

For Your Information



LIFT YOUR MOOD

Being around negative, unhappy people can bring you down and make you feel equally unhappy. Negative energy is infectious, but so is positive energy. To improve your mood, spend as much time as you can around the happy people in your life.

WORK/LIFE BALANCE TIP

Make the most of family time. Spend some time alone each day with your spouse and each child. Even if it is only for a few minutes, talk, read, or participate in an activity together. Also, plan special family events and ignore your weekend agenda of household duties once in a while and enjoy family time together.

DO YOU KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

Many people recognize excessive sadness as a sign of depression but did you know that symptoms of depression often include headaches, back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, anxiety, sleep problems, shortness of breath, and many other conditions? If you have persistent symptoms that resist treatment, the underlying problem might be depression. Call your EAP or doctor and ask to be examined for depression.

FAMILY LIFE

The Challenge Of Step Parenting

Whether you are already a parent or not, taking on the responsibility of being a stepparent can be a difficult and challenging job. Depending upon the ages and number of children that are involved, you may have to deal with several different responses to you, as a new parental figure. It is quite normal for a new stepparent to feel like an outsider or an interloper in someone else's family. It is important to remember that you and your new spouse are creating a new family. If you have children too, you will be creating something called a "Blended Family", because you will be blending your two families into one. It may take some time, but everyone involved needs to find their new place.



The following are some guidelines that may be helpful:

Work it out.

Sit down with your spouse and talk about the problems, fears, expectations or roadblocks that you may have. You might have to take your wife or husband's ex into consideration when making decisions about how much authority you will have as a parental figure.

Create new family traditions.

As a new family, you have no traditions. One of the things that makes a family a cohesive unit is a history composed of shared memories and experiences. Over time, this new family will create its own history which will help solidify it into a family unit. It is important to let everyone mourn the loss of their old ways and traditions while creating new and unique ones for the future.

Love me, love my kids.

It is very common and normal to believe that because you love your new spouse, you'll also love their children. Good intentions aside, you can't force or just expect that people will love or care for one another. It's not fair or reasonable to believe that because you're married, everyone in the family will be in love with each other. Initially, what's most important is that there is a mutual respect among all the family members. Forging a new relationship as a parental figure with the children of your spouse will take time, patience and some hard work on everyone's part.

Second parent, second best?

Not surprisingly, many stepparents feel like they are second best. They have a whole lot of history to try and compete with. Don't try to compete. Be yourself. The best thing for everyone is to just be who you are.

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

Fifty-Five Percent Of Caregivers Feel Overwhelmed

Millions of Americans provide care for aging or chronically ill family members at home, but according to the American Psychological Association's most recent Stress in America survey, caregivers are among the most-highly stressed Americans. Fifty-five percent of caregivers say they feel overwhelmed by the amount of care their aging or chronically ill family member requires. Additionally, caregivers are more likely than those in the general population to say they're doing a poor/fair job practicing healthy behaviors, including managing stress and getting enough sleep.



How can you give your best efforts to your loved one, while also avoiding the dangers of over-stress and burnout? The suggestions below can help:

Stress management tips for caregivers

- Learn about the cause, symptoms and course of the person's condition. Anticipate changes.
- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Don't feel guilty if you can't do everything on your own. Ask for help when you need it.
- Let the older person make his own decisions and solve problems if he/she is able. Set limits to the amount of assistance you will offer, if necessary.
- Delegate responsibilities and ask other family members and friends for help whenever possible.
- Discuss your feelings and experiences with others. Stay in touch with friends. Isolation can further increase feelings of stress. Social activities can help keep you feeling connected to others and help with stress.
- Join a support group for caregivers in your situation (such as caring for a person with dementia). A support group will allow you to receive emotional and moral support and share insights and understanding with other caregivers.
- Give good care to yourself by watching your diet, exercising regularly and getting enough rest.
- Contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for information and referrals for resources or support groups that are available in your community.
- If you experience any signs of depression (for example extreme sadness, trouble concentrating, withdrawal, or hopelessness), don't delay in getting professional help for yourself. Depression is a serious but very treatable condition. Contact an EAP counselor for help.

Your EAP is here to help

Remember, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is always available to help you or your dependents with any type of personal, family or work-related concern. All EAP services are FREE and strictly CONFIDENTIAL. If you need some help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

Step Parenting...

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"You're not my real father/mother. I don't have to do what you say."

Don't be surprised when you hear this or something very much like it. Working with your spouse and creating a plan for parenting will go a long way to help remedy this type of situation. At some point, the whole family will need to talk openly about these issues and how you will all deal with them. What is most important is that you and your spouse agree on how to proceed and be consistent with kids.

Contact your EAP

If you are troubled by an on-going or difficult step-parenting issue, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. Talking to a professional EAP counselor who is trained to help stepfamilies work out their family relationships can be extremely valuable.

SELF IMPROVEMENT

Tips to End Procrastination



Everyone procrastinates at one time or another. However, for some people, procrastination is a bad habit with many negative effects on work performance, job security, relationships and mental health. Twenty percent of people identify themselves as chronic procrastinators.

Why do people procrastinate?

There are two major causes of procrastination. The first major cause is avoidance. We procrastinate to avoid overwhelming tasks, difficult tasks, unpleasant tasks or to avoid change. The second cause is fear and anxiety. We procrastinate because of our fear of failure, fear of success, fear of criticism, fear of making mistakes or fear of rejection.

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Better Communication For Couples



Why do we always seem to argue about “silly” things? How can I get my partner to open up more? These are examples of the kinds of questions couples often ask counselors. While every couple’s situation is unique, these general guidelines can help you improve your communication with your partner:

Set An Example – If you want your partner to open up more, set the example by sharing more of your own thoughts and feelings. Try sharing interesting things you have read or overheard. Relate an experience that happened during the day.

Keep It Light – Try talking about something else besides the “problems.” Pass on a joke or bit of gossip. Make a decision not to bring up the hassles with work, kids or finances, at least not until the appropriate time.

Make “I” Statements – Avoid starting a sentence with “you.” “You” messages blame and judge the other person. “You” messages often trigger defensiveness or hostility in your partner and tend to increase conflict. Instead, put yourself on the line by sharing how it is for you. Say, “I think” or “I want” or “I feel.” “I” messages can express emotions in a way that is not threatening. No cheating by saying, “I think that you...!”

Use “Feeling” Words – It’s not fair to expect your partner to guess or “figure out” what you are feeling, as in “If he loved me, he’d know!” Quit playing the guessing game and say it. Be sure to use feeling words like “sad,” “happy,” “excited,” “angry,” “worried,” etc. Remember to start the sentence with an “I.”

Ask Open-Ended Questions – Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Otherwise, that’s often all you’ll get. Try starting out the question with “how,” or “what,” as in, “What do you think about...” or “How do you feel about...” Don’t ask “why.” Chances are the other person doesn’t know anyway and “why” can sound like an accusation.

Do Something Together – Experience has shown that people, particularly men, are more likely to share their feelings when they are doing something together that both can enjoy.

Your EAP is here to help

If you are concerned about a particularly difficult relationship issue, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for FREE and CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. Remember, your EAP is always available to help you or your immediate family members with most-any personal, family or work-related concern. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help you.

End Procrastination

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Suggestions to help you

If regular procrastination is a concern for you, here are tips to help you overcome this bad habit:

1. Identify the reasons why you procrastinate. Examine how avoidance or fear and anxiety are at the root of your procrastination. Identify the reason(s) you put off a particular task and then come up with solutions. Examining your emotions when you are faced with tasks that you always procrastinate is a good place to start.

2. Do the easiest part first. Start with what is easiest, so that you experience immediate success, which will give you the fuel and motivation to continue.

3. Break large tasks up into smaller, manageable pieces. Take unpleasant or difficult tasks and break them down into small steps and tackle them one step at a time. Create a timeline for yourself to accomplish these smaller tasks.

4. Write it down. Schedule time to work on your task and write it down. Keep your appointments.



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End Procrastination...

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5. Reward yourself. Set a "completion point" for accomplishing each step of a task. Completion points give you an end in sight to look forward to. Set up a series of rewards to give yourself upon accomplishing each "completion point."

6. Just get started. When it's something you don't like to do but have to do, don't waste valuable time agonizing over it. And, don't wait until you're "in the mood." The mood almost always never comes. Schedule time on your calendar and get the task done so you can get it out of your mind. Then, reward yourself. A "do it now" attitude deserves a pat on the back.

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Remember, your EAP is always available to help you or your dependents with any personal, family or work-related concern. All EAP services are FREE and strictly CONFIDENTIAL. Why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help you.

Stairways Behavioral Health's New Opportunities Employee Assistance Program

Please call for free,
confidential assistance

(814) 456-0584
1-800-321-7988

The information in this newsletter is for the purpose of information only and is not meant to replace consultation with your EAP professional, mental health professional or physician. Your EAP is a benefit provided for you by your company. We encourage you to call. No issue is too big or small.

Stairways Behavioral Health's

New Opportunities Employee Assistance Program, Erie, PA

As normal healthy adults, we all experience set-backs and difficulties from time to time. Most often, we are able to recover from them and resolve our problems ourselves. Sometimes professional assistance can help when problems have grown too complicated to manage alone and begin to affect our happiness, relationships, health and job performance. During these times, an employee assistance program can be very helpful.

As one of your employee benefits, you and your family can take advantage of free, professional and confidential help through Stairways' Employee Assistance Program (EAP). New Opportunities EAP is staffed with trained counselors dedicated to help with any type of personal problem including:

- Job-related problems
- Workplace conflicts
- Marital/Family issues
- Parenting issues
- Emotional problems such as stress, grief, anxiety and depression
- Crisis situations
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- Eldercare issues
- Communication and interpersonal problems

You and your immediate family members are eligible to use this EAP service free of charge. Just call New Opportunities at **(814) 456-0584 or toll-free at 1-800-321-7988** to make an appointment. Appointments can be arranged to fit your schedule including evenings and weekends.

Remember, anything discussed with the counselor is strictly confidential. Information will not be released to your employer, family or anyone else unless you want it shared and sign a written consent form.

New Opportunities EAP provides an initial assessment of your situation and short term counseling as needed. Our counselors can also give you referrals to appropriate community resources. Contact New Opportunities EAP today to schedule an appointment.

WE ARE THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU NEED US!