



Take a Hike: The Nature and Mental Health Connection

It has long been established that vitamin D from natural sunlight elevates mood. Recent studies have discovered concrete evidence that walking in nature also reduces risk of depression and other mental issues.

One of these studies, published in the *National Academy of Science*, found that people who walked in nature, as opposed to walking in highly urban settings, showed decreased activity in the brain regions associated with depression. This corresponds with the fact that city dwellers have a 20% higher risk of anxiety disorders and 40% higher risk of depressive illnesses compared to people in more rural areas. How is this possible?

Researchers have found that being in nature helps us regulate our emotions better. These specific changes were seen in images of the subgenual prefrontal cortex of our brains. Why is this important? This area is responsible for worrying, anxiety and rumination. Being in nature lessens the activity in this part of our brain and helps quiet distressing thoughts.

Studies involving children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity (ADD/

ADHD) issues saw marked improvement in concentration, creativity and problem-solving.

Not all of us have the time for a 90 minute nature walk like the participants in these studies. However, we can be creative in tapping into nature’s healing ability.

- Take a five-minute break from your work area to walk along a path or by trees
- Pack a lunch under a tree and disconnect from electronics for a spell
- If you must work, take advantage of nearby Wi-Fi connections near green spaces
- Take a walk around your neighborhood
- Take your family for a walk or bike ride in one of the many parks and bike trails throughout the Milwaukee area.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Take a Hike: The Outdoors and Mental Health**
- **Coaching Employees**
- **Employee Coaching Worksheet**
- **Heroin: An Overview**
- **Gardening: Good for Mind and Body**
- **The Art of Negotiating**
- **Events and Reminders**

Employee Assistance Program



City of Milwaukee EAP

Coaching Employees

Think back to a person in your life who influenced and *coached* you to do better than you thought you could ever do. Do you have that person in mind? Now on a piece of paper, list the characteristics that made that person an effective coach.

What is employee coaching? Well, it may be helpful to explain what it isn't:

- Managing
- Training
- Mentoring
- Counseling
- Consulting

Managing vs. Coaching

Managing employees is process oriented and task centered. Managing, ensures employees are fulfilling their job responsibilities and duties.

Coaching differs from managing in that the focus is on helping employees see and understand the obstacles preventing them from success.

Training vs. Coaching

Training is all about building a particular set of skills. It involves instructing or demonstrating these skills.

Coaching is about discovering what may be preventing an employee from learning these new skills. When you coach, you do a whole lot of asking and very little telling.

Mentoring vs. Coaching

Mentoring is the process of passing on your job knowledge and related experience to help build an employee's job depth.

Coaching allows the employee to use their own experience to problem solve and develop solutions. It

means giving the employee room to experiment with trial and error.

Counseling vs. Coaching

Counseling usually involves looking at an employee's past to discover what could be affecting their current work behavior/performance.

Coaching is future oriented. It looks at their present behavior and current situation to discover what could effect their future success. Even though you are not a counselor, there may be current personal issues that may be impacting work success.

When coaching, you have to look at an employee holistically, not as emotionless worker bees.

Consulting vs. Coaching

Simply put, consulting is a method to get an expert's advice on what to do.

Coaching is a positively focused way to explore options, opportunities, and resources. Being an effective manager, supervisor and leader means knowing when to switch "hats" between all of these approaches.

How to Coach

Go back to the list of coach characteristics you created earlier. See how well your list mirrors the characters below.

Observe: Don't be quick to judge and make sure not to assume. Ask if your own behaviors are solving or adding to the problem.

Listen: Stop talking. Be aware of non-verbal communication and listen to understand the whole situation an employee may be experiencing.

Give feedback: Provide timely information about behaviors and performance. Identify City wide resources that may help the employee succeed.

Ask questions: This is the most important part of coaching. Ask them one at time and avoid leading the employee to answer in a particular way. Use open-ended questions like: *who, what, when where, and why* (tip: avoid using "why" as your first question).

Excuses and Resistance

Sometimes discipline is warranted but also know that a hammer may not be needed. Speak of solutions rather than being hung-up on the excuses.

Lastly, focus on the natural consequences vs. punishment for behavior/work performance, "*a glass of water is going to be empty if flipped upside down.*"

Use the sample worksheet on page 3 with an employee as a framework and starting point for coaching.

Coaching may be a valuable tool for staff retention, promoting/developing employees and positively impacting overall work culture.



Heroin: An Overview

What is Heroin?

Heroin is an opioid drug that is derived from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from the seed pod of the Asian opium poppy plant. Heroin usually appears as a white or brown powder or as a black sticky substance.

In 2011, 4.2 million Americans aged 12 or older (or 1.6 percent) had used heroin at least once in their lives. It is estimated that about 23 percent of individuals who use heroin become dependent on it.

How is it Used?

Heroin can be injected, inhaled by snorting or sniffing, or smoked. All three routes deliver the drug to the brain very rapidly. This contributes to its health risks and high risk for addiction.

How Does Heroin Affect the Brain?

When it enters the brain, heroin is converted back into morphine, which binds to molecules on cells known as opioid receptors. These receptors are located in many areas of the brain (and in the body), especially those involved in the perception of

pain and in reward. Opioid receptors are also located in the brain stem, which controls automatic processes critical for life, such as blood pressure, arousal, and respiration.

Heroin overdoses frequently involve a suppression of breathing. This can affect the amount of oxygen that reaches the brain, a condition called hypoxia. Hypoxia can have short and long-term psychological and neurological effects, including coma and permanent brain damage.

What is Withdrawal from Heroin Like?

Chronic use of heroin leads to physical dependence, a state in which the body has adapted and “needs” the drug. If use abruptly stops, he or she may experience severe symptoms of withdrawal.

These symptoms, which can begin as early as a few hours after the last use, can include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea and vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps (“cold turkey”), and kicking movements (“kicking the habit”). Users also experience severe craving for the drug during withdrawal, which easily leads to using again.

What are the Treatments?

There are a variety of behavioral therapies and medication treatments available.

Some medications like buprenorphine and methadone work by binding to the same cell receptors in the brain as heroin and thereby lessen cravings. Other medications like naltrexone block opioid receptors in the brain, which prevents heroin from providing a “high” effect.

Common Myths

- **Myth:** Abstinence is an appropriate treatment for heroin addiction
Fact: Very few individuals can quit on their own without the help of a qualified drug rehab program
- **Myth:** Most heroin addiction starts with a legitimate pain prescription
Fact: While people who misuse prescription pain pills are 40 times more likely to become addicted to heroin, 75 percent of prescription-drug misusers acquired their pills not through doctors but through friends, family and other sources.

Hope

Recovery is possible at any stage of substance use. One doesn’t have to hit “rock bottom” before getting help. Contact the City of Milwaukee EAP for a confidential consultation. United Health Care subscribers may also contact *Care24* at 800-942-4746; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Employee Coaching Worksheet: What needs to stop, do less, keep doing, do more, start?

| | STOP | Do LESS | KEEP DOING | Do MORE | START |
|---|------|---------|------------|---------|-------|
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |



Gardening: Good for Mind and Body

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), moderate-intensity level activity for 2.5 hours each week can reduce the risk for obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, stroke, depression, colon cancer and premature death.

The CDC considers gardening a moderate-intensity level activity, and can help you to achieve that 2.5 hour goal each week.

Gardening has also emerged in recent years as a scientifically proven stress

reliever. An experiment published in the Journal of Health Psychology found that gardening participants experienced a more significant decrease in stress than those than subjects assigned to read as their stress reliever.

Short on space? Start a potted garden on your porch or steps, plant vegetables in your backyard or get involved in shared community gardens!

For information on community gardens contact 414-286-3748 or email: tmccol@milwaukee.gov

The Art of Negotiating

Keep it results-focused

It is way too easy to get side tracked by our emotions, especially if there are less than favorable feelings toward the other person or when passionate about the issue at hand.

This is why sticking to the facts and not on the people is critical if you want to be heard. Be clear and brief about your concerns. Don't make it personal.

Show Respect...Always

You stand a better chance at being respected if you give respect. Watch your body language and check your ego.

Use "We" Statements.

Frame your negotiation around **mutual** goals, needs, and wants, "*We* both want, need..." You stand a better chance at getting buy-in with a "*I want what you want*" approach.

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

- **Not feeling well?** Visit the [Workplace Clinic](#) (841 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI. 53202/Zeidler Municipal Building) for no cost onsite health care services. Due to increased demand, the Workplace Clinic is adding additional hours and will be open 40 hours a week. [Call 414-777-3413](tel:414-777-3413) for information or to schedule an appointment.
- **Free screening, consultation, and education services to prevent and treat potential musculoskeletal injuries.** Schedule an appointment with a physical therapist at the [Workplace Clinic](#). [Call 414-777-3413](tel:414-777-3413) to schedule an appointment.
- **There is still time to complete the Healthy Rewards Program and receive a \$250 HRA. The deadline to submit points is June 30th.** Questions? Contact Workforce Health at 414-777-3410.
- **Health4Me™** is a UHC mobile app that provides instant access to your family's critical health information, anytime/anywhere. Find a physician near you, check the status of a claim or speak directly with a healthcare professional.

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