

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

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Deer Oaks EAP Chat Sessions now have audio!

August 2011
Chat Topic:
Chronic Illness and Stress

Every month, you will have the opportunity to chat on-line with a trained counselor. These live chats are held from 12:15-12:45 PM & 6:00-6:30 PM CST

Our Deer Oaks counselor now has the capability to conduct the live chat session in audio and all participants can respond via text.

Come Join Us!

**August 2011
At A Glance**

**National Immunization Awareness Month
August 1st—31st**

Visit
www.cdc.gov/vaccines
For more information

**Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month
August 1st—31st**

Visit
www.fsma.org
for more information



5 Ways to Unwind in 60 Seconds

Simple tips to feel relaxed and peaceful.

Need to get some relief, now? Whether you're at work or home, these five easy tips will leave you feeling relaxed and peaceful in a minute or less.

Stare up at the ceiling and count down from 60

Gazing upward stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which lowers blood pressure and slows the pace of the breath. Slow, deliberate counting will also help rid your mind of distractions.

Write down your worries in a notebook, then set it aside for tomorrow

Putting your problems down on paper and knowing that they're there for you to work through later may help take your mind off of them while you're trying to rest.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth 10 times

Deep breathing slows the heart rate and calms the body. Focusing on your stomach rising and falling, and your breath flowing in and out, will help you concentrate on your body, instead of outside distractions.

Imagine floating on a cloud, and what you would see passing by

Guided imagery is a powerful meditation tool that can give you a temporary escape from everyday worries and stresses. Invite all your senses to participate: Imagine what you see, hear, and smell in this peaceful place.

Slowly tense and relax your muscles, from your head down to your toes

The body responds to stress by involuntarily tensing your muscles, which can cause pain and discomfort. Progressive muscle relaxation reduces muscle tension and general mental anxiety.

Tips

- Smile! Research has shown that simply smiling can make you feel less stressed
- Doodle—focusing on a mundane activity can help you decompress
- Take a short walk—focus on your surroundings instead of the stressors on your life
- Stay hydrated—many times during the day when you might feel drained, you might actually be dehydrated.
- In case of extreme stress, contact the professionals at Deer Oaks EAP for additional tips and strategies

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Deer Oaks EAP Services, your Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks at:

1 (866) 327-2400

eap@deeroaks.com

www.deeroaks.com

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Grilling Safety Tips

Safety tips

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.



Charcoal grills

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

Propane grills

Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. A propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble test, and there is no flame, turn off the gas tank and grill. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department. If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.

Courtesy of: www.nfpa.org

EAP Spotlight

Elder Assistance

Deer Oaks EAP offers a multitude of resources related to elder assistance, from finding facilities and caregivers to assistance legal and financial matters related to retirement and aging. Call our toll-free number or visit our website for more details.



Matters of the Heart

Power Food Whole Grains



Health Benefits:

The soluble fiber contained in barley and other whole grains helps prevent the cholesterol in the foods you eat from being absorbed into your bloodstream. According to a small study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, those who added 1-1/2 to 3 cups of cooked barley each day to a heart-healthy diet reduced their total cholesterol by 9 percent and their bad cholesterol (LDL) by 11 percent. Refined grains, however, have shown no benefit in research studies.

Portion Control:

Eating just one daily serving of whole grains may help prevent high blood pressure and eating more than one could decrease that risk even more. Whole grains include whole grain corn, oats, popcorn, brown rice, whole rye, whole grain barley, buckwheat, and quinoa (pronounced "keen-wah"). Be a smart shopper: Look for foods where the first ingredient is "whole grain," "whole wheat," or "whole grain rolled oats."

<http://www.hearthealthyonline.com/>

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Prevent Workplace Accidents



Accidents occur for many reasons. Understanding why an accident happens is the first step in prevention.

Unsafe acts cause four times as many accidents and injuries as unsafe conditions. This list will cover seven behaviors that can cause workplace accidents.

1. **Over Confidence:** Having confidence is a good thing but being over confident can be dangerous. Thinking "it can never happen to me" is an attitude that can lead to improper procedures or methods used while working.
2. **Ignoring Safety Procedures:** Failing to observe safety procedures can endanger all workers. Rules and procedures are in place for a reason and it's important for them to be followed. Having a casual attitude about safety rules leads to danger.
3. **Shortcuts:** As we try to be more efficient we tend to take shortcuts that can lead to unsafe conditions and increased chances for injuries. Will implementing a time-saving idea compromise safety? Is it worth it?
4. **Not having complete instructions when starting a task:** Many times a worker will be shy or intimidated about asking for better instructions and will just try to "wing it" instead of knowing exactly how to do things correctly. New employee training is a must to prevent accidents. Don't just assume that everyone knows how to do his or her job correctly.
5. **Poor Housekeeping:** A well maintained work area sets a standard for all. Poor housekeeping creates all types of hazards and sets the stage for accidents. Good housekeeping encourages pride and a safe environment.
6. **Mental Distractions:** Doing a task safely requires mental attention. Things that distract a person from work creates a hazard and can pull focus away from tasks at hand. It's important to stay focused and leave problems at home. Even casual conversations can be distracting.
7. **Pre-Planning:** Not thinking through a process to complete a task can be a hazard. Being hasty and just starting on a job without giving a thought to what how to go about it can be asking for problems. Remember the saying, "Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan."

http://www.ehow.com/how_4901044_prevent-workplace-accidents.html

Help Prevent Injuries in the Workplace

- Help co-workers reach boxes or other items that are too high for them to grab without a step stool.
- Avoid standing on a chair to get items from ledges or higher bookshelves. Doing so can result in a nasty fall, especially on a chair that swivels.
- Keep a ladder or a step stool handy whenever you need to gain access to higher filing cabinets or other storage containers.
- Lift heavy boxes with your legs and not with your back. Lifting heavy objects with your back increases the risk of pulling a muscle, as well as giving yourself a hernia. Always bend to pick up boxes and straighten up as you raise the box off the ground.
- Invest in a comfortable, ergonomic chair for your desk. Poor posture at your computer can lead to a variety of injuries, like a strained back or neck or even an unnatural curvature of the spine.
- Prevent carpal tunnel syndrome by using an ergonomic keyboard, a wrist rest and even an ergonomic mouse pad. These items help to raise and support your wrist which can prevent long-term damage as a result of continued use.
- Open boxes carefully when using a razor blade. Be sure to retract the blade once you have finished opening the box.
- Avoid overloading a hand truck beyond the top of its supporting beam. Doing so dramatically increases the risk of having boxes fall or slide off the hand truck to either side.

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Keeping up with the Joneses Online: An Old Phenomenon Moves to a New Platform



Websites such as Facebook and Twitter can add a lot to your social life, but their use also comes with the inevitable myriad of consequences. Some are more obvious, such as the loss of time management skills. (Did I really just spend two hours on Facebook reading what that woman I barely remember from college had to eat for lunch today?!) And then there are those that can impact your wallet – yes, your wallet.

There are numerous factors that drive consumption, according to financial experts. From a desire to show off our success, to coveting things other people have, these feelings can be magnified when you are comparing yourself with the virtual “Joneses” on websites such as Facebook.

When you are looking at photos from the “amazing vacation!” a former colleague recently returned from in Europe, it may be hard to suppress the green-eyed monster that is threatening to rear its ugly head. As you peruse the lives of others via status updates and posted photos you may find yourself wondering why everyone else has such a seemingly perfect, financially stable life.

In reality, that is almost never the case. Studies show more Americans are relying on credit to maintain their standards of living. According to the Federal Reserve, the total U.S. consumer debt is \$2.4 trillion as of June 2010. Statistics also show

the average credit card debt per household is \$15,788.

Don’t be tempted to sacrifice the peace of mind provided by sound financial planning for the opportunity to post a rejoinder to someone’s recent purchase of the latest HD television. Instead, try looking for ways that social sites can actually improve your financial standing.

Following are six ways you can use Facebook and Twitter to your financial advantage.

1. **Stay informed.** Get up-to-the minute information by following the tweets of top personal financial bloggers.
2. **Get support.** Many financial services organizations offer information about products and services via their social networks and some even offer support services.
3. **Ask questions.** Get free answers to personal questions in forums and tweetchats. Most participants are happy to share their knowledge and experience.
4. **Gain balance.** “Liking” personal finance websites and organizations on Facebook will give some needed balance to your news feed. Look for profiles that will regularly provide you with practical ideas on improving your financial situation.
5. **Win prizes.** Both Twitter and Facebook are full of opportunities to enter contests for chances to win gift cards and prizes. While you shouldn’t ever count on winning, it doesn’t hurt to try!
6. **Further your career.** Having a steady income is imperative to your financial wellness. Social sites are a great place for networking and learning.

The key to managing your online community and your money is to keep your perspective. Be aware that when someone creates a social media profile, they are determining the version of themselves that you will see. Their virtual persona is not necessarily their reality. How many times have you seen photos of credit card statements to go along with the photos from that fabulous trip to the beach?

By [Kim McGrigg](#), MMI Community Manager

About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.