



EAP NEWS

Fully Effective Employees, Inc. Employee Assistance Program
A newsletter for employees and their families

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Dealing with Divorce

The decision to end a relationship can be a lengthy and complex process. When a home, finances, family and children are combined and life with someone else is created, it can be very difficult to divorce. Some couples struggle for years, trying to work things out or being afraid to leave, while being miserable in their marriage.

Common factors that lead to divorce are infidelity, untreated addictions, a violation of trust, domestic violence, severe financial or personal problems or finding that one or both spouses changes or they have "fallen out of love".

While ideally, a divorce is amicable and mutual, more often than not, one party makes the decision to end the marriage. This can result in one or both partners feeling intense emotions which can cause them to hurt each other more by fighting over personal possessions, property and the children.

Divorce is both an emotional journey and a legal process and it's best to keep these two aspects of divorce separate. The rational and concrete aspects of divorce contrasts with the chaotic and emotional aspects which involve adjusting to the drastic life changing event. The emotional impact of divorce can be as significant as a family death and the resulting emotions can bring intense grief, sadness, anger and pain. There can be fear at the prospect of being single again for a long time or even forever, and with having to live with a change in lifestyle, finances and social circumstances.

Overwhelming depression can result from what may seem like an impossible situation.

These emotions are all part of the

normal grieving process related to a life altering situation. While there is no cure for these feelings, there are healthy ways to cope with them so as to

suffer as little as possible. The emotional coping process can allow one to grieve the loss and move on. It is important to allow yourself to grieve. Grief is a natural human reaction. Most people move back and forth between numbness and shock, characterized by denial, depression, anger or fear. Over time, the intensity of the emotions diminish. It's a good idea to allow yourself to experience these feelings rather than fighting them. Some people need to be alone and others do better venting their feelings to a friend or family member or engaging in professional counseling. Everyone grieves differently and for different amounts of time. If a marriage ends suddenly without warning, the feelings may be different than they will be for someone who's marriage has been deteriorating for a long period of time. If you find your feelings of grief have not subsided in about a year, it is a good idea to seek professional counseling.

There are some things that people can do to help themselves recover from the loss of a marriage which can include:

Prioritize. Despite your pain, there are things that need to get done during this transition which may add to your stress. Before you allow yourself to become overwhelmed, create a "to do" list with the most important things on top. As you accomplish a task, check it off your list. Doing these tasks will make you feel more in control of the otherwise uncontrollable events in your life.

Start preparing to be single. When you are emotionally ready, start putting away photos



and evidence of your ex-partner so you don't have to look at them every day. Start separating your name from your spouse's on bank accounts, bills, etc.

Seek support. Talk about it with supportive people rather than keeping your feelings inside. If you don't have someone to confide in, try a divorce support group or counseling.

Take care of yourself. Maintain or begin a healthy routine. Begin a diet or workout program, get enough rest, take vitamins and eat healthy regular meals, even if you have lost your appetite. Being well physically helps you feel better emotionally. Keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings. Writing things down can help you grieve and put things in perspective.

Keep busy. Distraction helps. Simple things like watching movies, cleaning the house, reading a book, spending time with friends, taking a class and keeping busy, can keep depression at bay.

Be good to yourself. Give yourself a treat-get a massage, go to a favorite restaurant, take long, luxurious baths or buy something special if your finances allow.

Explore new interests. Get a pet, take a class, try something new. Remember, often when one door closes, another one opens.

People who are emotionally distressed often hurt so much that their judgment is clouded and they can be tempted to do things to try to numb the pain. The problem is that these solutions may initially work but often create other problems. Avoid dangerous or self-defeating behavior such as overspending, overeating, gambling, taking drugs or drinking. Also, avoid making any major changes or decisions for at least six months

Source: *Centersite, LLC*



Anger Management

Anger is a fundamental human emotion that everyone deals with from time to time. It is usually triggered by hurt feelings or when we are faced with obstacles that keep us from obtaining personal goals.

The experience of anger differs among individuals including how often it occurs, the intensity to which it is felt and how it is dealt with.

People learn how to express their angry feelings from very early on by what they see going on around them. Some people learn that anger is an unacceptable emotion and they are only able to express anger in indirect ways. While inappropriate expressions of anger can be dangerous, appropriate expression of anger is a critically important part of self-defense and self-preservation. People who are unable to express their anger are unable to stand up for themselves. Anger turned inward, rather than being appropriately expressed, can lead to depression.

Some people use anger so they won't have to feel emotional pain or sadness. Most of the time, this is done unconsciously. Being angry instead of sad, deflects the pain from self-focus to other focus. The person begins to focus on getting back at someone who made them angry rather than their own pain. Angry people often feel their anger is justified but others around then often do not agree. Anger problems exist when people become dependent on anger as a primary means of expressing themselves, when they use it to threaten violence or intimidation to get their way. Out of control anger alienates friends, co-workers and family members. It also has a clear relationship to health problems such as high blood pressure.

If your anger is affecting your job, relationships or health, it is time to do something about it. If people have told you that you have an anger problem, you probably do.

Learning to control your anger will be an ongoing task, and understanding a different way to deal with your emotions

and reactions is an important step to controlling your anger.

Some people are motivated to change when their spouse threatens to leave after a violent episode, they have lost their job after a temper outburst or they feel out of control after an emotional or angry outburst. It can be difficult for many people with anger problems to become motivated to seriously want to work on their anger. This is because it may be the only emotion they have ever been able to express and like any major behavior change, it can be hard to give up and replace with behaviors that are unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Some people feel "flat" and emotionless when they don't have temper outbursts. They need to learn to feel comfortable with new feelings and behaviors. In addition, behaviors that have been a way of reacting for someone's whole life, will not change overnight.

A key part of anger management is recognizing how you feel the anger in your body. It may be a rapid heart beat, feeling hot, tense or like you will explode. Other people feel it emotionally; they may feel like their feelings have been hurt or dismissed, like they aren't being heard or validated or that they are so upset they want to cry. If you can identify when you start to feel it physically or emotionally, you may be able to stop it from increasing by practicing relaxation techniques or walking away.

Relaxation is an important part of any anger management program. Your breathing and heart rate increase when you are under stress. If you continue shallow breathing, it can exacerbate your anger. Instead, try to slow your breathing by taking deep breaths in and slowly blowing your breath out. As you concentrate on your breathing to a slow count of ten, you lose focus on what is making you angry and the act of slow, deep breathing will slow your heart rate and calm you down. Try to spend 15

minutes a day practicing this breathing technique so when you feel yourself becoming angry, you can begin to breathe slowly and deeply.

Another relaxation technique is muscle relaxation. When you become angry, you may feel yourself tense up in your chest, jaw or shoulders and it can remain long after your anger is gone. If your neck is tense, you can very gently roll your head towards one shoulder and then the other while slowly inhaling and exhaling. You can work out shoulder tension by shrugging your shoulders and then releasing them and rolling your shoulders back and forth. See if you can identify tension in other areas of your body. Tighten and release the other stressed and tense areas of your body while breathing slowly and deeply.

Take a break. Walking away from the situation that makes you angry can de-escalate a situation and give you time to calm down and get a new solution to the problem you are facing. In the heat of the moment, it is hard to see things clearly.

Many counselors provide anger management in groups because much of the treatment involves education about awareness of the anger and learning skills to appropriately deal with it. Group members hold each other accountable for their behaviors and let the others know when they see reactions that should be tempered or changed.

If you have an anger problem, contact Fully Effective Employees for confidential assistance at 425-454-3003 or 1-800-648-5834.

Source: *Centersite, LLC*





Improving Your Self-esteem

A negative self-esteem or self-worth may stem from how you were raised and the messages your parents gave you about yourself. It is perpetuated by the negative messages you give yourself through your life. Some examples are “I am unlovable”, “I can’t do anything right” or “I am unattractive”. Most people believe these messages no matter how untrue they are. These messages tend to imagine the worst in everything, and are difficult to turn off or unlearn.

You may think these thoughts so often that you are unaware of them. It helps to become aware of your negative thought patterns and then ask yourself the following:

- Is this message/thought really true?
- Would another person say this to someone else? If not, why am I saying this to myself?
- What do I get out of thinking this? If it makes me feel bad about myself why am I thinking it?

Sometimes people are unaware that they are getting a benefit out of thinking negatively about themselves. Perhaps it means if you don’t take risks because you tell yourself you will fail, then you never have to try something new and therefore never have to risk failing but then also never get anything positive.

The most important step to improving your self-esteem is to develop positive statements you can say to yourself on a regular basis, often referred to as positive affirmations. Avoid using negative words like *never*, *always*, *not*, *worried*, or *bad* and try to replace them with words that infer the

positive has already occurred such as, *I am happy*, *I am trying*, *I have a good job*, *I am loved*, etc.

You can work on changing negative thoughts to positive ones.

- **Replace the negative thoughts** with positive ones every time you realize you are thinking negative thoughts.
- **Write down positive affirmations** on sticky notes by your bedside on your dashboard, on your refrigerator door, at your desk and on your mirror, and then repeat that thought several times to yourself whenever you see it.
- **Pay attention to your own needs and wants.** Some people pay a lot of attention to the needs of others while neglecting themselves. Listen to your body and your mind about what you need.
- **Take good care of yourself.** As you were growing up, you may not have learned to take care of yourself. Treat yourself as a wonderful, nurturing parent would. If you work at taking care of yourself, you will find that you that will feel better about yourself.
- **Take time to do things you enjoy.** You may be so busy or feel so badly about yourself that you spend little time doing things you enjoy such as listening to music, watching movies, doing a craft project or going fishing.
- **Spend time with positive people** who care about you and avoid ones who bring you down.
- **Do something nice for another**

person.

- **Learn something new or improve your skills.**
- **Make your living space a place that makes you feel good.**
- **Begin doing things you know will make you feel better about yourself** such as going on a diet, cleaning your home, exercising or getting a new hair style.
- **Make it a point to treat yourself well every day.** Reward yourself with your favorite food, buy a CD, read a new book or take a hot bath. Before you go to bed each night, write about what you did for yourself that day.
- **Consider talking with a therapist** about your thoughts and feelings. Counseling can help you practice at looking at things in a more positive light as well as work on resolving past hurts and negative experiences.



Changing negative thoughts about yourself requires time and persistence. If you follow the techniques mentioned above daily and consistently for 4-6 weeks, you will notice that you don’t find yourself thinking the negative thoughts as much. As you work on improving your self esteem, trying to do new things that may feel uncomfortable or risky can bring a sense of accomplishment in overcoming something difficult. The positive experiences build on each other and you begin to feel better and better about yourself. While it is very hard to unlearn a lifetime of behavior, feeling better about yourself and improving your self-esteem is well worth it.

Source: *Centersite, LLC*

Fully Effective Employees, Inc.

425-454-3003
1-800-648-5834



Quick Facts about Fully Effective Employees

- FEE has been providing EAP services for 34 years.
- Our service is confidential .
- It is available to family members living in your home.
- Counselors are available by phone 24/7.
- We will provide a confidential assessment, short term problem resolution and case management to ensure your needs are being met.
- We can help with a wide range of issues including : personal, work, family, relationship, emotional, addictions, depression, stress, anxiety, financial, legal or worklife issues.

Are You Self-Conscious?

Do you find yourself stressed out worrying about what you said in yesterday's meeting? Do you worry about how bad you think you looked in last year's bathing suit?

Self-consciousness keeps us battling to fight for control over our self-image. But obsessing over our perceived shortcomings is a self-defeating venture which can trap us in embarrassment and shame.

One way to overcome your self-consciousness is to try to end the embarrassment and shame before it occurs. David Allyn, Ph.D., a Harvard trained social scientist and author of "I Can't Believe I Just Did That", offers a few pointers:

1. **Be on time.** Punctuality creates self-discipline, impresses others and it makes you feel good to be on time.
2. **Stick to the facts.** You're bound to get caught if you lie even if it's just a

white lie. Lies give you unnecessary opportunities to feel ashamed.

3. **Don't gossip.** Comments made behind your back can hurt and you don't easily forget

those who talked about you. Focus on deep, meaningful talk that can make a difference in your life, rather than talk about others.

4. **Keep your word.** A promise is a promise. When you honor your word, you will be viewed as reliable and trustworthy.

5. **Focus on the positive.** When you put yourself in positive situations you feel better about yourself. Completing a difficult project at work leads to future success. Having satisfying personal relationships helps motivate us to seek other positive connections.



If the damage is already done and you find yourself in an embarrassing situation, you can still avoid the feeling of shame by recovering gracefully. Don't lash out in defense or lie to cover your tracks- you'll feel worse and likely complicate a

relationship that doesn't need complicating. Try laughing it off or explain why you made the mistake. Don't leave a social situation simply to avoid people you made a mishap in front of- avoidance leaves you feeling more ashamed and isolated. It's important to remember that everyone has embarrassing moments and these moments show that you are human. People tend to forget others' mistakes and obsess much more over their own.

Source: Psychology Today, Neil Parmar 2005