



THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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August Online Seminar

Technology and Keeping Your Kids Safe

The seminar touches on the risks facing children online. You'll learn helpful tips, from where to locate the computer in the home to available parental computer monitoring programs.

Available on-demand starting August 21st at www.deeroakseap.com

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A Loved One's Substance Abuse Problem: What You Can Do

Your brother has been irritable, angry, and anxious. Sometimes he acts depressed. You've noticed he can't seem to concentrate when you're talking to him. You start to suspect he may be on drugs. You feel helpless, but you can't just watch while your brother continues to hurt himself and those around him. What can you do?

The best way to start is to learn the facts. There are a lot of misconceptions about drug abuse and addiction. Many people can't understand how anyone could become addicted to drugs. They mistakenly view it as strictly a social problem and think those who take drugs are morally weak.

Research has revealed that drug addiction is a disease of the brain. "We now have incontrovertible evidence that repeated exposure to drugs changes the brain—in structure and in function," says Dr. Susan Weiss, an expert on addiction research at National Institutes of Health's (NIH) National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

It's true that for most people, the initial decision to take drugs is voluntary. Over time, however, the brain changes that occur with drug abuse erode a person's self-control and ability to make sound decisions, while prompting intense urges to take drugs (S. Weiss, personal communication, n. d.).

The brain controls how people's bodies function through a far-reaching communications network of chemical message transmissions between nerve cells. Research has shown that when the brain is exposed to drugs, these brain control systems become altered, compromising the ability to make healthy decisions.

Why do people start taking drugs in the first place? "Drugs make people feel good, or make them feel better. Some use drugs to get high or to feel different and others attempt to self-medicate problems," Weiss says.

Drugs affect the brain in some of the same ways as natural rewards like eating a good meal or spending time with loved ones—but drugs can be even more potent, and in those who are vulnerable, drug abuse can lead to addiction. (S. Weiss, personal communication, n. d.).

It's hard to predict whether or not a person will become addicted after starting to use a drug. According to the NIH, scientists estimate that genetic factors account for about half of a person's vulnerability to addiction. Other factors include the influence of the home environment, friends and acquaintances, and the age when drug use begins.

Many cultural factors affect drug abuse trends. Research has shown that addiction often begins in childhood or adolescence. NIH-funded studies have found that prevention programs targeting this time of life are effective in reducing drug abuse. Successful prevention involves families, schools, communities, and the media.

Despite these efforts, people still try drugs, and some become addicted. How do you know when someone you love has become addicted to a drug? If that person is compulsively seeking and using a drug despite negative consequences—such as job loss; debt; or physical, mental, or family problems brought on by drug abuse—then he or she is probably addicted.

“The actual signs of abuse or addiction can vary depending on the person and the drug being abused,” Weiss says (S. Weiss, personal communication, n. d.). Drug abuse can show itself physically—for example, loss of appetite, slurred speech, or problems sleeping. It can also cause changes in behavior, such as a general attitude change, difficulty paying attention, or a drop in school grades or work performance.

If you suspect your brother is addicted, find a way to gently ask him about it, and suggest that he seek professional help. “It is a myth that an addict must hit ‘rock bottom’ to be ready for treatment,” Weiss says. “The reality is, treatment works regardless of whether a person has hit rock bottom, and catching a person earlier in the addiction cycle may mean fewer accompanying problems and a better overall prognosis for long-term recovery.” (S. Weiss, personal communication, n. d.).

It is important to realize that drug addiction can be treated. Research has revealed several basic principles that underlie effective drug addiction therapies. No single treatment is appropriate for everyone. The treatment course depends on both the drug and the needs of the individual. The process often begins with detoxification, in which the person is systematically withdrawn from the drug under the care of a physician.

Studies have found that the best way to ensure success is to combine appropriate treatment medications, when available, with behavioral therapy. Behavioral therapy helps people modify their attitudes and behaviors. It teaches them skills for handling stress and the environmental cues that may lead to relapse.

Treatment may last for an extended period of time, and multiple courses of treatment may be needed to ensure success.

NIH scientists continue to study what makes people more or less vulnerable to addiction. They are also exploring how to use that information to design effective prevention programs to reach people before they start abusing drugs. These programs involve schools, families, sports teams, faith-based organizations, and the broader community. NIH is also working hard to engage the medical community to help catch drug problems early, before they develop into addictions.

“If you think a loved one is in need of treatment,” Weiss says, “do everything in your power to help them find the courage, determination and means to seek treatment as early as possible. Express your concern and then provide the person with resources, or make the call yourself.” (S. Weiss, personal communication, n. d.).

An addicted person needs medical help from trained professionals. Of course, if someone is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. To find a treatment center in your state, call 1-800-662-4357 or visit <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

Source: National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2009, March). A loved one’s substance abuse problem: What you can do. NIH news in health. Retrieved June 21, 2016, from <http://newsinhealth.nih.gov>



Making Time for Yourself

Making time for yourself is probably the last thing on your list, and probably one that you rarely ever get to. There's always someone or something that needs your attention, and taking care of others is more important than taking care of yourself, right? You might feel like it's hard enough to get everything done as it is and that you'll never find the time. But there are some very compelling, and important, reasons to try.

Why should you make time for yourself?

With the nonstop demands of work and family, there's always something to do. Energy is expended on work projects, taking care of the home, maintaining relationships, managing child care arrangements, and playing with the kids. But where does that energy come from? How can you recharge your batteries, so to speak?

Spending time alone on a regular basis has been shown to reduce heart rate and blood pressure. It can also play an important role in reducing stress, which can in turn enhance the immune system. Not to mention the spiritual rejuvenation that a few moments alone can spark.

Aside from the health and spiritual benefits, another good reason to take care of yourself is your children. Chances are you spent a great deal of time and energy trying to find a quality child care provider for your little ones. Recognizing that quality care has a positive effect, you wanted to make sure that your kids are well cared for. But who's taking care of you? And how much can you give your children if your own energy banks are depleted? Making time to take care of yourself will help ensure you can provide your children with the quality care they deserve.

What does it take?

Taking care of yourself doesn't have to be a big production, but it might require a shift in your mind set. Many working parents feel guilty if they don't spend every free moment with their kids. The first step is to recognize that you deserve the attention, that it doesn't make you a bad person, and that ultimately, it will allow you to give back more to the people you love. Have some fun coming up with something that works for you—and then make sure you do it!

To get you started, here are a couple of suggestions for how to create some self-care time:

- *Take a bath.* Adding candles and soft music can make a half hour seem like a luxurious getaway.
- *Read a good book.* When was the last time you read something just for fun?
- *Go for a walk.* Visit a favorite park, or just stroll around the block.
- *Make a creative project.* Do you have a pile of photos and a photo album that needs to be completed? How about planting that herb garden? There's probably a project you've "put on hold" for some day when you have time. Make the time.
- *Get some exercise.* Not only is exercise good for you, but it helps relieve stress. Plus this feel-good activity is one that you can easily do by yourself.
- *Make an appointment at a salon.* Go ahead and pamper yourself!
- *Combine time alone with an enjoyable task.* Does cooking relax you? How about weeding or even mowing the lawn? You can always pick something that needs to be done and spend some time doing it alone.

By putting a little energy into caring for yourself, chances are you'll have more energy for everyone—and everything—else. That can only result in more quality time with your family.

Source: *Workplace Options*. (Reviewed 2018). *Making time for yourself*. Raleigh, NC: Author



Three Keys to Reducing Financial Stress

When you're dealing with financial stress, it can keep you from being able to live your life and be happy. Your thoughts of money and bills take over and are always in the front of your mind, which can lead to depression and anxiety. And when that happens, you start to feel stuck, like you'll never break out of your rut, so you close yourself off to opportunities that could help.

Finances are a source of stress for many people, but they don't have to be. When you can find ways to reduce your financial stress, you'll find yourself better able to think of solutions and opportunities will begin to present themselves.

Here are three core strategies for reducing financial stress when things are especially difficult:

Create a Plan

One of the reasons you may feel stress is because you don't feel in control of your finances. Instead, you feel your finances are controlling you. You feel the constraints of not being able to spend freely and worry about how you'll pay each bill.

Put yourself back in control by creating a plan. Start by creating a budget. Make a list of all the expenses that have to be paid each month, as well as a list of things that are optional, like gym memberships and movie rentals. Next figure out your actual, take-home income. When you look at the two numbers side-by-side, do you need more money each month or are there a few dollars left over?

Next look for ways to cut expenses by reducing things you don't need. Then, create a plan for bringing in more income. What kind of side jobs can you find that will bring in a few extra dollars each month? A quick Google search can provide a wealth of idea.

Create Limits

If you feel like you can't spend anything, it will only create more stress. Instead, create a spending limit for each of your budget categories. You can buy whatever you need or want, as long as it's within your spending limit for the month. Make a game out of figuring out where you can save and getting the best price you can find.

If you're feeling the urge to spend and buy yourself something to cheer you up, that's okay. Just give it a limit. No more than \$5 or \$10. Then challenge yourself to find something that will make you happy within that limit.

Get Support

When it comes to money, one thing's for sure, everyone deals with financial stress at some point. You are never alone in your struggle. Talk to friends and family, let them know what you're dealing with. When you do, two things will happen. They'll be more understanding when you tell them you can't do something and they'll probably even make more budget-friendly suggestions for spending time together. And, they may have some advice from a time when they dealt with the same issues and overcame them. They may even surprise you by explaining that they're in the same boat as you, but were to afraid to say anything.

Start a support group with friends and family to share ideas for saving money, budgeting, and reducing your spending on things like groceries and utility bills. Everyone has different ideas, you'll find great information from others.

Whatever you do, take control of your financial situation and face it head on. It's the best way to reduce your stress and know that it won't always be this way.

Article written by Emilie Burke. Emilie writes about overcoming debt, while balancing trying to eat healthy, stay fit, and have a little fun along the way. You can find more of her work at [BurkeDoes.com](https://www.moneymanagement.org). Retrieved July 18, 2018, from <https://www.moneymanagement.org>.

