THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Deer Oaks EAP Services
Making a Difference in Your Life
Makes a Difference To Us

NOV. 2020

NOVEMBER ONLINE SEMINAR

Building Resilience Muscles

Learn resilience by understanding yourself and identifying the mental obstacles that get in your way.

Available on-demand starting November 17th
www.deeroakseap.com

ONLINE SEMINAR

COVID-19 Support—Creating a Positive Learning and Working Environment

Click on the play icon below to listen to the recording of this online seminar.

▶

ONLINE SEMINAR

*Social Injustice:
An Open Dialogue*

Click on the play icon below to listen to the recording of this online seminar.

▶

Helpline: 866-327-2400
Web: www.deeroakseap.com
Email: eap@deeroaks.com

Resilience

What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability to

- Bounce back
- Take on difficult challenges and still find meaning in life
- Respond positively to difficult situations
- Rise above adversity
- Cope when things look bleak
- Tap into hope
- Transform unfavorable situations into wisdom, insight, and compassion
- Endure

Resilience refers to the ability of an individual, family, organization, or community to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. It is an ongoing process that requires time and effort and engages people in taking a number of steps to enhance their response to adverse circumstances. Resilience implies that after an event, a person or community may be able to not only cope and recover, but also change to reflect different priorities arising from the experience and prepare for the next stressful situation.

- Resilience is the most important defense people have against stress.
- It is important to build and foster resilience to be ready for future challenges.
- Resilience will enable the development of a reservoir of internal resources to draw upon during stressful situations.

Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary, and that people regularly demonstrate this ability.

- Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have.
- Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.
- Resilience is tremendously influenced by a person's environment.

Resilience changes over time. It fluctuates depending on how much a person nurtures internal resources or coping strategies. Some people are more resilient in work life, while others exhibit more resilience in their personal relationships. People can build resilience and promote the foundations of resilience in any aspect of life they choose.

What is individual or personal resilience?

Individual resilience is a person's ability to positively cope after failures, setbacks, and losses. Developing resilience is a personal journey. Individuals do not react the same way to traumatic or stressful life events. An approach to building resilience that works for one person might not work for another. People use varying strategies to build their resilience. Because resilience can be learned, it can be strengthened. Personal resilience is related to many factors including individual health and well-being, factors with and into which a person is born, life history and experience, and social support.

Further, there are several attributes that have been correlated with building and promoting resilience. The American Psychological Association reports that resilience includes the following attributes:[2]

- The capacity to make and carry out realistic plans
- Communication and problem-solving skills
- A positive or optimistic view of life
- Confidence in personal strengths and abilities
- The capacity to manage strong feelings, emotions, and impulses

What is family resilience?

Family resilience is the coping process in the family as a functional unit. Crisis events and persistent stressors affect the whole family, posing risks not only for individual dysfunction, but also for relational conflict and family breakdown. Family processes mediate the impact of stress for all of its members and relationships, and the protective processes in place foster resilience by buffering stress and facilitating adaptation to current and future events. Following are the three key factors in family resilience:4

- Family belief systems foster resilience by making meaning in adversity, creating a sense of coherence, and providing a positive outlook.
- Family organization promotes resilience by facilitating flexibility, capacity to adapt, connectedness and cohesion, emotional and structural bonding, and access to resources.
- Family communication enhances resilience by involving clear communication, open and emotional expressions, trust and collaborative problem-solving, and conflict management.

What is organizational resilience?

Organizational resilience is the ability and capacity of a workplace to withstand potentially significant economic downturns, systemic risk, or systemic disruptions by adapting, recovering, or resisting being affected and resuming core operations or continuing to provide an acceptable level of functioning and structure:

- A resilient workforce and organization is important during major decisions or business changes.
- Companies and organizations, like individuals, need to be able to rebound from potentially disastrous changes.
- Challenge for the incorporation of resilience into a workplace is to identify what enhances the ability of an organization to rebound effectively.

Measuring workplace resilience involves identifying and evaluating the following:4

- Past and present mitigative mechanisms and practices that increase safety
- Past and present mitigative mechanisms and practices that decrease error
- Necessary redundancy in systems
- Planning and programming that demonstrate collective mindfulness
- Anticipation of potential trouble and solutions to potential problems

What is community resilience?

Community resilience is the individual and collective capacity to respond to adversity and change. A resilient community is one that takes intentional action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to and influence the course of social and economic change. For a community to be resilient, its members must put into practice early and effective actions so that they can respond to change. When responding to stressful events, a resilient community will be able to strengthen community bonds, resources, and the capacity to cope. Systems involved with building and maintaining community resilience must work together.

How does culture influence resilience?

Cultural resilience refers to a culture's capacity to maintain and develop cultural identity and critical cultural knowledge and practices. Along with an entire culture fostering resilience, the interaction of culture and resilience for an individual also is important. An individual's culture will have an impact on how the person communicates feelings and copes with adversity. Cultural parameters are often embedded deep in an individual. A person's cultural background may deeply influence how he or she responds to different stressors. Assimilation could be a factor in cultural resilience, as it could be a positive way for a person to manage his or her environment. However, assimilation could create conflict between generations, so it could be seen as positive or negative depending on the individual and culture. Because of this, coping strategies are going to be different. With growing cultural diversity, the public has greater access to a number of different approaches to building resilience. It is something that can be built using approaches that make sense within each culture a n d are tailored to each individual.

References

1. Aguirre, B. (2007). Dialectics of vulnerability and resilience. Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law and Policy, 14(39), 1–18.
2. American Psychological Association. (2006). The road to resilience. Retrieved January 15, 2020, from https://www.apa.org
3. Bonanno, G. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? American Psychologist, 59(1), 20–28.
4. Wilson, S., & Ferch, S. (2005). Enhancing resilience in the workplace through the practice of caring relationships. Organization Development Journal, 23(4), 45–60.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (n.d.). Resilience and stress management: Resilience. Retrieved January 15, 2020, from https://www.samhsa.gov

Election Year Politics: Protocols for Office Talks

Most of us are familiar with the old adage cautioning against discussing politics in polite company, but at least one survey a few years ago indicated that employees do not heed this advice in the workplace. According to the survey by Vault.com, 66% of respondents say that their coworkers discuss politics at work, and 46% have witnessed a political argument at the office.

Passion and Politics

With election season in full swing, impassioned political debate has the potential to escalate into conflict of a deeply personal nature, some of which may create bad will among coworkers that can far outlast the current issues of the day. While a certain amount of political discussion at work is unavoidable, it's not surprising that such talk often leads to heated and emotional argument. Political viewpoints often serve as umbrellas that cover a spectrum of deeply held personal beliefs that are formed by an individual's religion, culture, upbringing, economic class and other influences.

Passion and Politics

Best practice dictates that employees avoid political discussion of any form during the regular conduct of business. Interjecting political commentary into meetings, work-related e-mail and/or other official communication is highly unprofessional and grossly inappropriate. Doing so drags down productivity, creates unnecessary distraction, and can potentially alienate fellow employees and/or clients.

While the line is clear in the conduct of official business, it's not as clear when socializing with coworkers while on the job. The following are a few guidelines to help you steer clear of any unintended harmful side-effects that may come about when expressing your political views.

*   **Be mindful of those around you.** While a boisterous political discussion may seem to you to be the perfect way to spend your lunch break, others may not share your enthusiasm for politics. Never take an individual's silence as agreement. It is equally likely to signal discomfort.

*   **Before launching into a political discussion**, ask all within earshot two questions: 1) Are you comfortable having a political discussion with me? 2) Do you mind overhearing me talk about politics? If the answer to either of these questions is no, then it is not appropriate to continue.

*   **Remember that others may feel as strongly as you.** While it can be frustrating when someone refuses to be swayed by your seemingly reasonable arguments, it's important to remember that others have deeply and honestly held convictions as well. Bullying and/or pestering others until they come around to your viewpoint is inappropriate behavior and will likely create conflict, workplace disruption, and hard feelings.

Avoiding escalation always begins with respecting the rights of others to believe differently than you. When in doubt, it's best to "agree to disagree" and drop the issue.

- **Never make it personal.** People of good faith can disagree on all manner of things. A particular political viewpoint is nothing more than a set of ideas and has no bearing on an individual's integrity or intelligence. Never allow political disagreement to become personal. Always take care to avoid inflammatory language, personal insults, and sweeping generalizations. Allow your sensibilities to be guided by basic courtesy. A good rule of thumb is to follow the same conversational etiquette that you would follow if you were a dinner guest in your coworker's home.

Handling Harassment

No employee should feel compelled to agree with or remain silent in the face of aggressive political advocacy. Attempts to embarrass, ostracize, harass or punish employees for their political ideologies can create a hostile work environment. If you are uncomfortable with the discussion of politics at your workplace, it's recommended that you make your feelings known and politely assert your wish to avoid political discussion at the office. If met with resistance or retaliation, report your discomfort to a supervisor or a Human Resources representative.

Source: Distributed with permission, Copyright ©2018 by DFA Publishing & Consulting, LLC

Celebrating Holidays During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The holiday season typically involves travel, gatherings of family and friends, indoor religious services, and parties, all of which present new risks this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. How can you maintain the most important aspects of your holiday celebrations without putting yourself or vulnerable family members in danger from serious illness? The answers will be different for every family and every individual. This article offers various key factors to consider and some ideas for enjoying the holidays in different ways this year.

Factors that Increase or Decrease the Risk from COVID-19 at In-Person Holiday Gatherings

Base your decisions around how to celebrate the holidays this year on the key factors that are known to increase or decrease the risk of catching or spreading the virus. These include the following:

- **The incidence of COVID-19 in the community**—Pay attention to the current levels of disease in the community where a holiday gathering is being considered and in the communities from which people may be traveling to attend your family's gathering.

- **The number of people who will be at the gathering**—The more people at the gathering, the greater the risk that one or more will be carrying the coronavirus. The number of people allowed to gather may also be limited by state or local health guidelines.

- **The behavior of people before and during the gathering**—If all attendees have been following the safe virus-prevention practices in the weeks before the gathering (limiting contact with people outside of their households, social distancing and wearing masks when outside the home, frequent handwashing) and if all attendees continue to observe safe practices during the gathering, the risk of infection will be lower than if even one attendee is lax in observing these measures.

- **How people will travel to the gathering**—If any attendees will need to travel a distance by plane, train, or bus to the gathering, this will increase the risk of bringing the virus to the celebration.

- **Ventilation and air flow at the gathering location**—COVID-19 is known to spread through exhaled aerosols when people breathe, talk, sing, yell, sneeze, or cough. Small aerosols can remain suspended in still, indoor air for hours. Outdoor gatherings are safer than indoor gatherings, and indoor gatherings are safer with good ventilation, such as open windows or doors.

- **How long people will be together**—The longer the gathering, the greater the risk of virus transmission.

Do not host or attend an in-person holiday gathering if you or anyone in your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19, has symptoms of COVID-19, is waiting for COVID-19 viral test results, or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the 14 days before you attend the gathering.

In-person holiday gatherings beyond the immediate household should not include anyone who is at higher risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19. This includes adults age 65 and over and people of any age with existing heart, lung, or immune-system conditions. These at-risk individuals should limit in-person holiday celebrations to members of their immediate households and find safe ways to connect by phone or video with friends and extended family.

Ways to Celebrate Holidays Safely During the COVID-19 Pandemic

People around the world have already had some experience with changing the ways they celebrate important holidays. Many key religious holidays have already been observed with virtual or carefully managed services and limited family gatherings. National holidays have been observed without parades or public gatherings. As the fall and winter holidays approach, the same kinds of changes will be needed to protect the health of the people you love while maintaining the joy, togetherness, and spiritual meaning you value so much in these celebrations. Here are some ways to celebrate the upcoming holidays to minimize the risk of COVID-19:

Lowest Risk
- Limit in-person gatherings to people from your immediate household.
- Include other family members and friends by phone or video.
- Select key elements of your holiday traditions, and modify them to be safe during the pandemic:
    - Prepare traditional family recipes for family and friends who live nearby, and deliver them in a way that does not involve contact.
    - Make holiday cookies early, and mail them to people who won't be with you in person.
    - Share recipes ahead of time so virtual participants can prepare some of the same food at holiday meals.
    - Watch a holiday movie together using Netflix Party (https://www.netflixparty.com) or another application.
    - Have a virtual cookie-decorating party.
    - Share pictures of your holiday decorations and activities.
    - Think of new holiday traditions this year to make your celebrations meaningful and fun even if you can't all be together.

Moderate Risk
- Limit in-person gatherings to people from your immediate household and a small group of people from other households.

- Include distant family members by phone or video to limit the risk of virus transmission during travel and the spread of COVID-19 between regions. If family members do travel from a distance, they should follow guidelines to minimize the risk during travel and self-isolate for a period of time on arrival.

- Gather outdoors if the weather allows. If gathering indoors, increase ventilation by opening windows and doors, weather permitting.

- Ask that attendees avoid contact with people outside their households for two weeks before the gathering.

- Communicate expectations about the safety guidelines to be followed during the gathering:
  - Maintain physical distancing.
  - Wear masks when in the company of people not in your household.
  - Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizers.
  - Avoid handshakes, hugs, or fist bumps.
  - Sanitize door handles, bathroom surfaces, and other surfaces after every use.
  - Don't share serving utensils—have one person serve everyone, or have each household group bring their own food and utensils and serve themselves separately.

High-Risk Activities to Avoid
Avoid activities such as

- Large indoor gatherings with people from outside your household
- Shopping in crowded stores just before or during the holidays
- Attending crowded outdoor events

For More Information

"Holiday Celebrations," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html

"People at Increased Risk," CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html

"Travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic," CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html

Incidence of COVID-19 by Region

"COVID Data Tracker," CDC
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesinlast7days

This coronavirus tracker website can be filtered by country, region, and language:
https://www.coronatracker.com/country/united-states

Travel Safety
"Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic," CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html

"Here's how to stay safe when flying during the coronavirus pandemic," USA Today
https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/travel/airline-news/2020/06/29/safe-fly-now-how-stay-safe-flights-amid-covid-19/3243308001

"How to road trip safely during a pandemic: Tips for navigating rest stops, gas stations and hotels," USA Today
https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/travel/experience/america/2020/06/10/covid-19-road-trips-find-out-how-stay-safe-and-see-whats-open/3155769001