

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Quarterly Newsletter: December 2014



Holiday Rudeness?!

Yes, it is true...the Holiday Season may bring out both the best AND worst in folks. Sometimes the hustle and stress of the Season wears down patience and common courtesy. So, what to do if you are faced with *Holiday Rudeness*?

1. **Distance yourself:** You may actually need to put physical distance between yourself and the other person, especially if the other person appears overtly hostile. Taking a step back provides you with safe distance and gives the other person an opportunity to calm down. Distancing yourself also means not taking the rude behavior personally.

Do not “fight fire with fire” and respond with equally rude behavior, sarcasm or passive-aggressive behavior. Muttering a zinger comeback under your breath may open the door to more conflict.

2. **Stay calm:** Keep your emotions in check by purposely slowing down your speech and actions. When we feel wronged, our “fight or flight” response gets triggered. Our pulse may increase, our breath quickens and muscles tense up. At the same

time our ability to think clearly and problem solve becomes harder to do when under stress.

3. **Stick to the facts:** Many times, conflicts arise from misunderstandings or misperceptions. Politely but firmly explain your behavior, intent or request. Be prepared to repeat it several times if necessary. It is okay to stand your ground; firmly and calmly repeating yourself.
4. **Let it go:** You can’t stop someone from being rude. That behavior may be part of their personality...a jerk. It may also be the result of their own stress coming to a boil and you can’t do anything about that either. You can, however, decide how you want it to effect you. Don’t let it ruin your day by dwelling on it...and it will if you over think it.

Moving-on and choosing to ignore it doesn’t mean you are weak, a push-over or spineless. Rather, it does mean you are smart enough to know what you can and can’t change and strong enough not to allow anyone to push your buttons.

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Grief and Loss During the Holidays

As you see and hear the enthusiasm of others busy in their Holiday planning, you are numb to it...maybe even dreading it. Grief during the Holiday Season may be particularly difficult. The following reminders may help:

- **PREPARE.** Emotions may rise up triggered by familiar sights, smells or feelings. Expect that this may happen and account for them when socializing or participating in Holiday activities.
- **ACCEPT** that the Holidays are a difficult time of year for you but know that it will pass.
- **SOCIALIZE.** You may be tempted to wait out the Holidays away from everyone, however, doing so will only serve to increase the feeling of loneliness. Take small steps to socialize instead. For example, you don't have to stay for the whole party but make an appearance and make it a point to stay for a little while.
- **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.** Movies and songs paint an unrealistic picture of the Holidays. Life's stressors and challenges don't take a vacation during the Holidays.
- **DON'T ANESTHETIZE.** Numbing emotional pain with alcohol or drugs works on the short term but leaves you feeling more depressed in the long run.
- **GET UP AND MOVE.** Take care of your physical well-being. Exercise produces natural stress reducers. A simple walk may boost your overall energy levels.
- **COPING STRATEGY.** Have the phone number of your counselor, pastor, church, close friend or hotline on your phone. Make the commitment to call someone if negative thoughts get fierce.
- **LIGHT.** The loss of sunlight during winter can take a negative toll on your mood. Even a small dose of sunlight helps. Simply positioning yourself close to windows may have a positive effect.
- **SET BOUNDARIES.** Precisely explain to your family and friends what you are capable of doing this year, and what you aren't able to do. Be careful not to let others guilt you into taking on more than you can handle.

The Holiday Spending Creep

Did you suffer from “*Shopping Hangover*” last year by going beyond your spending budget? Start 2015 on strong financial ground.

- **Review:** Take a moment to recall last year's Holiday budget pitfalls. What worked and what didn't?
- **Set a budget:** Assign a realistic and exact dollar amount for each person on your gift giving list.
- **Limit Credit Cards:** Only bring cash you've set aside for holiday shopping to avoid temptations for unnecessary purchases that will take you over

budget.

- **Track your receipts.** Knowing how much you spent will keep you honest and help you plan better for future holiday shopping.
- **Emotional Shopping:** Don't get caught up in the hype of holiday sales. Keep the “knee-jerk” shopping at a minimum by doing your research and price comparison in advance. Keep your budget in-hand when shopping. Most importantly, know that you are most vulnerable to impulse buying when tired, stressed or depressed.

Creating the Holiday Spirit

♦ **Keep expectations in check.** All too often we are preoccupied with what the holidays are *supposed* to be like. We hold fast to a fantasy about what it *should* be at the expense of losing sight of what is important. Instead, focus on how you're supposed to *feel*. The Holidays are a time for gratitude, appreciation, and spending time with those we care about.

♦ **Find positive ways to remember loved ones.** Holidays may remind you of the loved ones who aren't around anymore. Do something to celebrate their memory. For instance, go out with your sisters to your mom's favorite restaurant or donate to charity in her name.

♦ **Give yourself a break.** Though a joyous time of year, the Holidays may also be pretty demanding on your time, energy and resources. Put down unrealistic expectations. It is the season of kindness and forgiveness, after all. Save some of it for yourself.

♦ **Try something different, a new tradition.** Avoid getting stuck in a rut. If you are doing something only because “*it has always been done*” and it doesn't hold any more meaning for you, it may be time for something new during the Holidays.

♦ **Volunteer.** Doing for others not only helps that person but also makes us feel good...that feeling is called “altruism”...and it is good. It helps build a positive sense of ourselves and our impact in our own community and world.

Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10)

How to know if you or a loved one is misusing drugs? The *Drug Abuse Screening Test* (DAST-10) may help. It is one of several screening tools that may be used during an interview for substance misuse for **adults**. If answering these questions for yourself, remember to be honest and pick the answer that is mostly right. If you are answering for a loved one, you may have to approach him/her with these questions. Approaching your loved one about his or her drug abuse problem is never going to be easy, but it very well may save his or her life.

The following questions concern information about your possible involvement with drugs not including alcoholic beverages during the past 12 months. "Drug abuse" refers to (1) the use of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs in excess of the directions, and (2) any nonmedical use of drugs. The various classes of drugs may include cannabis (marijuana, hashish), solvents (e.g., paint thinner), tranquilizers (e.g., Valium), barbiturates, cocaine, stimulants (e.g., speed), hallucinogens (e.g., LSD) or narcotics (e.g., heroin). Remember that the questions do not include alcoholic beverages.

This tool is for screening purposes only and not intended to provide a definite diagnose or label. It should not take the place of a face-to-face assessment with the Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor.

<u>These questions refer to the past 12 months.</u>	<u>Circle Your Response</u>	
1. Have you used drugs other than those required for medical reasons?	Yes	No
2. Do you abuse more than one drug at a time?	Yes	No
3. Are you always able to stop using drugs when you want to?	Yes	No
4. Have you had "blackouts" or "flashbacks" as a result of drug use?	Yes	No
5. Do you every feel bad or guilty about your drug use?	Yes	No
6. Does your spouse (or parents) ever complain about your involvement with drugs?	Yes	No
7. Have you neglected your family because of your use of drugs?	Yes	No
8. Have you engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drugs?	Yes	No
9. Have you ever experienced withdrawal symptoms (felt sick) when you stopped taking drugs?	Yes	No
10. Have you had medical problems as a result of your drug use (e.g. memory loss, hepatitis, convulsions, bleeding, etc.)?	Yes	No

Scoring and Interpretation – For the DAST-10, score 1 point for each question answered, "YES", except for question (3) for which a "NO" answer receives 1 point and (0) for a "YES". Add up the points and interpretations are as followed:

Interpretation of Score		
Score	Degree of Problems Related to Drug Abuse	Suggested Action
0	No problems reported	None at this time
1-2	Low level	Monitor, re-assess at a later date
3-5	Moderate level	Further investigation
6-8	Substantial level	Intensive assessment
9-10	Severe level	Intensive assessment

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Mindfulness During the Holidays

We've all been guilty of the following statement, "The Holidays went too fast!..where did they go?!" The fast-paced Holiday frenzy is much different from our normal routine. Our wellbeing does much better with calm and this time of year has the potential to leave us feeling overwhelmed, stressed, exhausted and empty when it is over. Mindfulness may be the answer in coping with Holiday stress and genuinely enjoying the Season.

Mindfulness is simply focusing purposely on the here-and-now. Not allowing our minds to wander to the

past (should've, guilt, regret, depression) or the future (what needs to be done, hasn't happened, anxiety). Stay in the present without judgment or labeling by simply soaking up the present for all it has to offer. If you are talking with a loved one, tune completely in. If you are eating your favorite Holiday meal, slow down and savor every bite! If you are walking, purposefully focus on the sights, sounds and smells one at a time. Being in the present has a calming effect on us and will allow you to fully experience the Holidays in a meaningful way.

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.

City of Milwaukee Events and Reminders

- **Have Wellness questions?** Visit the *Wellness Center*. Call **414-286-5707** for information or to schedule an appointment.
- **Blood Drive.** Thursday, January 29, 2015; 8:00 am -1:00 pm in the Zeidler Municipal Building, Room 102 (Broadway Street entrance - *Fishbowl*).
- **Read or subscribe to RSS** feed found on the EAP webpage. Click  icon at the top right of the EAP Webpage to subscribe.

Sobriety during the Holidays

Whether this is your first sober Season or you have been maintaining sobriety for some time, take a moment to outline a concrete *Relapse Prevention Plan*.

1. **Attend Meetings:** Your recovery does not take a break during the Holidays, so you shouldn't either.
2. **Phone list:** Keep a contact list of supportive people, sponsor and/or hotlines.
3. **People, Places, and Things:** Resist the urge to test your sobriety by exposing yourself to obvious triggers. Avoid people, places and things associated with your drinking/substance misuse.
4. **H.A.L.T.:** Avoid going too long feeling hungry, practice good anger management, don't isolate (loneliness), and get plenty of rest (tired).
5. **Plan "B":** If you are going to attend a party where alcohol is present, rehearse how you will abstain and plan your escape route if it gets too difficult.

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Scan Me!