and mood boosters, reducing stress and promoting a sense of well-being.

- **Eating a balanced diet.** Consuming a balanced diet plays a significant role in the production of happy hormones. Foods rich in nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, can help increase the release of serotonin. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that promotes happiness and regulates mood. Adding fruits, vegetables, whole

grains, and lean proteins can also support the production of happy hormones.

- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep is crucial for our overall well-being, including the production of happy hormones. When we don't get enough sleep, our body may not produce sufficient serotonin, leading to a decline in mood.

- **Foster healthy relationships.** Maintaining healthy relationships and social connections can significantly impact our happiness levels. Spending quality time with friends and family, engaging in meaningful conversations, and participating in social activities can increase the release of oxytocin, a hormone associated with bonding and happiness. Surrounding ourselves with positive and supportive people can further enhance the production of happy hormones.

- **Engage in hobbies and enjoyable activities.** Hobbies and engaging in activities that bring us joy can stimulate the production of happy hormones. Whether it's painting, reading, playing music, or playing a sport, immersing ourselves in activities that we love can lead to increased levels of dopamine and endorphins. By setting aside time for these activities regularly, we create opportunities for our body to release the positive chemical messengers of happiness.

- **Self-care.** Excessive stress can hinder the production of happy hormones. Taking measures to manage stress effectively, such as practicing relaxation techniques and setting boundaries.

Obtaining happy hormones is within our reach by adopting simple yet effective lifestyle choices.

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City of Milwaukee EAP

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## Managing The “Empty Nest”

As children grow older and venture off into college or begin their own lives, parents are left with an empty house. To effectively manage an *empty nest*, it is essential to focus on self-care, establish new routines, and maintain open communication with family and friends

First, self-care plays a vital role in managing an empty nest. Engaging in hobbies, exercising regularly, or even pursuing new interests can help fill the void left by children. By focusing on personal fulfillment, parents can rediscover themselves and develop a sense of purpose beyond raising a family. This self-care allows parents to maintain a healthy mindset and better cope with the emotions that come with an empty nest.

Second, with children gone, parents often find themselves with newfound time and flexibility. Creating a schedule that includes activities such as

volunteering, learning new skills, or traveling can help fill the void and provide structure to their days. By establishing new routines, parents can embrace their independence and make the most of their free time, ensuring they remain active and engaged even without the presence of their children.

Third, maintaining open communication is crucial during this transition period. As children leave home, it is important for parents to stay connected and involved in their lives. Regular phone calls, video chats, or visits can help bridge the physical distance and strengthen the relationship between parents and their children.

Additionally, parents can reach out to other parents experiencing the same life change, creating a supportive network that can provide guidance and understanding.

## Mental Health at Work

There are several strategies we can adopt to promote positive mental health at work.

It's important to recognize and manage stress early. Identify stress triggers and use stress management techniques, such as deep breathing exercises or short stretch breaks throughout the day.

**Maintain a healthy work-life balance.** Set boundaries between work and personal life to avoid burnout. This can involve allocating specific times for work and taking breaks, as well as engaging in activities outside of work that bring joy and relaxation.

**Seek support when needed and communicate** with co-workers and supervisors/managers. If a supervisor/manager, be aware of supportive services and programs (EAP, UHC, Workforce Health).

A cluttered desk can make you feel anxious, disorganized, and flustered. **Organize your workspace/equipment.** A clean and organized work environment is a good way to alleviate stress.

**Be Kind.** Showing kindness towards others helps improve your mood drastically, it's linked to increased feelings of happiness. A simple “good morning” greeting to your co-workers or offering help to someone in need can boost your mental wellbeing.

**Avoid negative tunnel vision.** Research has shown that positivity impacts mental health because it boosts your resilience to difficult situations. Stay mindful of your negative thoughts throughout the day, and try to transform those negative thoughts into positive ones.

## EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

## Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: [www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM](http://www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM)
- The City's Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, onsite and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City's health insurance and dependents (18 mos and older) on the City's health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.
- The City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program web page houses topical information and resources on a wide range of work-life issues. Visit: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/DER/EAP>
- The City of Milwaukee offers a free Care.com membership through Care@Work to employees. A Care.com membership provides unlimited access to a platform employees can use to find and manage care for children, seniors, pets and their home. Visit [www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork](http://www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork) to learn more.