

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Quarterly Newsletter: December 2013



Happy Holidays

When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Go Shopping!

We've all heard the expression "retail therapy" but did you know that a Huffington post survey found that 1 in 3 Americans shop to cope with and relieve stress?

The Holiday Season, A.K.A the "Shopping Season", may present a particularly difficult challenge. The added on stress of the Holidays can quickly lead to over shopping as a way to cope with Holiday pressures.

The excitement around buying something new releases "feel good" chemicals called endorphins within the pleasure center of the brain. These chemicals in turn temporarily boost our mood. Treating yourself to something special from time to time is not all bad. The real problem lies in shopping while in a state of anxiety or depression, as it leaves the door wide open for overspending or purchasing high ticket items as a quick pick me up.

Shopping as the only way to boost one's mood may very well lead to unintended financial debt, which in turn could lead to increased anxiety, depression, feeling loss of control and conflicts at home.

The following Holiday shopping tips may be helpful in avoiding the trapping of over shopping:

- Know your budget: Keep a running log on what you've spent.
- Make a List: Make a detailed list of who you want to buy for, how much you want to spend, and which gifts you expect to buy. This keeps you focused.
- Pre-shop: Do some research before you hit the stores. Call around and go online to find better deals. You should also try to consolidate to a few stores to cut down on transportation costs.

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<http://city.milwaukee.gov/der/EAP>



Assertiveness Boot Camp

The Holidays may bring along more than the usual demands from others and at times more than our fair share of other's criticism. Not being able to set limits and say "no" sometimes will quickly leave you exhausted. Holiday stress may make others more prone to irritability and sharp criticism. Being assertive means standing up for yourself by expressing your thoughts, needs, desires, feelings and beliefs without disrespecting the other person, becoming defensive or argumentative. Assertive behavior is:

- Being open in expressing wishes, thoughts and feelings and encouraging others to do likewise.
- Listening to the views of others.
- Accepting responsibilities and being able to delegate.
- Regularly expressing appreciation toward others.
- Being able to admit mistakes and apologize.
- Maintaining self-control.
- Behaving as an equal to others.

Folks may have difficulty asserting themselves for a variety of different reasons:

- ◇ Fear of change
- ◇ Denial of passiveness or aggression
- ◇ Fear of not being liked, accepted or ruining a relationship.
- ◇ Poor confidence

Assertiveness is a skills that may be learned with practice. The trick is to

start with *confidence building* and have positive *interventions* at the ready.

Confidence Building

1. *Know the facts:* Most of the time aggressors don't prepare. Use this to your advantage by being prepared and knowledgeable.
2. *Role play:* Anticipate the other's behavior and prepare your responses in advance. Role play it and vary the scenarios.
3. *Open-ended questions:* Ask "who", "what", "when", and "where."
4. *Re-condition yourself:* Practice your optimal response in heated situations and visualize your assertive behavior. This will help you avoid "triggering" situations.
5. *Stall:* When facing unrealistic demands, ask the speaker to repeat their statement, or paraphrase what you heard. This buys you time to center yourself and mentally prepare an answer before responding.
6. *Find inspiration:* What reinforces your faith in yourself? Ask yourself how your role model would respond.

Interventions

1. **Broken Record:** This intervention is simply repeating your response, needs or wants over and over without getting pulled into an argument or power struggle. Remain calm yet firm.
2. **Fogging:** Involves partly agreeing with a criticism or insult on the **principle** or **odds**.

Agreeing on Odds

Odds response: "That's probably correct...you are likely right."

Principle example

Speaker: "*You said you'd be here at 7:00 and you are always late!!*"

Principle response: "*Yes, I'm 30 minutes late and having to wait on someone is annoying.*"

Speaker: "*Yes it is. Well...what happened?*"

This intervention is called fogging because the response is not to be baited into a defensive or argumentative reaction.

3. **Negative Inquiry:**

This intervention forces the speaker to re-evaluate their statement, criticism or belief/viewpoint by asking what specifically was "bad" about what you did or said.

Negative Inquiry example

Speaker: "*That meal was practically inedible, I can't remember the last time I ate something so awful!*"

Negative Assertion response: "*It wasn't the best, exactly what didn't you like about it?*"

This is different from an aggressive response that may have been: "*How dare you, I spent all afternoon preparing that meal*" or "*Well that's the last time I cook for you.*"

It is also different from a passive response that does not challenge the speaker at all. Assertiveness takes practice but the tips above will help you advocate for yourself more effectively.

Energy Assistance Program

The Social Development Commission Energy Assistance Program provides low-income residents with financial benefits for fuel costs, emergency furnace repair and replacement, and restoration of utility services. These services include:

- Regular energy assistance to help with your annual home energy costs.
- Crisis assistance includes: retention of utility services, reconnections, oil deliveries and furnace repair or replacement. (Note: furnace repair or replacement is only available when home is owner occupied). It is offered when funds are available.
- Referrals for other heating related services.

It is intended to help pay a portion of heating costs and is not intended to pay the total annual heating cost. The amount of heating assistance benefit varies according to household size, income level, and household heating costs.

What you must bring

- Proof of all income sources for all household members for the previous three months (i.e., child support wages, pension, etc.) Seasonal employees will require the prior year's 1040 tax forms
- Social Security numbers for all household members (*starting Aug. 12th*)
- Current energy bill (gas/electric/oil)
- If your heat is included with your rent: Rent certificate or statement from

landlord confirming heat included in rent.

SDC Energy Assistance sites:

4041 N. Richards Street (53212)
(414) 906-2800

2701 S. Chase Avenue (53207)
(414) 906-2800



6848 N.
Teutonia Avenue (53209)
(414) 906-2800

For more information on locations and income guidelines refer to our [SDC Energy Assistance flyer \(pdf\)](#) - [español](#) - [Hmong](#) or Call **(414) 906-2800**.

Communication With Your Attorney

Communicate expectations with your attorney. Your lawyer needs to know what your "dream outcome" is. Also, ask your lawyer to explain all other possible outcomes. Here are some things to bring up with your lawyer:

- First of all, check the attorney's credentials and background experience. Follow-up with the State Bar Association to ensure he/she is in good standing.
- Keep written list of your questions for your attorney
- Do your best to tell your story chronologically and step-by-step.
- Be prepared. Have relevant documents in order, organized and provide them when requested.
- What is the maximum amount in legal fees you want to pay?

- When is the latest/earliest you want the legal matter attended to?
- What is the minimum amount of settlement you will agree to?
- What is the worst way you think your case can end?
- How much are you willing to disrupt your life to pursue this matter legally?
- Be on time for appointments and arrive to Court at least 45 minutes early.

Rank acceptable outcomes with your lawyer to avoid the possibility of your lawyer not obtaining an outcome that you'll accept. Be sure to give the lawyer a chance to voice an opinion about your ranked outcomes.

Effective communication with your attorney will greatly improve the likelihood of a favorable outcome.





Maintaining Recovery During the Holidays

- **Good Self-Care:** Carve out some quiet time each day and work on an attitude of gratitude. Fit relaxation and meditation into your day, even for a few minutes.
- **Use Your Support System:** Reach out more frequently to your therapist, sponsor, spiritual advisor, support group, and supportive people in your life.
- **Avoid Isolation:** Spend time with people you like and who are not actively misusing substances.
- **Let go of Resentments:** The Holidays may be a time of reflection. However, it also presents an unhealthy opportunity to revisit and stir-up old grudges. Resentments that gain steam during the holidays can be disastrous for anyone, especially recovering people.
- **Use the Buddy System:** If you are going to a party where alcohol will be present, bring someone with you who is in recovery or who is safe and who will support you.
- **Plan Ahead:** Have a way out of high risk situations and rehearse an out. Say, "I can only stay for an hour" if the situation is too tempting.
- **Use "Bookends":** Talk with your support system before you go to a holiday party and then have a plan to connect with your support system after the event.
- **Volunteer:** Doing for others boosts your mood.

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.



Scan Me!

Working in Teams

Step 1. Start talking!

Talk about significant problems and share ideas with those involved. Avoid isolating and holding on to resentments.

Step 2. Avoid the Blame Game

Taking accountability for your own piece(s) of what went wrong. You will get much more respect for being honest over passing the buck to someone else.

Step 3. Support Other Ideas

Consider all ideas, without resorting to negative labels like "stupid, dumb or terrible."

Step 4. Don't Brag

Behaving like a superstar will only create resentment and tension among team members. If a compliment is paid to you a simple, "Thanks, that means a lot", is enough.

Step 5. Active Listening

Be sure to paraphrase what you heard to make sure you understand what the speaker is trying to communicate. This cuts down on miscommunication and misunderstandings.



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