

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Quarterly Newsletter: June 2014



Anger Management

We've all been there, a situation where we reacted in a way that was ugly...out of control. The emotion of anger is neither good nor bad. It's perfectly normal to feel angry at times. The feeling isn't the problem; it's what you do with it that makes a difference. Anger becomes a problem when it harms you or others. Anger management is not about "bottling up" feelings or being passive. It is about recognizing when its getting the best of you and responding (not reacting) in a way that doesn't harm you or someone else.

1. **Breath Deeply:** As simple as that sounds, slowly breathing from your diaphragm resets our "fight or flight" stress response and helps put us in a more calm state. **Make sure your exhale is twice as long as your in-hale.**
2. **Self-Talk:** As soon as you feel anger coming on, make positive statements to your self. "I'm not going to let this person/or thing get the best of me."
3. **Think Before You Speak:** Give yourself some time before reacting to a situation. Evaluate all your options and pick the best one. You can't put toothpaste back in the tube once it is out!
4. **Give up Controlling:** You can't control anyone other than yourself. Let go of the "should 's" and what other folks are or aren't doing. Instead, focus on what you do have control over...yourself.
5. **Review:** We are not going to respond to every provoking situation in the best possible way...we are only human after all. Go over how you dealt with the situation, note what went well and not so well.

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Resolving Employee Conflicts

In a perfect world where unicorns and fairies frolic under candy rainbows, heated arguments and conflicts between co-workers do not exist. The fact that they are common does not exclude the need for supervisors/managers to immediately address when they occur.

Common managerial mistakes often take the form of 1) simply ignoring the problem, 2) instructing the parties to “knock it off and work it out”, and 3) focusing on getting the employees to “like” each other, which may be unrealistic and is not necessary to a productive working relationship.

Below is a structured, three phase approach toward addressing conflicts between employees.

⇒ Review policies/procedures

- Has there been a possible violation of City Policy (anti-harassment, workplace violence etc.)
- If so, consult with HR and possibly initiate safety protocol and/or discipline.
- Supervisor/Managerial intervention should address conflict swiftly.

⇒ Conflict resolution

1. **Initial Brainstorming: Meet with each employee individually.**
 - Review department expectations as it relates to professionalism, work environment, and productivity.
 - Be ready to specifically site how conflict has disrupted department.
 - Stress how each employee is responsible for maintaining a work environment conducive to productivity and safety.
 - Ask each employee to verbalize his/her ideas on 1) improving work relationship and 2) maintaining

department productivity

- Focus on one problem at a time.
 - Write down their ideas.
 - It is important to elicit **ONLY** what each party plans to do (individual responsibility) to avoid/resolve conflict and ensure productivity.
2. **Review ideas: Meet with each employee individually.**
 - Meet individually again and share the other party’s ideas toward improving work relationship and productivity.
 - Note and gauge response to each other’s ideas.
 3. **Resolution Planning: Meet with both employees together.**
 - Type up ideas and reactions from previous meetings.
 - Share what you’ve learned from your one-on-one discussions.
 - Explain that you’ve heard their suggestions/reactions and now it is time to individually commit to agreed solutions.
 - Stick to concrete solutions to work related problem.
 - Schedule a follow-up meeting within 30 days between yourself and employees to review the conflict resolution plan; amend if needed.
 - The idea behind this meeting is to hold all accountable for their own (and only their own) agreed upon ideas to avoid further disruption.

⇒ Quickly implementing a game plan that focuses on productivity and fosters a professional working relationship is key toward managing employee conflicts.



Conflict Resolution

1. **Stay in the present.** If you’re holding on to old hurts and resentments, your thinking will be clouded and unable to think about solutions to the current problem.
2. **What is your goal?** If your goal is only to “win” an argument or have the last word, you won’t be open to really solving the problem.
3. **Pick your battles.** Conflicts zap our energy. Be picky with the one’s you take on.
4. **Willingness to forgive.** Conflicts are maintained by the urge to aggressively “push back.” Conflicts are fueled when we are *unable* or *unwilling* to forgive.
5. **Avoid clamming up.** Giving someone the “cold shoulder”, ignoring or isolating someone only builds resentment and leaves the door open for future blow-ups. Instead, keep the communication going.
6. **Express yourself in words.** Be honest and direct but don’t lose control. It is best to give it a break if you begin to feel over-



Mental Health Stigma and DIY Home Repairs

As human beings, we tend to avoid and distance ourselves from what makes us uneasy or uncomfortable. This is easy to do when we don't understand something or know what to do. Example, I'm not very mechanically inclined, so I avoid DIY repairs around the house until the last minute...and even then approach reluctantly. I talk negatively about having to do the project, the time and resources needed etc. I complain...a lot. My attitude and negative perception of home repairs is shaped by the fact that I don't have much DIY experience and knowledge. Mental Health Stigma happens in much the same way.

As I mentioned, we avoid things that make us feel uneasy or uncomfortable. In Mental Health Stigma, we create "distance" by holding an us vs. them attitude. This opens the door for negative attitudes, misperceptions and beliefs. This may leave the person living with a mental illness to feel shame, inappropriate blame, isolated, scapegoated, negatively stereotyped, and discriminated against. Ultimately, stigma stands as a barrier against someone seeking out help when needed.

What can you do to challenge Mental Health stigma?

- Educate yourself about mental illness. Having the facts can help you

challenge the misinformation that leads to stigma.

- Be aware of words. Don't reduce people to a diagnosis. We certainly wouldn't say, "There goes Jim, he's lung cancer." So, we shouldn't say, "There goes Jim, he's BiPolar." Correct people who use hurtful language to describe people with mental illness, such as "psycho" or "crazy."

- Support those with mental health issues. Treat them with respect. Remember, your example could help someone else.

MYTH BUSTING FACTS

MYTH: Mental illness is fairly rare and doesn't affect average people.

FACT: Mental illness is quite common. One in five Americans suffer from a mental disorder in any given year. Mental illness can strike people of any age, race, religion or income status.

MYTH: People with mental illnesses are dangerous.

FACT: The vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not dangerous. They are much more likely to be

the victims of violence and crime than the perpetrators.

MYTH: Being treated for a psychiatric disorder means an individual has "failed" or is weak.

FACT: A serious mental illness cannot be willed away. Ignoring the problem does not make it go away, either. It takes courage to seek professional help.

MYTH: Most people with a mental illness are receiving treatment.

FACT: Only 1 in 5 persons affected with a mental illness seeks treatment.

MYTH: People with mental illnesses can never be normal.

FACT: With proper treatment, many people with mental illnesses live normal, productive lives.



Making a Change?

Making a change, even a positive one, may be difficult. Being strategic and understanding the steps needed to make a lasting change is important if you want to be successful. Typically, change involves certain "steps." However, these phases are not linear and you may find yourself at one step, jump to one or another. The important thing is to cover all the steps involved.

- *Pre-Contemplation:* At this phase change isn't even on your mind. You may not see a reason for a change or be in denial for the reason(s) to change.
- *Contemplation:* You are thinking about a change but are on the fence and ambivalent. There is a need to weigh the pros vs. cons and costs vs. rewards. Talk to someone you trust about the options.

- *Planning:* You've decided to make a change. Do your research and homework. What or who is going to help you?
- *Action:* You are doing it! Keep it up!
- *Maintenance:* Stick with what has been working and don't be tempted to take your foot off the gas pedal. Don't give in to excuses. Make modifications to your plan to make it better.



How to Say “No”

Saying “NO” to people can be difficult at times. Generally, we don’t like to let others down. However, saying “YES” to everyone may very well spread you too thin. The key to saying no is to do so respectfully and with compassion.

1. Acknowledge the request with empathy:

⇒ “I know you’ve been working hard on the party planning.”

2. **Make it clear:** Don’t hint, beat around the bush or try to get the other person to agree with you. Avoid state-

ments like “*Wouldn’t it be better if...*”, “*would it be okay if...*”, or “*I don’t think that will work for us...*” Instead, be direct and stick to the facts.

⇒ “However, I already have a commitment for that date and won’t be around to help.”

3. Say something positive:

⇒ “Is there something else I can help with before the party?” or “Do you want to spend some time talking about how to organize the party?”

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

- **HEALTHY REWARDS** program is up and running for City employees through July 31, earn \$150 if you completed wellness program last year and reach 100 points. Go to www.milwaukee.gov/der under Healthy Rewards for more information.
- Join "**100 Miles in 100 Days with Mayor Barrett**" this summer, as part of a community wide walking effort to get everyone in Milwaukee moving more. Join one of the many sponsored walks, or just walk around your block with a family member or friend. The mileage can be self-reported on special web site on e-services. Watch for more. Kickoff will be June 2, 2014 at 12 noon in Red Arrow Park.
- View Archived EAP Newsletters and access additional resources at: <http://city.milwaukee.gov/der/EAP>
- Read or subscribe to RSS feed found on the EAP webpage. Click  icon at the top right of the EAP Webpage to subscribe.

Alcohol and Depression

Studies are finding a strong link between serious alcohol use and depression. According to one major study conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol abuse, **nearly one-third of people with Major Depression have an alcohol problem.**

A number of studies have shown that alcohol abuse increases the risk for depression. This connection may be due to a couple of reasons.

First, alcohol has a neurotoxic effect to the brain. As blood alcohol increases, users may experience heightened emotional responses (including anger, depression, and aggression).

Second, alcohol misuse may lead to financial and legal troubles, impaired thinking and judgment, as well as marital stress. In short, alcohol abuse compounds life problems and may lead to frequent and severe episodes of depression and place you at higher risk of suicide.

Consult with your doctor or trained counselor if you have concerns about your alcohol use.

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Scan Me!