



THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Dec.
19

December Online Seminar

Examining Relationships: Healthy vs. Unhealthy

Examine different types of relationships – from family and friendship, to romantic and professional – while learning to recognize healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Available on-demand starting
December 17th at
www.deeroakseap.com

About Your EAP

Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline. Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.

Tele-Health Services

Did you know that the EAP offers structured telephonic and video counseling in addition to traditional in-person counseling?

Call from the privacy of your home or office and one of our helpful counselors will help you address issues that are making it difficult to manage at work or at home.

Helpline: 866-327-2400
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Building Social Bonds

Connections That Promote Well-Being

Strong, healthy relationships are important throughout your life. Your social ties with family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and others impact your mental, emotional, and even physical well-being.

“We can’t underestimate the power of a relationship in helping to promote well-being,” says National Institutes of Health (NIH) psychologist and relationship expert Dr. Valerie Maholmes. Studies have found that having a variety of social relationships may help reduce stress and heart-related risks. Strong social ties are even linked to a longer life. On the other hand, loneliness and social isolation are linked to poorer health, depression, and increased risk of early death.¹

As a child you learn the social skills you need to form and maintain relationships with others, but you can learn ways to improve your relationships at any age.

NIH funds research to find out what causes unhealthy relationship behavior. Researchers have created community, family, and school-based programs to help people learn to have healthier relationships. These programs also help prevent abuse and violence toward others.

What is healthy?

Every relationship exists on a spectrum from healthy to unhealthy to abusive. One sign of a healthy relationship is feeling good about yourself around your partner, family member, or friend. You feel safe talking about how you feel. You listen to each other. You feel valued, and you trust each other.

“It’s important for people to recognize and be aware of any time where there is a situation in their relationship that doesn’t feel right to them or that makes them feel less than who they are,” Maholmes advises.

It’s normal for people to disagree with each other, but conflicts shouldn’t turn into personal attacks. In a healthy relationship, you can disagree without hurting each other and make decisions together.

“No relationship should be based on that power dynamic where someone is constantly putting the other partner down,” Maholmes says.

If you grew up in a family with abuse, it may be hard as an adult to know what healthy is. Abuse may feel normal to you. There are several kinds of abuse, including physical, sexual, and verbal or emotional. Hurting with words, neglect, and withholding affection are examples of verbal or emotional abuse.

In an unhealthy or abusive relationship, your partner may blame you for feeling bad about something they did or said. They may tell you that you’re too sensitive. Putting you down diminishes you and keeps them in control.

In a healthy relationship, however, if you tell your partner that something they said hurt your feelings, they feel bad for hurting you. They try not to do it again.

Abuse in an intimate relationship is called domestic or intimate partner violence. This type of violence involves a pattern of behaviors used by one person to maintain power and control over someone that they are married to, living with, or dating now or in the past. A pattern means it happens over and over.

In an unhealthy or abusive relationship, you may not be allowed to spend time with family, friends, and others in your social network. “One of the signs that’s really important in relationships where there is intimate partner violence is that the partner that is being abused is slowly being isolated from family, friends, and social networks,” Maholmes says. “Those social networks are protective factors.”

Social ties protect.

Studies have shown that certain factors seem to protect people from forming unhealthy relationships over their lifetime. The protection starts early in life. NIH-supported research has shown that the quality of an infant’s emotional bond with a parent can have long-lasting positive or negative effects on the ability to develop healthy relationships.

“The early bond has implications that go well beyond the first years of life,” says Dr. Grazyna Kochanska, an NIH-funded family relationships researcher at the University of Iowa. The goal of Kochanska’s research projects is to understand the long-term effects of that early bond and to help children develop along positive pathways and avoid paths toward antisocial behaviors.²

A family that functions well is central to a child’s development. Parents can help children learn how to listen, set appropriate boundaries, and resolve conflicts. Parents teach children by example how to consider other people’s feelings and act in ways to benefit others.

Secure emotional bonds help children and teens develop trust and self-esteem. They can then venture out of the family to form other social connections, like healthy friendships. In turn, healthy friendships reduce the risk of a child becoming emotionally distressed or engaging in antisocial behaviors.

On the other hand, having an unhealthy relationship in the family, including neglect and abuse, puts a child at risk for future unhealthy relationships.

“One caring adult can make a huge difference in the life of kids whose family structures may not be ideal or whose early life is characterized by abuse and neglect,” says Dr. Jennie Noll of the Center for Healthy Children at Pennsylvania State University. “That caring adult could be an older sibling, or a parent, or someone else in the family, a teacher—the kind of people who have a large influence in communicating to the child that they matter and that they’re safe, and that they have a place to go when they are needing extra support.”^{3,4}

Healthy friendships and activities outside of the home or classroom can play protective roles during childhood, too. In fact, everyone in a community can help support the development of healthy connections. Adults can serve as good role models for children, whether the children are their own or those they choose to mentor.

Helping and Getting Help

At any age, your relationships matter. Having healthy relationships with others starts with liking yourself. Learn what makes you happy. Treat yourself well. Know that you deserve to be treated well by others.

Having an unhealthy or abusive relationship can really hurt. The connection may be good some of the time. You may love and need the person who hurts you. After being abused, you may feel you don’t deserve to be in a healthy, loving relationship.

With help, you can work on your relationship. Sometimes in an abusive relationship, you may be advised to get out. Either way, others can help.

If you or a friend needs help with an unhealthy relationship, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at <https://www.thehotline.org/> or 1-800-799-SAFE. If you know a child who may need help, find resources at the Child Welfare Information Gateway at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>.



Wise Choices: How to Help Someone in an Unhealthy Relationship

- Let them know that you're worried about them.
- Listen without judging or blaming.
- Tell them that it's not their fault.
- Offer to go with them to talk to someone who can help.
- Visit <https://www.thehotline.org/> for more tips on how to help.

References

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Source: Wein, H. (Ed.). (2018, April). *Building social bonds*. NIH News in Health. U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). Retrieved November 22, 2018, from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/>

Losing the Holiday Blues

The holiday season can be a time of joy, happiness, and family get-togethers. But for some, it is a time of loneliness and anxiety about the future.

Why do I have the holiday blues?

Many things can cause the holiday blues. It could be stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, money problems, or being unable to be with one's family and friends. For many, the holidays bring back old memories of friends and loved ones who are no longer present. The demands of shopping and family reunions can also lead to feelings of tension.

Some people develop stress symptoms such as headaches, excessive drinking, overeating, and problems sleeping. There is also the postholiday let down after January 1st. This is common after such intense activity for so many weeks. It may also result from disappointments during the holidays, added to the excess fatigue and stress.

Here's one way to see if you are depressed.

You may be wondering if you have symptoms of depression. One way of determining that is to take a brief screening online or with your doctor. Only you will see the results of an online screening. You can then choose to print a copy of the results for your own records or to give to your physician or a mental health professional. If you choose to do a screening with your physician, he or she can assist you in determining a treatment plan.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (n.d.). *Losing the holiday blues*. Retrieved April 7, 2017, from <https://www.va.gov/>

Ten Holiday Tips

Each year, December brings a month filled with holidays and celebrations complete with a variety of gift giving traditions. Check out this list of holiday tips to keep you and your family safe and healthy this holiday season.

1. **Buy safe toys.** If you plan to buy toys for the kids in your life, choose age-appropriate toys and look for labels with safety advice. For young children, avoid toys with small parts, sharp edges, and electric toys that can heat up. Always purchase safety gear in addition to sports-related gifts or ride-on toys, such as bicycles or skateboards.
2. **Celebrate on a budget.** The holidays can be expensive, but you don't have to break the bank to celebrate. Take a few minutes to decide how much you can afford to spend on gifts, travel, parties, decorations, and other holiday expenses. Once you've created a spending plan, keep track of your purchases. Shopping online can help you stick to a budget, as you'll avoid the temptation of store displays and may be able to use coupons and promotion codes. Before you buy, look for free shipping offers, check ordering deadlines to ensure that your gifts will arrive on time, and read the return policy.
3. **Give the gift of service.** Sometimes the greatest gift you can give to others is service. Reading to a child just 3 hours a week significantly improves his or her reading skills, or if you help out at a local soup kitchen or food bank, you are directly providing meals to hungry individuals.
4. **Find seasonal employment.** Even in a tough economy, businesses need extra help around the holidays. Seasonal employment can help supplement your income and potentially lead to a permanent position.
5. **Get through the holiday blues.** The holidays aren't joyous for everyone. This time of year can bring stress and feelings of loneliness. Exercise, focusing on positive relationships, and doing things that you find rewarding can help with depression. Keep in mind that winter depression could be a sign of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which is caused by the lack of sunlight. Treatment for SAD is much like treatment for other forms of depression, but may also involve light therapy.
6. **Be safe and save money with LED lights.** Electricity bills can grow during the holidays if you decorate with strings of lights. Consider switching to LED (light-emitting diode) holiday lights to save energy and money. In addition to the energy and cost savings, LED lights are much cooler than incandescent bulbs, reducing the risk of fires. Every holiday season, fires claim lives and cost millions in damage. To prevent holiday fires in your home, use nonflammable decorations, do not overload electrical sockets, and avoid the use of lit candles. As you should do year-round, ensure that your smoke alarms are working. If you celebrate Christmas, be sure to regularly water Christmas trees.
7. **Pay attention to food portions and physical activity.** The holidays are a wonderful time to celebrate with family and friends, but celebrations sometimes involve over-indulging in sweet treats and heavy foods. Even if you only gain only 1 or 2 pounds during the holidays, these gains can add up over the years. The holidays are probably not the ideal time to try to lose weight, but you can take steps to maintain your weight.
8. **Pack for hassle-free air travel.** You can get through the airport security line faster by traveling with unwrapped gifts and following the "3-1-1 rule" when carrying on liquids. You may have favorite liquid food items (like cranberry sauce or special dips) that you want to share during the holidays, but it's best to put such items in your checked bag or ship them ahead of time. If you need last-minute information about what you can and can't bring through security, visit the TSA Web site at <http://www.tsa.gov/>.
9. **Reduce holiday waste.** The holiday season includes many opportunities to reduce waste, recycle, and reuse items. Consider buying rechargeable batteries (and a charger) for electronic gifts to help reduce the amount of harmful materials thrown away. After the holidays, look for ways to recycle your tree instead of sending it to a landfill. If you plan to send greeting cards, consider purchasing ones that are made of recycled paper or sending electronic greetings.
10. **Keep food safe.** Holiday buffets are convenient ways to entertain a crowd, but leaving food out for long periods of time can invite bacteria that cause food-borne illness. To keep your holiday foods safe, cook them thoroughly; use shallow containers; never leave them sitting out for more than two hours, and keep them at the appropriate temperature.

Source: *USA.gov*. (Updated 2014, September 3). 10 holiday tips. Retrieved September 8, 2016, from <http://www.usa.gov/>