EAP CONSULTANTS, LLC

HEALTHY™ EXCHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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How to Help Your Aging Parents

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, an estimated 30% of people in the American workforce are caring for an aging parent. Additionally, of those who are not presently caring for an aging parent, 37% say they expect to do so in the future. About half say they're concerned about being able to provide such care (USA Today/ABC News Gallup Poll survey of people ages 42 to 61 who have a living parent).

Are you prepared to handle the difficult issues that can arise when faced with caring for an aging parent? The following guidelines can help ensure that you make the best choices possible for your parent, your family and yourself:

1. Find out your parent's wishes. How great is your parent's need for independence? What goals or dreams remain to be accomplished? What are your parent's needs and concerns about the future? What aspects of your parent's life are most important to him/her at this stage of life? Being near family? Seeing certain friends? Practicing his/her religion?

2. Be sure your parent's legal documents are in order. Has your parent executed all of the important legal documents and are they up to date? These would include an up-to-date Will, Living Will, Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, and Durable Power of Attorney.

3. Learn your parent's desires regarding healthcare. Does your parent have a doctor who he/she trusts? If your parent is sick presently, what is his/her prognosis and how will it affect his/her personal care, housing, medical needs or finances? If you had to make medical decisions for your parent, what would he/she want you to know? How would your parent weigh the benefits or burdens of various medical treatments? Is there a certain point after which your parent would no longer want aggressive medical care? Are advanced healthcare directives in place (Living Will, Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare)?

4. Find out your parent's wishes regarding housing. How important is it to your parent to remain in his or her own home? Where would your parent want to live if he/she could no longer manage at home? Is your parent familiar with other housing options available? What if it isn't possible for your parent to live with another family member?

5. Learn about your parent's financial resources. What are your parent's present financial needs and potential future needs? Is he/she in a financial position to meet these needs? Is your parent's insurance - including life, health, home and auto - adequate and current?

6. Be sure that your parent has all relevant documents, records and information in order and be sure that you or another family member knows where they are. As your parent becomes increasingly frail, your family will need certain financial records, insurance information, advance healthcare directives, names of doctors, etc. Talk and plan together now about how your parent's affairs should be handled in the event he/she becomes incapacitated.

7. Learn about sources of help for seniors and housing options available. Chore services, housekeeping, home-delivered meals, senior recreation, day care, respite care and transportation assistance are some of the services available in many communities. Housing options include living with family, foster care, home sharing, board and care homes, senior apartments, continuing care communities or nursing homes.

8. Meet with family members to discuss various responsibilities should your parent become incapacitated. Who will be the designated agent on the Durable Power of Attorney For Healthcare or Durable Power of Attorney? Is in-home care a possibility? Under what circumstances?

9. Don't offer personal home care unless you thoroughly understand and can meet the responsibilities and costs involved. Closely examine your family's ability to provide long-term in-home care for a frail and increasingly dependent parent. Consider the family's physical limits. Plan how your own needs will be met when your responsibility for the dependent parent increases.

10. Gather information now on how to care for an aging parent. There are numerous resources available which discuss: housing options, preparing wills and advance healthcare directives, long-distance care giving, protecting and maximizing financial resources, healthcare, community and home-care services, dealing with Alzheimer's Disease or other disorders, etc. An excellent book to use as an ongoing reference is: How To Care For Aging Parents, by Virginia Morris, Workman Publishing, New York.

Your EAP is here to help

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you with the complicated processes and emotional impact of eldercare. We can assist you with planning for caring for an aging parent or relative by providing resources and referrals to community providers for legal, financial, housing, medical care, long-distance care giving, home-care services, and other eldercare services. Your EAP can also provide counseling for communicating with elderly relatives and making the difficult decisions related to their care. Additionally, assistance is available to help employees cope with the challenge of balancing eldercare responsibilities with other family or work-related responsibilities. If you need help with caring for an aging parent or relative, why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

Get Adequate Sleep to Help Fight Stress

Stress experts report that chronically stressed people almost always suffer from fatigue and people who are tired do not cope well with stress. When distressed people get more sleep, they feel better and are more resilient and adaptable in dealing with day-to-day events.

Did you know that most sleep difficulties (about 80%) are either caused or reinforced by our own behaviors or daily habits? If you have trouble sleeping, the tips below will help you get the most out of your hours in bed:

Stay away from stimulants. Coffee, tea, colas, chocolate and some over-the-counter medications contain caffeine which stimulates the central nervous system and increases blood pressure and heart rate. Drinking a can of cola or cup of coffee in the late afternoon can keep you awake at midnight. Avoid consuming caffeine at least 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.

Don't smoke, especially before bed. The nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant. Insomnia is among smokers' greatest complaints. Research shows that smokers take longer to fall asleep and wake up more often during the night than nonsmokers. Having a smoke before bed may feel relaxing, but it is actually putting a stimulant into your bloodstream.

Go to bed at regular hours. An erratic schedule can cause problems such as "Sunday night insomnia." This problem occurs to people who stay up late and sleep late on weekends and then try to switch back to their usual bedtime to prepare for Monday morning. Try to go to bed at roughly the same time each night and, no matter how long you slept, get up at your usual time in the morning.

Exercise regularly. Sleep is facilitated by relaxation and exercised muscles relax more easily. Aim for 20 minutes of exercise that increases your heart rate at least three times a week, but finish your workout at least three hours before bedtime.

Don't use alcohol to induce sleep. A nightcap can lull you to sleep, but alcohol typically produces light, unsettled sleep. Also, using alcohol to fall asleep could lead to dependency.

Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Set the mood for relaxation before bed. Start letting down about an hour before bedtime: read, listen to music or take a warm bath.

Don't take sleeping pills; they induce less restful sleep and can cause serious problems. Oftentimes, the person relying on sleeping pills is left with his/her original insomnia, plus a drug problem.

Note: Quality sleep is vital to your health, happiness and productivity. Seven to eight hours of sleep per night is the recommended average for adults.

Study Links Propensity to Worry To Early Death

Your personality may dictate how long you'll live. After studying 1,633 men over a 12-year period, researchers at Purdue University determined that chronic, excessive worrying can take several years off your life. Negative thinking triggers the release of cortisol, a stress hormone that can be dangerous when elevated for long periods of time, says study author Dan Mroczek, Ph.D. Unhealthy coping techniques, such as overeating or drinking to excess, may also contribute.

"We observed that neuroticism levels are a clear indicator of how long one can expect to live," Mroczek said. The good news is that participants in the study who found a way to reduce their worry lived longer. "Neurotic men whose levels dropped over time had a better chance at living longer," Mroczek said. "They seemed to recover from any damage high levels of the trait may have caused."

How can you reduce the negative impact of chronic, excessive worrying to your health and longevity? Mroczek said that those who worry excessively can learn to deal with their potentially negative personality trait in a positive way. "For example, very neurotic people can work toward dealing better with stress," he said. "They can seek treatment, take up yoga, schedule daily walks to help themselves unwind, listen to calming music or even meditate."

3 strategies to decrease worry and improve your health

If you are concerned about the amount of worry and anxiety you may be feeling, below are three strategies to help:

Control your worry. Select a half-hour "worry period" that will take place at the same time and place each day. Observe your worrying throughout your day. When you "catch" a worry beginning, postpone it to your worry period, reminding yourself that you will have time later to worry about it and there is no use upsetting yourself now. When you get to your worry period, spend 30 minutes thinking about your concerns and what you can do about them. Try not to dwell on what "might" happen. Focus more on what's really happening. Distinguish between worries over which you have little or no control, and worries about problems that you can influence. If you can influence the problem, do some problem-solving and take action. If the worry is largely beyond your control, recognize that little or nothing can be done and that you are only making yourself feel bad by worrying.

What causes you to feel anxious? Try to pinpoint what it is you are feeling anxious about. If you can recognize what's really bothering you, what can you do to eliminate or minimize the situation in some way so that it isn't so stressful? More important, how can you react differently so you won't be so affected by this situation?

Exercise and learn relaxation techniques. Not only can exercise and relaxation techniques ease tension and relax the body, they can give you a break from worry. For exercise, focus on aerobic exercise like brisk walking, jogging, swimming or cycling. Relaxation techniques may include muscle relaxation, yoga, biofeedback, meditation or deep breathing. Choose what works best for you.

Getting help

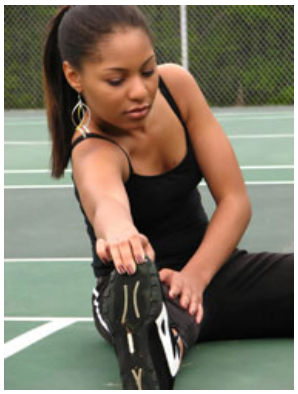
If your worry or anxiety seems excessive, uncontrollable or is significantly interfering with your daily functioning, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help you or your dependent family members with most-any personal, family or work-related concern. If you need help, why not call a professional EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

For Your Information

ANGER MANAGEMENT TIP

Before you blow your lid, count to ten. Counting to ten is an anger management tip that has worked for centuries. The Roman poet Horace (65 – 8 BC) said, "When angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, one hundred." Counting to ten (or one hundred) helps you step back from an anger-provoking situation, buying time for you to examine the problem and decide on an effective, rational way to express your anger.

EXERCISE YOUR BRAIN



Walking or other aerobic exercise can do more than improve your physical fitness. Recent research shows that walking can enhance your brain function too. The explanation: During exercise, the heart pumps more blood to the brain. Delivering more blood means more oxygen and nutrients are delivered to the brain, which are good for brain cells and make the brain healthier. The vessels that deliver the nutrients also branch out and become more effective.

BETTER FAMILY LIFE

Encourage family activities. A sense of belonging is developed by doing things together, such as social activities, as well as household chores.

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/.