



Special points of interest:

- Parenting
- Mental Health
- Alcohol/ Substance Use
- Job/Career

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Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



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

Gratitude during the Holidays

The Holiday Season has historically been a time to be grateful. This is tough when juggling a busy schedule and demands. However, research shows that spending just 10-15 minutes each day experiencing gratitude, really experiencing it and not just thinking about it, has positive health benefits. Why? Simply put, one can not feel anxious, anger, frustration, or sadness at the same time as gratitude; there is only "room" for one emotion/

feeling at a time.

1. Find a quiet space and sit in a relaxed position.
2. Close your eyes and shift attention away from the mind to the area around your heart, put your hand on it. Visualize your breath going in and out as you take slow deep breaths. Visualize a warm glow around your chest and heart and breathe it in.
3. Now, find something that's easy for you to appreciate. For some it will be parents, friends, chil-

dren, loved ones or a beloved pet. Visualize sending them appreciation, from your heart to them, don't just think about it but feel it. Take a moment to appreciate your material possessions and what you do have.

4. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the area around your heart.
5. Try to hold this appreciation for at least 10 minutes before slowly opening your eyes and returning to your day.

Crunch Time? Manage your effort and time in 6 steps

The Holidays brings with it more than just cheer. It also brings along the stress of additional tasks, responsibilities, and things to do. After all, that turkey is not going to cook itself, right? When pressed for time, it is not an issue of working harder but SMARTER. Try these steps in managing your time effectively.

Use a to-do list, put aside time wasters, and do what really matters first.

2. **Schedule.** Assign time slots and durations for each task and keep to it as much as possible.

3. **Focus your attention.** Shut out distractions and avoid multitasking. Get more done by approaching things one at a time.

4. **Process new information.** Keep informa-

tion moving by sorting out email, filing papers and voicemails quickly.

5. **Tweak it.** Determine what does and doesn't work. Check for inefficiencies and bottle necks, tighten it up as you go.

6. **Manage your capacity.** Focus on the physical factors affecting your energy. Be sure not to run out of gas by not getting enough sleep, eating right, and skipping exercise.

Surviving the Holidays with a Mental Illness

For many people with mood, substance/ alcohol issues, anxiety and eating difficulties, the Holidays can be especially challenging.

Depression

For people with depression, the joy and festivities of the holiday season seem to amplify their own inability to experience pleasure. As families and friends come together, they may withdraw.

To make matters worse, Christmas falls right around the shortest day of the year, so the lack of sunlight can be a huge trigger for those with *Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)* – a type of depression which occurs in the fall and winter months.

Anxiety

For people with anxiety, being around large groups of unfamiliar people can be terrifying. Christmas parties, crowded shopping malls, even visits with unfamiliar (or unkind) relatives can be extra stressful.

Eating Disorders

For people with anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa, the large amounts of foods, par-

ticularly “treats,” that are part and parcel of holiday events can induce major anxiety. So can the enormously triggering “diet talk” that often accompanies holiday feasts and intensifies near New Year.

“Many people stop engaging in health-promoting behaviors around the holidays.”

Alcohol/Substance Use

For people with problem drinking, holiday parties and events where alcohol is present makes it difficult to socialize normally or enjoy the typical gatherings with family and friends without the temptation to over indulge.

Holiday Action Plan

Now is the time to plan ahead. Create a written list of potential problems that could arise around

the holidays. Think about various ways that you could handle these situations. Take it a step further and actually write down your solutions. Take a page from successful business people and athletes and use your imagination to visualize yourself handling these difficult situations with grace and strength.

Shore up your support network. Talk to people you trust – your therapist, family members, or friends – about your concerns. Let them know how they can help you through this difficult time. Maintain good health habits. Be sure to get at least 8 hours of sleep per night, eat plenty of healthful foods, exercise regularly, and drink in moderation (if at all).

Many people stop engaging in health-promoting behaviors around the holidays. If you struggle with a mental illness, this is the time to be extra-conscientious about caring for your physical and mental health.

Keep it simple. The holidays have become so commercialized, and so many demands are placed on people to throw and attend parties, buy and wrap lavish gifts, and

cook even if you feel overwhelmed by stress. You may want to simply have a quiet, one-evening celebration with a few people of your choosing who are closest to you.

There is no need to spend precious time and money getting people the perfect gifts. A simple card with a thoughtful note is sufficient to let people know you are thinking of them. Focus on what really matters. These material things have no bearing on our ability to enjoy the Holidays.

Above all else, remember to have fun. The Holidays are suppose to be a time for enjoyment and not a punishment, so put down unrealistic expectations, undue pressure and enjoy the Season.



Scan Me!

PERMA for wellbeing and happiness in your life

I recently read an article that outlined a simple five ingredient recipe for increased wellbeing and happiness. **PERMA** is based out of *positive psychology* and originally developed by psychologist, Martin Seligman.

PERMA stands for the five essential ingredients toward **lasting** wellbeing and happiness. The ingredients explained:

Positive Emotion (P)

For us to experience wellbeing, we need positive emotion in our lives. Any positive emotion like peace, gratitude, satisfaction, pleasure, inspiration, hope, curiosity, or love falls into this bucket.

Yes, it's unrealistic to feel happy all the time. The point here is to actively seek out positive emotions like happiness, pleasure, inspiration, contentment, joy, and peace.

Engagement (E)

When we're truly engaged in a situation, task, or project, we experience a state of "flow." It seems like time stops/slow, we lose our sense of self, and we concentrate intensely on the present. Athletes refer to this

experience as being in the "Zone". The more we experience this type of engagement, the more likely we are to experience well-being because our talents/skills are being **fully** utilized in that very moment.

You can increase your "flow" at work by minimizing distractions and solely focusing on the task at hand. Engaging in hobbies, sports, house projects, and even time with loved ones all present opportunities to be engaged in the moment in your personal life as well.

"Do you feel that your life and work has meaning?"

Positive Relationships (R)

Humans are not creatures of isolation. The benefits of healthy relationships can not be understated. We need and require positive relationships.

Make spending regular quality time with positive/supportive friends or family members a priority.

Meaning (M)

Do you feel that your life and work has meaning? That is, do you feel that you're connected in some way to a cause bigger than yourself?

Meaning comes from serving something bigger than ourselves. Whether this is a specific deity or religion, or a cause that helps humanity in some way, we all need meaning in our lives to have a sense of well-being.

Are you working with a purpose or simply turning out widgets or punching numbers? Do you feel unsatisfied with your work? Increase your job satisfaction by finding meaning in your work. Make the connection between what you contribute on an individual level to your work group, department, employer, community, and humanity. You may find that your piece, though small in scale, is important to the whole.

Are you finding meaning in your personal life?

Simply volunteering an hour a week for a cause you hold important or performing occasional acts of kindness can really improve your sense of meaning in life.

Accomplishment/Achievement (A)

In a nutshell, the fifth and last ingredient is about striving to better ourselves in some way. This may be by mastering a skill or achieving a meaningful goal. Clear and realistic goals are what keeps us moving, motivated and energized.

There is a note of warning here. All too often, society places too much emphasis on materialistic achievements and accomplishments. Real happiness and wellbeing comes from knowing what truly matters in your life and having your goal(s) reflect that.

The **PERMA** approach to happiness is all about returning to the basics in life, keeping all ingredients on the table and in balance to one another. If you find yourself off track, take a step back to see which of the ingredients is missing or needs to be added.



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Employee Assistance Mission Statement

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

Work To-do lists made easier.

Reorganize your to-do list using short, small action verbs in order to manage your time better.

“Small” action verbs such as: **call, draft, review** and **invite** are things you can do generally in one sitting, and that have the potential to move the project/

task forward one step at a time.

Avoid to-do categories labeled with “big verbs” like: **plan, discuss, create** and **implement**. These words are more mentally demanding, they usually have lots of smaller steps and are more compli-

cated, making them more difficult to get done quickly.

“Smaller” verbs are easier to wrap our minds around because they are less intimidating and therefore easier to begin and subsequently complete.

Coping strategies for recovering alcoholic during the Holidays

The Holidays present especially difficult challenges for someone in recovery. Experts in the field often refer to this time of year as the “*Bermuda Triangle*” of potential relapse (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year). Stop to think of all the Holiday gatherings that include drinking

alcohol and the pressure to relapse. Now add Milwaukee’s dreary winter weather that can contribute to feelings of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Yes, the Holidays are especially challenging.

There are three tips to

help keep you grounded and on track:

1. **Think in the present**—don’t dwell on the past or become overwhelmed with the future, take it ‘*one step at a time*’.
2. **Stop ‘all or nothing’ and ‘what if?’ thinking**—these absolutes and infi-

nites are unrealistic and just serve to raise anxiety.

3. **Fight isolation** by actively searching out support. Continue to work your recovery program and plan ahead for how you want to respond to challenges to your sobriety.

Divorce, children, and the Holidays

Offer Understanding:
Be willing and available to listen, especially to negative feelings. Create a safe place for negative feelings by explaining that anger and/or sadness are normal given the situation. Be supportive.

Be Cordial To Your Ex:
Model positive behavior to your child even if it means taking the “high road” during tough encounters with an ex.

Involve Your Child in Decision Making:
When parents divorce, children often feel a lack of control. Consider offering some measure of choices over visitations, activities and functions.

Holiday Traditions:
Do away with holiday traditions that cause emotional pain for your children.

Create a new tradition that your child can look forward to doing with you in your home.