

Consider EASE@WORK your personal strategic partner

When you think of Ease@Work, your employee assistance program (EAP), what do you think of? Do you think:

"That's for people who have drug or alcohol problems."

"That's where they send you if you get into trouble at work."

"I don't have any real big problems, so I don't need you."

"Yeah, they say it's confidential, but I don't believe that."

Or even, "I've thought about calling a couple of times, but just haven't."

As representatives of Ease@Work, it's amazing how many times we hear phrases like these from you, the employees of our client companies.

But, when we actually get a chance to talk with you at health fairs, visibilities or on the phone, the reaction about the services we offer is always the same—"I didn't know you guys did all that!"

Successful organizations talk about strategic plans and strategic partners—planning and partnering is an essential aspect of reaching their business goals. As an individual, why shouldn't you have a strategic plan? Why shouldn't you have strategic partners who can help you reach your goals?

Think about it. . .if your goal is to gain better control of your finances, how are you going to do that? Do you have a plan? Do you have expert who can offer good advice?

If you want to eat healthier, lose weight or become more fit, how do you plan on achieving those goals? Have you set attainable short-term and long-term

goals? Who is going to provide you with the tools and support to get to those goals?

If you want to stop arguing with your spouse or children; if you acknowledge that there are better ways of communicating in your home—do you have a plan for changing your communication habits?

Do you know how to become a better listener, how to remain calm when faced with conflict, or how to let those around you know what your needs are? Do you have someone who can help you navigate through to a more peaceful home life?

Ease@Work can be part of your strategic plan. . . we can be your partner.

Too many times people think they have to be "in crisis" to use the EAP services. That is not true. In fact, addressing an issue early on is easier than waiting until something has become a big problem.

As you read through our newsletters, we hope you'll start thinking of how you can use Ease@Work in your life. It's a benefit that is paid for by your organization, so there is no out-of-pocket cost for you or your qualified family members to use our services. And it doesn't matter if your spouse, partner or child is on your health insurance plan or not—they all have access to our services.

And yes, it's absolutely confidential! If you or a family member calls us seeking services voluntarily, we do not release any names to your organization. Your boss, manager, HR person, co-workers will never know that you used our services unless you tell them.

We can you help with . . .

- personal problems
- family and personal relationships issues
- fitness coaching
- childcare needs
- substance abuse
- nutritional coaching
- eldercare concerns
- smoking cessation
- financial issues
- anxiety/depression
- parenting concerns
- legal concerns
- job/home stress
- and more . . .

Remember, we offer a variety of services to help improve your work-life situation. Above are some of the more common topics we can help you address. If you're not sure if Ease@Work can help with a particular issue, please just give us a call at 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273. Our Intake Specialists will be able to listen to your concern and help you access the assistance needed.

EASE@Work newsletters are for informational purposes only and should not replace the advice of a qualified health professional. If you would like to speak with a professional counselor, call EASE@Work: 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273. . . We can help!

A parenting to-do list

- ✓ Every day, tell your child you love him/her.
- ✓ Show affection daily with a hug, kiss or touch.
- ✓ Make time for special fun family activities.
- ✓ Meet your child's friends to be sure he/she had positive influences

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

New parents can find peace when returning to work



Your maternity/paternity leave ends abruptly, and now life's back to the 40-hour (or so) workweek. As a new mom, or new dad, you reflect on the short time at home when you focused solely on engaging your new little one and watching him or her grow. And, although times have changed, it is still a difficult decision for the parent who decides not to be a stay-at-home mom or dad.

There remains the mental struggle that the child will be placed in another's care, and won't have Mom and Dad 100 percent of the time. In order to find peace, think of how your decision to work will positively impact your child in the future:

- exposure to a network of individuals who care about his/her well-being
- aid in developing fine social-skills and comfort in group settings
- financial savings when he/she is ready for activities and education that require it
- medical/dental/vision care as a dependent of your healthcare plan
- knowledge and appreciation of values and rewards that come from hard work
- the time spent together with him/her will be even more precious

If you are returning to work, or have recently returned, hopefully you've made a decision about your child's care that you are comfortable with—such as being cared for by a relative, in a daycare or a homecare situation. However, if you do not feel secure with your decision or if you are just getting ready to go out on maternity/paternity leave, then now might be a good time to contact Ease@Work's Childcare Specialist.

Our Childcare Specialist can help you sort through care options and provide you with some guidelines when considering caregivers. The goal is to help you feel good about the decision you make regarding the care of your child when you are working or need to be away. Our childcare specialist can also help with back-up and sick care for times when things aren't going quite the way you planned, yet you still have work obligations to fulfill.

As always, there are pros and cons to every caregiving decision. As a working parent, you give back to your child in many ways. You make each decision because you care. As a provider for your child, you will present many opportunities for growth and advancement throughout his/her years.

Marriage and teenagers: Strap in for a rough ride!

Lately, I have encountered lots of married couples whose relationship is going through stress and strain. The common denominator between these couples is that they are currently raising teenagers.

"We've never argued this much in our entire marriage," one spouse told me. "I'm not sure if we're going to make it through."

There is no doubt in my mind that the period between when your child turns 13 (sometimes a year or two earlier) and early to mid-twenties is the hardest time in your marriage.

And why is that? Because your children are creating a major distraction, which by the way, they are supposed to create. They are going through a rebirthing period in their lives and their job is to consistently and doggedly push the limits. You want them to do that—it's normal.

What isn't normal is for you and your spouse to get hooked into their ups and downs in life to the point that you lose yourself and your marriage. What your children want from you is for you to stand on the sidelines and be vigilant with the limits you set. The key is to set them with the least amount of emotion possible, which allows you to keep and protect the energy you need to nurture your marriage.

Although your teenager needs your attention and limits, keep your eye on the ball—your marriage—at all times.

*by Kathy Dawson, relationship coach, author and speaker.
Kathy also facilitates seminars for EASE@Work.
For more articles by Kathy, go to www.kathythecoach.com*

*Whether you're a new parent or your children are getting ready to go off to college; from those with kindergartners, seniors, and/or special needs, our Childcare and Education Specialists are ready to answer your questions about childcare, school options, parenting concerns and any other child-related issues you need to discuss. When you need help, call Ease@Work! Call EASE@Work at **216/241-3273** or **800/521-3273**, or go to www.easeatwork.com/EASEy with your organization's user name and password.*

Where are you at on the Caregiving Pyramid?

According to the work of Stephan G. Wiet, Ph.D., the most common needs caregivers explain as their concerns can be best demonstrated in a pyramid form. The bottom part of the pyramid represents the foundation and the top represents the ultimate goal, without compromising the healthcare needs of the caregivers loved one.

Help me make better decisions

This foundation refers to things that help caregivers make better, faster, and more appropriate decisions for their situation. Without this foundation, caregivers may find that they don't have time to do everything that needs to be done, or that they are constantly playing catch-up.

If you're a caregiver, you need to take advantage of all the resources available to you, so that you can make informed decisions quickly.

Simplify my life

The next step in the caregiver pyramid is simplification. This is the need to find out which things absolutely must be done and do those first. You can't figure out everything all at once. Prioritize by doing the important things first and you'll often find that the other things will sort themselves out.

Peace of mind

When a caregiver feels that the needs of their loved one are being met, the caregiver's needs tend to shift from the needs of their loved one to their own needs. Some caregivers never reach this point, but it is absolutely critical that caregivers take care of themselves in order to provide the best care for their loved ones.

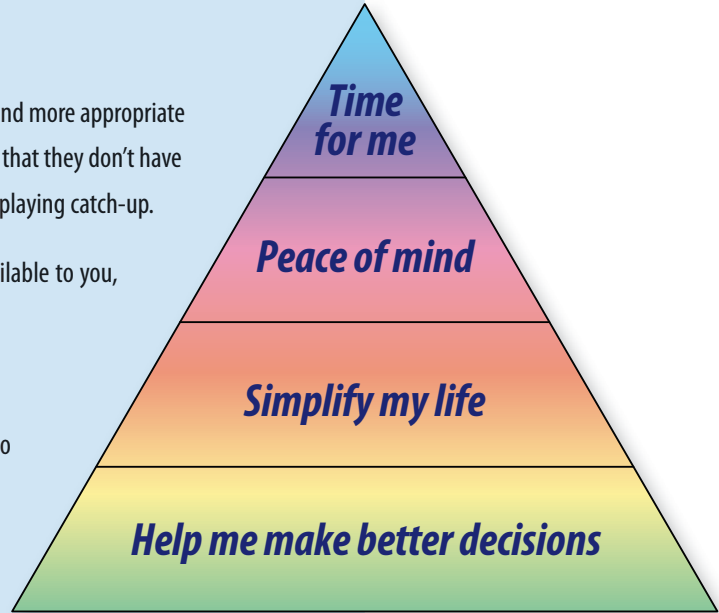
Peace of mind refers to the caregivers' ability to connect with their loved one from a distance. Knowing that your loved one is receiving proper care in your absence can reduce stress and allow you the opportunity to focus guilt-free on other demands, such as work or other family members.

Often, this stage is only possible when the you have additional help or support systems, such as an eldercare community center or a visiting healthcare professional.

Time for me

Perhaps the greatest unmet need among caregivers is finding personal time. This need occupies the top of the pyramid and reflects the importance of maintaining one's own health while managing the health of others.

Over 90 percent of caregivers say they need more help managing their emotions. Solutions that allow personal time and pampering occasions for the caregiver result in healthier, more emotionally stable care providers. The message here is simple: find time for yourself.



*Ease@Work has Eldercare specialists who can help you navigate through the stresses and information overload associated with caring for an elderly loved one. Make Ease@Work your partner in eldercare by call EASE@Work at **216/241-3273** or **800/521-3273**. Or go to www.easeatwork.com/EASEy with your organization's user name and password.*

Your wallet has been stolen... Now What?

To avoid, or lessen the chances of becoming a victim of identity theft, follow these 10 steps:

- 1. Don't panic.** Stop and think about everything you've lost and what private information it might contain. Write it down and prepare to make your calls as quickly as possible.
- 2. Call the police.** File a report immediately. If you can't remember everything you've lost, you can amend your report later.
- 3. Alert your bank and credit issuers.** The faster, the better.
- 4. Check nearby trash bins.** Some thieves will quickly discard what they don't want.
- 5. Notify credit reporting agencies.** File a fraud alert with Experian (888/397-3742), Equifax (800/525-6285) and TransUnion (800/680-7289). Ask that a security freeze be placed on your credit reports; this will prevent anyone from opening a new account in your name.
- 6. Suspend cell phone service.** If your cell phone is stolen, your provider can deactivate it.
- 7. Put your home under lockdown.** The thieves may now know where you live and may even have your keys. If your keys have been stolen, you should change your locks or have a locksmith re-tool your locks.
- 8. Contact government agencies.** You may need to replace your driver's license or car registration. If your social security number was part of the items stolen, you should contact the Social Security Administration to protect your benefits.
- 9. Call your health insurer.** Many of us carry our health insurance cards in our wallets. Thieves may try to use your card for health insurance benefits or pharmaceuticals.
- 10. Cancel membership cards.** You might think you don't have to cancel your library or grocery store card, but you should because some of these cards can be used without producing additional ID. This could leave you subject to fees. Other customer loyalty cards can become problematic if they are attached to your name and home address.

EMOTIONAL STRENGTH TRAINING

Most of us today are feeling the stress created by hard financial times, even if we are still employed. Perhaps you have a spouse whose hours have been cut, or they may be unemployed. It may be that rising costs for goods are making it harder to meet your bills every month.

With over 5 million people out of work and 1 out of 6 Ohioans dealing with job loss, layoffs, cut hours, decreased income, sparse job prospects, and businesses struggling to stay afloat, the pressure and fear is enormous.

For some of us, the emotional strain becomes evident in sleep problems, weight gain or loss, physical symptoms—grinding teeth, hypertension, muscle aches/pain, stomach or intestinal distress. For others, there is an increase in anxiety, depression, fear, worry, irritability, anger, loss of energy, discouragement, and negativity.

How can we combat the increased mental and emotional reactions to troubled, abnormal times? This

is when strength training for emotional health is in order! Developing an emotional strength training program can keep us balanced and resilient during stressful times. Practice exercises such as the following on a regular basis:

- Practice positive thinking
- Get 6 to 8 hours of sleep each night
- Eat balanced healthy meals and snacks
- Get some physical activity on a regular basis
- Try yoga, meditation or prayer
- Participate in activities that you find fun, interesting and enjoyable
- Reduce use of nicotine, caffeine and alcohol
- Maintain healthy social relationships
- Talk it out—communicate thoughts and feelings
- Make it real—lessen exaggeration, over-generalizing, and all-or-none thinking



from *Life Notes*, by Mary Anne Ricci, LPCC.
Mary Anne is an Ease@Work contracted counselor.

Risk factors for addiction

As humans, we all have pleasure centers in the brain, which when activated, are associated with feelings of euphoria. This happens to us everyday. We go through naturally occurring periods when we feel comfortable, secure, happy, and fulfilled—and this is followed by periods when more negative feelings are aroused, such as anxiety, insecurity, or discomfort. Humans are highly reinforced by positive feelings of pleasure and we want to experience those feelings again and again.

Addictive behavior can be seen as an attempt to control our daily cycles by maximizing pleasurable feelings and decreasing the frequency of negative feelings. But we need our down phases of the daily cycle as much as we need the more positive ones—if for no other reason than that the negative parts of the cycle help us appreciate the positive ones even more. Our negative experiences strengthen us and help us to become survivors. They assist us in learning wisdom and integrity.

As a simple definition, addiction is an uncontrollable search for gratification through a relationship with a substance or activity to the exclusion of other more diverse life experiences. The substance or activity varies. Common sources of addiction are: alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, prescription medication, sex, love, food, shopping, shoplifting, gambling, television, computers, video games, pornography and work. *Following are some of the factors that place a person at risk for addiction:*

- As a child, having addicted parents (or other adults)
- As a child, having too much, too little or uncertain love, discipline or safety
- A tendency to find others who are also addictive
- Feelings of insecurity, loneliness or being different
- Difficulty in using positive emotions such as love, joy or intimacy in times of trouble
- An inability to self-reflect and self-soothe

Coming to terms with addiction may be the most important journey of a person's life. One way of coming to terms with addiction is to work with a trained therapist. It is often a long journey, but the first phase of recovery is to admit the addiction.

If you are struggling with an addiction and want to (or need to) address the issue, Ease@Work can help with a plan for change by offering you access to a trained partner—a counselor specializing in addictions. If you are in a home with an addicted person, or in a relationship with an addicted person, Ease@Work can help you to learn how to more effectively manage the situation. Call our Intake Specialists for assistance at 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273.

Source: *Emotional Wellness Matters* by Family Behavioral Health Service, LLC, a contracted counseling provider with Ease@Work

FitTips @Work

incorporate isometrics!

isometric exercise {noun.}

An exercise or a program of exercises to strengthen specific muscles or shape the figure by pitting one muscle or part of the body against another or against an immovable object in a strong but motionless action [from dictionary.com]

Try a Palm Press. Place the palms of the hands together at your heart (as if in prayer) and press one palm against the other with equal force. Hold for several seconds. You'll feel the muscles of the arms and chest engage, without taking them through a range of motion. Try this at your desk, in the passenger seat of a car, or in any small space.

Learn more isometric exercises by contacting a FitIn@Work fitness coach through EASE!

Stay positive, stay on track

So, you've decided to make some type of lifestyle change for a better quality of life. It may be that you've decided to try to quit smoking, to eat healthier, to lose weight, to begin a fitness program, to become more active in your religion or spiritual life, to stop being so critical of those around you, to be a better spouse, partner or employee. . . the list goes on and on. But whatever goals and no matter when you set them, there are bound to be times when you fall short of meeting your goal.

You may slip up and yell at your child when you had decided to try another approach to resolving conflicts. You may overindulge in the cake and ice cream at a birthday party. You may skip a couple of workouts. Nobody is perfect. The key is not to let these minor situations become major—recognize that you did not handle the situation as you would have preferred and get back on track right away. Don't make the mistake of thinking you've failed and give up.



Stay positive and know that even the most disciplined people will occasionally overeat, miss a work out or not follow through as they would like. Forgive yourself, then promise to stop and think the next time you are faced with a similar choice. Move on and move forward with your goals.

Super-easy soup

Ready for a nice warm bowl of soup, but don't have all day to make it? Try this easy method for a quick meal with whatever you might have in the house—all you really need is broth to get started. Keep a box, some cans or even low-salt bouillon as a staple in your cupboards and you'll be all set.

1 box of broth/or two cans (chicken, beef, low-salt, no-fat or vegetable—whichever you prefer)

Any type of cooked leftover meat or tofu (leftover chicken chunks, pork in small cubes, tofu cubed or in strips)

Chopped onions (an amount of your liking)

Carrots, snow peas, green beans, corn, broccoli, spinach, chopped cabbage/bok choy, water chestnuts, etc. (any type of vegetable you have—may use cooked leftovers, frozen, canned, etc.)

Salt, pepper, other seasonings to taste

Soy sauce to taste (low-salt, optional)

Noodles or rice (optional)



Put the broth in a sauce pan or pot large enough to hold the liquid and the additional items you will add. Start warming the broth and add the chopped onions on a medium heat.

Select the other vegetables, meat or tofu that you plan on using. Chop, dice or julienne to your liking and begin adding them to the soup. (This is a great opportunity to use up small amounts of frozen vegetables that aren't really enough on their own.) Add more meat and vegetables to make a heartier soup, or less for a more liquid soup. There are no rules about what you can use or how much to put in, as long as you like the ingredients!

Add your seasonings to taste. Be careful not to add too much salt or soy sauce though, especially if you are not using low-salt broth or soy sauce.

Serve simply as a soup as is, or over rice or noodles.

Typically, this recipe takes less than a half hour to make. However, cooking time may vary depending on the types of vegetables you are using and the desired tenderness.