



# HEALTHY™

EXCHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FALL 2013

## Inside This Issue:

1. [Optimism is Good for Your Health](#)
2. [Help for Problem Gambling](#)
3. [How to Help a Family Member Who is Abusing Alcohol or Drugs](#)
4. [For Your Information](#)

## EAP Services:

1. [How to Use Your EAP](#)

---

## Optimism is Good for Your Health

According to the latest research, optimistic people are healthier and live longer than pessimists:

In 2010, researchers studied the results of 83 scientific studies measuring the impact of optimism on physical health. Whether an individual study looked at overall longevity, survival from a disease, heart health, immunity, cancer outcomes, pregnancy outcomes, pain tolerance, or another health topic, those who had a more optimistic outlook performed better and had a better outcome than those who were pessimistic.

A 2006 study looked at nearly 7,000 students who had taken a psychological test when they enrolled at the University of North Carolina in the 1960's. Among the most pessimistic third of the subjects, the death rate over the next 40 years was 42% higher when compared to the most optimistic third.

In a study of 1,000 men and women aged 65 to 85, after nearly 10 years of follow up, those who described themselves as "highly optimistic" had a 55% lower risk of death from all causes, when compared to those who were termed "very pessimistic."

Some may believe that optimists are unrealistic people who ignore reality, but numerous studies report otherwise. Far from living life with blinders on, it is optimists who confront trouble head-on while pessimists bury their heads in denial and avoidance. In a study of women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, the women with an optimistic disposition were more likely to acknowledge the seriousness of the disease and took more active steps to cope with it. Several



studies have shown that optimistic breast cancer patients have better health outcomes than pessimistic and hopeless patients.

Researchers say several factors may explain the link between optimism, better health and longer life.

- Optimism is associated with living healthier – more physical activity, less smoking, moderate use of alcohol, following their doctors advice more faithfully, etc.
- Optimistic people tend to have more friends and a larger social network to rely on during crises.
- Optimists handle stress better, a risk factor associated with high blood pressure, heart disease and other risk factors that adversely affect health and longevity.



### More benefits of optimism

By almost every measure, optimists fair better than pessimists, whether it's work, school, sports or relationships. They get depressed less often than pessimists do, make more money and have happier marriages. Optimists don't give up as easily as pessimists and they are more likely to achieve success because of it. They see negative events as minor setbacks to be overcome and view positive events as evidence of more good things to come. Believing in themselves, optimists also take more risks and create more positive events in their lives.

### What makes optimism so optimal?

According to psychologist Suzanne Segerstrom, optimism is not just about feeling positive. It's also about being motivated and persistent. In her book, *Breaking Murphy's Law: How Optimists Get What They Want From Life – and Pessimists Can Too*, Segerstrom explains that optimists tend to deal with problems head-on. Instead of walking away, they plan a course of action, seek advice from others, and stay focused on solutions. Segerstrom also says that optimists tend to expect a good outcome, and even when they don't get it, they find ways to learn and grow from the negative experience. Optimists believe their actions shape their destinies. This may be why optimists are more likely to eat right and exercise and are less likely to smoke or engage in other unhealthy habits. When an optimist does get sick, he/she is more apt to research the ailment, seek appropriate medical care and actively participate in treatment – all of which may improve her/his prognosis.

### 10 tips to increase optimism

So what if you are a pessimist or not as optimistic as you'd like to be? No matter what your outlook is, studies show that optimism can be learned and improved. The following strategies can help you decrease pessimistic thinking and increase optimism:

- 1. Notice your negative self-talk** – Become aware of the negative scripts that you are playing in your mind and constantly play. Self-talk such as, "I can't do that. I'm not good enough to...I'm afraid to..." Track your thoughts on a daily basis and notice the negative assumptions and conclusions that you draw. Identifying your negative self-talk is essential to change.
- 2. Capitalize on the power of positive thinking** – When you find yourself saying something negative, think of something positive to say even if it doesn't "ring true" to you at the moment. Segerstrom says that even if you're not completely "feeling it," you should "fake it until you make it." By merely acting more optimistic, you're likely to be more engaged in the process and the outcome and are less likely to give up after an initial failure. Replace phrases such as "I can't..." or "That is never going to work" with "I'll try..." or "Let's see how that will work out."

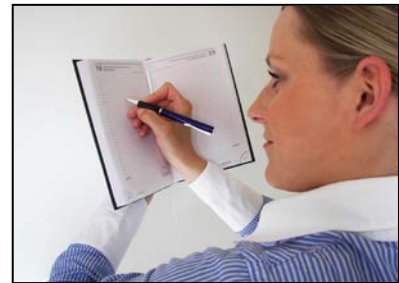
**3. Reframe how you define events** – Instead of dwelling on a bad experience, analyze it to figure out what good can come out of it. What can you learn from the experience that will help you grow from it? Virtually any “failure” can be turned into a learning experience, which increases your potential for success in the future.

**4. Focus on the here-and-now** – Avoid dwelling on negative past experiences. If you face a difficult situation, determine the cause, take corrective action and move forward. Too much obsessing about the past can paralyze you, just when positive action is what is most needed.

**5. Be realistic and expect ups and downs** – Just because you’re an optimist doesn’t mean you’re not going to have bad days. Setbacks happen to everyone. When things go wrong, learn from what went wrong and move forward with a new determination to make things turn out better.

**6. Focus on what you can control and let go of what you can’t** – Pessimism is impractical because it causes you to spend time dwelling on negative things that haven’t happened yet, while simultaneously preventing you from taking effective action in the present. Recognize the things you can’t control, let these go and focus your energy and thoughts on the things that you can control to affect the best outcome possible.

**7. Set and pursue goals** – How can you keep from being immobilized by pessimistic thinking? By taking action, even if you think it might be futile. Determine what is important to you and set meaningful goals. Create and write down a step-by-step plan for accomplishing your goal and then take the first step. Even if you’re worried about doing something new, just give it a go. With planning and persistence, your chances of succeeding are greatly enhanced.



**8. Be persistent** – It’s persistence that paves the optimists path, says Segerstrom. Optimists believe they will eventually succeed, so they keep plugging away at their goals. “Positive expectations fuel motivation and hard work,” Segerstrom explains. “negative expectations have the exact opposite effect.” Optimists keep going. When they succeed they try harder. When they fail, they try again.

**9. Surround yourself with positive people** – Optimism is a learned habit and can be contagious. Surround yourself with supportive friends who have positive outlooks. Avoid negative people whenever possible, and if you can’t avoid them, develop strategies to help you limit your exposure to them as much as possible.

**10. Focus on the positive** – Keep a diary of all of the good things in your life. Spend a few minutes at the end of your day writing down your positive experiences. This exercise will help you end each day on a strong, positive note.

### **Your EAP is here to help**

Remember, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to help you or your dependents with any personal, family or work-related concern. If you or a family member needs help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help you.

# Help for Problem Gambling

Approximately two million adults in the U.S. meet the criteria for pathological gambling, and another four to six million are considered problem gamblers, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling. Due mainly to shame, denial and a desire to handle the problem themselves, only one in 10 problem gamblers seek professional help.



## What is problem gambling?

Just as some people become addicted to drugs or alcohol, it is possible for a person to become obsessed with an uncontrollable urge to gamble. A person has a problem with gambling if he or she continues to gamble despite evidence that their gambling is causing personal, family, financial, work or legal problems.

## Warning signs of problem gambling

Review the warning signs below. If you or someone you know answers "Yes" to any of the questions below, consider seeking help from a professional who is experienced in treating problem gambling:

- You have often gambled longer than you had planned.
- You have often gambled until your last dollar was gone.
- Thoughts of gambling have caused you to lose sleep.
- You have used your income or savings to gamble while letting bills go unpaid.
- You have made repeated, unsuccessful attempts to stop gambling.
- You have broken the law or considered breaking the law to finance your gambling.
- You have borrowed money to finance your gambling.
- You have felt depressed or suicidal because of your gambling losses.
- You have been remorseful after gambling.
- You have gambled to get money to meet your financial obligations.



## Your EAP is here to help

If gambling has gotten out of control for you, recognizing and admitting that you have a problem is the first step toward recovery. There are specific behavior patterns associated with problem gambling. Gamblers who recognize these patterns can cope with their problem and learn to live free of gambling. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can provide you or your dependents with counseling, referrals and/or information to help you recover a life free of gambling. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help you.

# How to Help a Family Member who is Abusing Alcohol or Drugs

Someone in your family has a problem with alcohol or drugs, what can you do to help? Believe it or not, your best chance for helping your family member who is abusing alcohol or drugs begins by changing yourself. Below are suggested guidelines to help:

**1. Learn as much as you can about the drug being used, alcoholism, addiction, treatment programs and the recovery process.** Alcoholism/drug addiction is not caused by lack of willpower or moral decay. It is a treatable disease.

**2. Get help for yourself from a health professional who specializes in substance abuse and related issues.** Ask your employee assistance program for a referral, or do an internet search for a local health professional.

**3. Join a self-help group for families of drug abusers... such as Al-Anon or Narc-Anon.**

**4. Stop enabling.** Stop rescuing the abuser from the consequences of his or her actions. Helpful perspective: "I will do everything in my power to help you stay sober. I will do nothing to help you continue using."

**5. Try to get the abuser to get treatment.** Work with a health professional to plan a way to intervene in your family member's alcohol or drug use.

**6. Remain involved.** Once your family member is receiving treatment, remain involved in their treatment. Continue to show that you are concerned about their successful recovery.

**7. Take good care of yourself and expect a difficult period.** Becoming a drug-free family takes effort, time and patience.

**8. Continue to focus on getting better yourself no matter what.** All interested family members need to join together in an effort to create healthier lives for themselves, even if the abusing family member chooses not to get help.

## Your EAP is here to help

If you suspect that a family member might have a problem with alcohol or drugs, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). A professional EAP counselor can help you assess your situation and help you determine the best way for you to help yourself, your drug-using family member, or other family members. All EAP services are strictly CONFIDENTIAL and EAP counselors are specially trained to help people get the right help for an alcohol or drug problem. If you need assistance, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.



## For Your Information

### Increase Your Stress Fitness

Start each day with a nutritious breakfast. You are much more vulnerable to stress when you're hungry and lethargic than when you're well-nourished.

### Couple Care

Make time for each other. Scheduling time together on a weekly basis, can help keep you close and help alleviate stress in your relationship.

### Weight Management Tip

Did you know that the average American gains one pound of fat every year between the ages of 25 and 55? That's about the equivalent of just 100 extra calories a day... or one-half can of soda... half a large cookie... or one thick slice of bread. Solution: Walk briskly for 30 minutes a day. This will burn extra calories and prevent weight gain.



---

## Employee Assistance Program Services

PROVIDED BY YOUR EMPLOYER FOR YOU AND YOUR DEPENDENTS

Your Employee Assistance Program is a prepaid and confidential program designed to help employees and their dependents resolve problems which may be interfering with their personal, work or home life. EAP Consultants offers help for marital and family issues, substance abuse, job concerns, emotional problems, life adjustments, legal issues, financial matters, and elder care and child care referrals.

If you're experiencing problems which are causing concern, you and your EAP Counselor can work as a team to find solutions.

For assistance, call EAP Consultants at: **800-869-0276** or request services by secure e-mail on the Member Access page of our website at <http://www.eapconsultants.com/>.