



LIFE ENRICHMENT
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

800-404-7960 • www.eaplife.org

Your Employee Assistance Program

NEWSLETTER

Life Enrichment is a program of The Center for Family Services of Palm Beach County, Inc.

Illness, Loss and Grieving in the Workplace

No one wants to think about it, but serious illness, even terminal illness or death can occur to any one of us or someone we know.

Each person responds differently, but often feels confusion, grief, shock, anger and pain. Each person seeks to eventually move beyond the hurt and begin healing.

Someone's illness can make us feel vulnerable and helpless or remind us of loved ones who have died as well as our own mortality. We may not know what to say, so, too often, we withdraw. The rule of thumb is that "it is better to say the wrong thing, than to say nothing at all."

Talking with someone who is very ill can be a liberating experience for both people. To finally broach this "forbidden" topic and say what you are both thinking can lead to laughter, tears, comfort and acceptance. Acting as a comforting presence may be challenging, but pretending all is "normal" can be very stressful for everyone.

Tips: Offer to listen when the person who is ill needs to talk, vent or cry and sympathize with how difficult this must be. If you want to become more involved, ask how the person's family is coping, offer to pick up their medicine if needed or take the person to the doctor. You could even make them a meal.

In asking how the person feels, be prepared for whatever their answer is, even if tearful. Most importantly, let the person know you care.

The person who is ill or the worker who experienced the death of a family member may need time off or will not be as productive, creating an additional burden for co-workers. This is time to practice an added degree of compassion, tolerance and patience.

Simply do your best to relieve the person's stress and remember that grieving has no time limit. Remind the person (and yourself) that whatever they may be feeling is quite normal and that self-care is important.

Most of us are never completely prepared for how we will feel when a person leaves work or dies. There is almost always a feeling of shock and disbelief.

Ignoring the necessity to grieve only prolongs the process. Guilt (or sadness) may also be felt when thinking of "what you could have said or done" or when the person is replaced.

Some people hold a memorial service or create a special donation fund at work to honor the person. Or, they create a book of memories or photos for the family or office. Looking at pictures and sharing stories of the deceased can be helpful.

Some companies hold a meeting to express feelings and suggestions for dealing with their loss or the return of a person who has been away grieving or returning after a battle with an illness. It is important to discover anyone who may need extra assistance in dealing with the situation.

Appropriate things to say are:

"I am sorry to hear about your loss;" "You are (or have been) in my thoughts;" "How are you doing?;" or "I don't know what to say, but if I can be of help to you, I'm here." Sometimes a shared memory about the deceased is appropriate or just being there and listening helps.

Notifying company staff regarding an untimely death is best done quickly, speaking individually to those who were close to the deceased. Information should be brief and include time and place of death, circumstances (if appropriate), place and date of memorial services, names and addresses of next of kin and possible charitable gestures or contributions.

Work duties will have to be delegated, voice and email messages should be retrieved and the deceased's voice mail turned off, email disabled and a decision about the response to outside calls for information should be made.

Removal of personal effects can be a sensitive issue and family members or close friends should be consulted. Time off for attending memorial services helps to promote a sense of unity and support.

Your Employee Assistance Program (**Life Enrichment EAP**) can be invaluable in helping to deal with issues of grief and loss. Your EAP counselor is available for group efforts for colleagues, co-workers and management. A "group debriefing" as well as individual counseling is available.

The Center for Family Services

HIPPY

(Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters)

- Free home-based program for parents of three to five-year-old children.
- Home visitors help parents to be their child's first teacher.
- Prepares children for kindergarten and future educational success.
- Provides weekly lesson packets, books, crayons, scissors, shapes & glue.

RECOVERY

- Intensive outpatient programs and counseling for individuals who suffer from alcohol and/or drug abuse problems.
- Confidential services provided by certified and/or licensed substance abuse professionals.
- Family members are integral partners of the recovery team.

COUNSELING

- Experienced licensed therapists provide individual, group and family counseling.
- Services are available based on a sliding fee scale.
- Confidentiality guaranteed.

SAFE Kids

- Specializes in treating victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect, and various forms of violence.
- Works with the whole family including non-offending parents and siblings.
- Provides counseling for Adults Molested as Children, Sexually Abused Reactive Children, and children who witness violence.
- Through safety planning and psycho-education, children as young as three learn ways to protect themselves from further harm, parents learn ways to keep their kids safe, and adults learn to stop the cycle of abuse.

PARENTING SMART BABIES

Specially Trained Home Visitors provide the Growing Great Kids curriculum to parents in their native language and in their home with all supplies.

- No fees for services.
- Specializes in strengthening the social and emotional bond between infants and their parents.
- Assisting parents in gaining

confidence in their parenting abilities

- Strong focus on family literacy
- Monthly Parent Support Groups.
- Family Outings and Community Events

FAST

(Families Achieving Solutions Together)

- We come to you! Family therapy is provided in the home.
- Services are free for families who qualify.
- Focuses on what families do right - not what they do wrong!

PAT REEVES VILLAGE/ PROGRAM REACH

- Short-term emergency shelter for homeless families with children.
- Provides food, shelter, clothing, transportation passes, employment assistance and counsel and counseling.
- Assists families in obtaining permanent or transitional housing.
- Links families to legal aid, medical care, employment, school enrollment and public benefits.
- 94% success rate assisting families achieve self-sufficiency.

Compassion Fatigue

Unlike a first-hand traumatic experience of a disastrous event, compassion fatigue is experienced by emergency care workers — medical professionals, law enforcement, mental health professionals, clergy or other emergency volunteers who assist survivors. It results from caring for, dealing with and becoming overly emotionally involved in assisting victims of trauma and becoming overly empathic with those who have been severely injured and are in emotional or physical pain. This can lead to severe fatigue, despair, becoming emotionally drained, absenteeism,

job performance decline and health problems and has been called “secondary post-traumatic stress.”

Where those with burnout adapt to their exhaustion by becoming less empathetic and more withdrawn, compassion-fatigued professionals continue to give themselves fully to their jobs and victims they work with, finding it difficult to maintain a healthy balance of empathy and objectivity. “No time” becomes the battle cry with the excuse of blaming others.

The solution begins by learning to care for oneself and increase emotional resilience:

1. Meditation to center yourself and keep thoughts from pulling you in different directions. Reconnecting with a spiritual source and praying can help with inner balance and serenity, even when the world seems bleakest.
2. Eat healthy, stopping other activities while eating (eliminating junk food). Exercise regularly for stress reduction. Take long morning walks (with someone) to reconnect to the world. Spend time with friends and family.

FATIGUE – Continued on page 4

EAP SPOTLIGHT

Featured Employer: **Palm Beach Community College**

Interviewer: **Michele Romaglino**, Life Enrichment EAP Marketing Representative

PBCC Representatives: **Shelly Hill**, Manager, Benefits & Personnel Data System
Donna Agard-Harvey, Benefits Specialist

EAP:

Palm Beach Community College has been offering our EAP program to your employees since 1999. Can you share with our readers some positive changes you've seen in the workplace resulting from our presence?

Shelly Hill:

The EAP's presence at monthly New Employee Orientation is well appreciated. As you know, we offer EAP benefits to all full time employees and their eligible family members. Having you explain the program in detail, including the legal/financial benefit is a real plus. During these orientation presentations, new employees are inundated with so much information; choosing health plans, retirement options, etc. We don't want the EAP portion to get lost with all the other information. Having you there gives our employees a chance to connect a face with the program, and it solidifies our commitment to Life Enrichment EAP.

I would also like to compliment EAP on your Legal/Financial Program. This is a wonderful benefit and it's absolutely free to our employees. This has been a valuable discovery about your program and reinforces the value of your EAP.

EAP:

What kind of feedback do you receive, if any, from your employees (including management) about their EAP benefits?

Donna Agard-Harvey:

Very positive and high marks for customer service. Again, as Shelly mentioned, your Legal/Financial Program is a valuable tool for our employees and is utilized frequently.

Shelly Hill:

Michele, we are so happy with EAP's representation here at PBCC. You have done a remarkable job in the overall operations of the EAP. We value you and the program you represent. You are constantly developing new ways to keep us informed of important matters while supplying us with promotional materials, and making yourself available for our new employee orientations. You ensure that our needs are continually met. Thank you.

EAP:

Well, thank you so much Shelly. I appreciate your kind words.

We are very excited about the development of our first Advisory Committee Meeting. Our goal is to plan/discuss and implement strategies to enhance utilization, in addition to assisting you with day-to-day issues that impact your bottom line. What types of topics would you like to bring to the forefront of this committee?

Shelly Hill:

Elder Care Resources — As you are aware, many of us are facing this issue in our personal lives. This can add a tremendous amount of stress to families, and we need available tools and resources to pass along. Another area we would like to bring to the committee is drug free workplace programs in conjunction with BlueCross/Blue Shield or other insurance carriers your readers may have.

EAP:

We are pleased to be participating in PBCC's Annual Health & Benefit Fair in September. How many participants can we expect, and how do you encourage attendance?

Donna Agard-Harvey:

We expect a large turnout. This Lake Worth campus will have about 300 employees attend, Boca - 75, Palm Beach Gardens - 75, and Belle Glade - 30. It's important for our employees to have the personal contact and visibility with our vendors. This encourages attendance. We plan on having a Wellness representative from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, plus free health screens, massages, raffles and speakers.

EAP:

It sounds like a wonderful day, and we are happy to be a part of the Fair.

Shelly, Donna, on behalf of Life Enrichment EAP and our readers, I want to thank you for taking time from your busy schedule and participating in our Newsletter.



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South Florida's Premier EAP*



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Your EAP Newsletter
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EAP NEWS

We would like to extend our welcome to **Northern Palm Beach County Improvement District** as the newest member of Life Enrichment EAP. Welcome Aboard!

EAP Advisory Committee — We are proud to announce the implementation of the EAP Quarterly Advisory Committee. Our Goal: to give Human Resource professionals an opportunity to interface directly with EAP staff discussing issues that impact your organization. Our first meeting will start in September and follow every quarter thereafter. We look forward to your attendance. Any questions, please call Michele Romaglino call 561 616-1251.

Customer Service — We have implemented **C.A.R.E. Values** in our organization.

- C = Community** – reaching out to those around us
- A = Accountability** – in everything you say and do
- R = Respect** – treat others as you would like to be treated
- E = Excellence** – our only standard

Legal & Financial Update — CLC Incorporated now offers seminars in three venues; face-to-face, teleconference with Web Ex, and on-line self-study programs. The topics range from; Finance 101, Retirement Planning, Tax Basics, College Planning, Home Ownership 101, just to name a few. **If you have any questions, you can access our website at www.eaplife.org or call 1 800 404-7960.**

FATIGUE – Continued from page 2

- Reconnect to nature and the outdoors.
3. Take time off that you have coming. Start a project you never had time for. Talk to someone who understands. Seek a therapist to help you come to terms with any anger, self-doubt or anxiety. Getting in touch with “the real you” is essential.
4. Don't make big decisions at this time until you've recovered physically, emotionally and spiritually. Don't quit your job, get a divorce, have an affair or spend your money extravagantly. It may feel great at the time, but a few days or weeks later you'll find yourself waking up to the same problems.
5. Don't blame others. Blaming administration, staff, colleagues or the “system” won't help. Being adversarial will only exhaust you further and prevent healing. Hold off for now and wait until you can see things more clearly.
6. Stop complaining and commiserating with discontented colleagues. You've heard that, “miseria loves company,” but it will only make you feel worse.
7. Don't try a quick fix or addictive behaviors (including sex) to relieve personal pain. Just as drugs can be addictive and soon cause a set of different problems, a quick fix almost always ends up complicating an already overburdened life, escalating the downward spiral.
8. Once back at work, create a personal “mission statement” that articulates your values and identifies your parameters for doing your job.
9. Visualize that when a client leaves your office, your feelings of empathy also leave, while making room for someone new, knowing you can reconnect to that person later.
10. Call an EAP counselor for help with this problem.
1-800-404-7960.
We're here to help you.