

UPDATE

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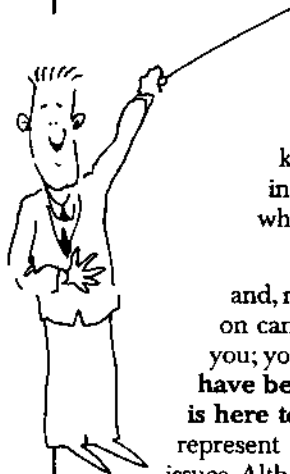
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The EAP Consultation: How does it work?

By Susan E. Barbour, Ed.D., EAP Director

In the Summer 1998 issue I began a two-part series to address the stigma of seeking the help of a counselor. This is the second part of the series in which I will address key concerns that employees have about seeking a consultation from the Employee Assistance Program.



One of the more important conversations I've had in these few months, occurred spontaneously with an employee. I learned that employees believe that when they use EAP, other people, particularly supervisors, know about the visit. I was surprised! I said, "but we always send out information that says your visits are confidential." He replied, "Yes, that is what you say, but you don't do it."

As director of the program, I want to answer some of your questions and, more importantly, to address your misperceptions. There are some myths on campus about how EAP works. The questions below may be familiar to you; you may have wondered about these points. **Whatever may, or may not have been the realities of the past, the program has a new direction and is here to address your needs and your concerns.** In writing what follows I represent the entire group of EAP counselors with whom I've discussed these issues. Although there are some organizational differences between the staff groups (faculty, academic staff, classified staff), everyone works for someone and many supervise or oversee others. This article speaks to us all.

Part II. Myths and Taboos

What can I expect when I make an appointment

Employees come to EAP by self-referral, because a friend who has been there recommends that it is helpful, or because a supervisor suggests EAP out of concern for their welfare or as an option to improve work performance. Sometimes a family member comes to EAP first, and the employee decides to join the family in counseling to address family problems. When you phone the office (424-1078) you will talk with either Barbara Kargus or Joan Conners. Barb and Joan are Program Assistants with specialized backgrounds in working in a center that provides confidential counseling services. They will schedule your appointment. You will identify yourself as an employee and say that you want an appointment with an EAP counselor. *They will not ask you what your visit is about.*

Appointments are scheduled a quarter past the hour, Monday through Friday, 9:15AM to 3:15PM. Late afternoon or early evening appointments are available on Mondays and Tuesdays during the academic year. If you are unable to make any of these times, we will try to accommodate your schedule. Appointments are typically 45-50 minutes long. Employees are offered up to three appointments, and there is no charge for the appointments.

Do EAP program assistants gossip?

Many employees believe or fear that Barb and Joan will know what you talk about when you come for an EAP visit, and they worry the program assistants will tell other employees. I am aware that in a small community everyone seems to know each other. That is one

reason why we are very careful about protecting your confidentiality. After Barb and Joan schedule your appointment, their role in your visit is done. Barb and Joan will greet you, but they do not know what your visit is about. In addition, as part of their job requirement, and out of respect for you, they will not tell anyone that you made a visit to the center. Your counselor will not discuss your visit with them nor will the program assistants have any knowledge regarding the content of your file here. (See discussion on confidentiality of your file).

Can I schedule my EAP appointment during my work time?

You may choose whether or not to tell your supervisor about your visit. If you hope to come to EAP during your workday, you will need to discuss your visit with your supervisor. Some employees decide to tell their supervisor that they are going to EAP and ask for time off from the workday. Every supervisor decides whether or not to excuse an employee for an EAP consultation. Some supervisors permit one or two visits during the workday. Some do not and will require you to take sick time or vacation time for your EAP visit. *That decision is up to your supervisor, and your supervisor has the authority to deny your request based on the needs of the department, departmental policy and your job responsibilities.*

Whenever possible it is best to schedule your appointment at a time when you are least pressured and hurried. Your counselor will be flexible and assist you in making an appointment that works with your schedule. If you would like to come during a lunch hour, that is possible to arrange as well.

Can I meet my counselor somewhere besides the EAP office?

Once an appointment is scheduled you will be asked to come to 201 Dempsey Hall where you will meet with your counselor. While other arrangements may be possible in extenuating circumstances, it is the exception not the rule. At times we may have a brief consultation or preliminary phone

conversation. There are a number of reasons why consultations are held in our office. The office is more private than informal meeting places on campus. Sound does not carry and interruptions are controlled.

Second, there is less chance of confusion about appointments if there is organization about how EAP visits are done and where they are held. Lastly, there is some paper work in making an EAP visit, and if your counselor needs to carry papers around campus it increases the chance of leaving them or losing them. Your counselor will not take this chance. We are aware that some people are self-conscious about being seen entering the EAP Office. **We cannot guarantee that no one will see you. However, many employees visit the center, or meet with staff, each day for reasons other than an EAP consultation.**

What Paperwork is there?

When you arrive at the EAP Office you will be asked to review two information forms. The first is a data form. We will ask you for your name, address, job classification and ethnic background. We will also want to know if you do, or do not, give us consent to call you, or write to you at work, and/or home. There are times when it is helpful to phone you if an appointment must be changed. However, you may deny us permission to do so. We will not contact you if you mark "no". The information on this form has two purposes. State law requires that we keep a record of your visit. Second, we collect anonymous data about how many people use EAP so that we can better meet your needs.

The second information form is called "Participant Rights." A copy of that form is printed in this newsletter. When you come for an EAP visit we will ask you to sign the form and it will become part of your file in the EAP Office indicating that you had an opportunity to read it and ask questions.

There's a file with my name on it?

Yes, we do keep a record of your visit. It will include these two forms and a brief summary of the problems and recommendations you discuss with your counselor. The file

is treated in the same confidential way that your visit is treated. Nothing in the record leaves the EAP Office without your written permission. It is not accessible by the Personnel Office, your supervisor or anyone else without your written permission unless the situation qualifies as one of the exceptions listed on the "Participant Rights" form. Files are kept for eight years from the date of your last EAP contact. If you wish, your EAP Counselor will discuss with you what the file includes.

Will my supervisor know I came to EAP for a non-work related consultation?

There are different kinds of situations in which you may worry that your supervisor will learn of your EAP visit. In the first general type of situation, your supervisor may be aware that you are not your usual self and encourages you to see an EAP counselor. A second similar circumstance is one in which you decide to make an EAP visit to discuss issues unrelated to work but are afraid that your supervisor could hear that you made a visit through the grapevine. Your work performance is not a problem in these situations. Your visit is confidential within the limits of state and federal guidelines (see participant's rights exceptions). No one will talk with you supervisor, or anyone else about your visit to EAP without your written permission.

Sometimes supervisors notice a change in your mood or behavior and become concerned about you. They may hear from a co-worker that you are not your usual self. They may realize that you are behaving differently than is typical. In this kind of situation, your supervisor is concerned for your well being and wants you to get help so you can resolve the problem and prevent it from getting worse. Your visit is confidential. If you and your counselor agree that it would be advantageous for someone else to know that you made a visit, you will be asked to provide your written consent to release the information.

What if my supervisor says I'm not doing my job? Will he/she know about my visit?

There may also be situations in which your work performance is in question. If you have had work performance problems, supervisors will require you to meet the expectations of job performance. They will ask you to rectify the problem. In order to meet those expectations they may recommend, and maybe even encourage you to visit EAP, as one of a number of resources to help you to improve your behavior. However, how you improve your job performance is up to you. Therefore your use of EAP is **always voluntary**. Under no circumstance is an EAP visit mandatory for continued employment. It may be mandatory, however, that you change your work performance in order to keep your job.

At times, it may help for your supervisor to know that you are making an effort to improve your performance. When a supervisor makes a formal referral to EAP, and the employee is seen on work time, it is a courtesy and also in your best interest to let the supervisor know whether or not you kept the appointment and accept EAP recommendations. Whether or not you tell your supervisor that you are seeing an EAP counselor is entirely up to you; your counselor will discuss this with you. Therefore in situations where it is helpful for your supervisor to be aware of your visit, you and your counselor will discuss the situation. If you agree that it is best that your supervisor know you kept your appointment and agree to follow up on recommendations, your counselor will ask for your written permission to release the specific information you agree to release. That form will state what information will be discussed and with whom it will be discussed. You may opt, instead to talk to your supervisor yourself.

What does confidentiality mean:

The EAP Program wants to create the best atmosphere possible for you when you come for a consultation. We ask you to read and sign the following form when you come for a visit. The form explains what your rights are and also what the exceptions to confidentiality are. An EAP session with an employee assistance counselor remains confidential. Your counselor cannot reveal to anyone that you came for a visit or disclose what you talked about. Wisconsin Statutes like other states, define your legal rights. There are some exceptions to confidentiality, as you will see in the Participant Rights section.

EAP PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh employees and their immediate family members are entitled to the following rights as participants in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

1. To be treated in an atmosphere which is safe, trusting and confidential;
2. To be treated with utmost care, concern and respect;
3. To be referred to the most competent, cost effective resource when an outside referral is necessary;
4. To know that their job security or promotional opportunity will not be jeopardized due to involvement in the program;
5. To view their confidential case records with the EAP Coordinator or receive a copy at their own expense

There are some significant exceptions to the general principle of confidentiality which are required by law and/or responsible professional practice. In the following instances information may be disclosed without the client's consent:

1. Medical emergency;
2. Threats to self or others;
3. Abuse or neglect of a child;
4. Court orders or subpoenas;
5. Felonies threatened or committed;
6. Any unexplained or suspicious death;
7. Activities which jeopardize state operations or the stealing of state property.

If a supervisor refers an employee to the EAP, the supervisor will be told, **with your knowledge and written agreement**, only whether you kept the appointment, whether a recommendation was made and whether the employee followed through with the recommendation. The supervisor will not be told what was discussed with the employee.

Finally, the EAP staff may need to consult with a knowledgeable health care professional from time to time to enhance services to the client. Care is taken in these consultations to avoid identifying individual clients.

CONFIDENTIAL

EAP DID YOU KNOW?

1999 marks the 20th Anniversary of the UW Oshkosh Employee Assistance Program



Evening Appointments are Available!!

Evening appointments are available for EAP consultations on Mondays and Tuesdays during the academic year. Call 424-1078 to make an appointment.

TIP

Getting too many credit card solicitations in the mail?

Write: TransUnion Name Removal Option
PO Box 7245,
Fullerton, CA 92637

Request that your name be removed from the mailing list for companies soliciting credit card applicants.

CORRECTION!!!

The Summer, 1998 newsletter includes "Karen" Rauscher on the Advisory Board for EAP. Dr. Rauscher's first name is **Frances**. I apologize for the error and welcome our newest board member.



NO EXCUSE NOT TO EXERCISE

By Alex Inciong

According to the National Institutes for Health, 97 million Americans, a staggering 55% of the adult population, are now considered overweight or obese. Most recently, because

of the strong scientific evidence of its impact on heart disease, the American Heart Association has upgraded the status of obesity from a "contributing" risk factor and added it to its list of "major risk factors" for coronary heart disease. The list also includes smoking, hypertension, high cholesterol and physical inactivity as major risk factors. The data overwhelmingly indicates that overweight, or obese individuals run higher risks of illness related to hypertension, lipid disorders, Type II diabetes, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, and certain cancers.

Research also documents that improving your fitness through regular physical activity

is necessary to help prevent age related weight gain and reduce the risks of the illnesses mentioned above. So what's new you say? We all know that being overweight is not healthy and that regular exercise is good for you. However, despite the fact that the majority of Americans know that regular exercise is important, the American College of Sports Medicine and the Center for Disease reports that 60% of U.S. adults do not engage in the recommended amount of activity and approximately 25% of the adult population get no exercise at all.

"The new standard emphasizes the amount, rather than the intensity of the activity, that doing something is better than doing nothing and that "something" does not mean high intensity."

Approximately two years ago this summer, the Surgeon General's report on Physical Activity and Health strongly urged Americans to perform some type of physical activity on most, if not all, days of the

week to maintain their health. The report specifically suggested that people burn 150 calories through physical activity each day, or 1,000 calories each week. This represents a dramatic shift from previous recommendations. The most common standard level advocated exercising three to five days a week at an intensity level of 60 to 90 percent of maximum heart rate, for 20 to 30 minutes. The new standard emphasizes the amount, rather than the intensity of activity, that doing something is better than nothing and that "something" does not mean high intensity. The types of activities that are considered healthful have broadened considerably leaving little room for excuses not to be active. Thus, a pair of comfortable shoes and daily, twenty to thirty minute brisk walks are sufficient to achieve the desired health benefits.

However, if you are looking for something more, that is, social support, personalized attention, or need help in getting started, there are a variety of options available in the community that can assist you. In selecting a particular program, such factors as time, convenience, specific needs, expertise and costs are important considerations. For worksite convenience, the University Health Promotion (UEHPP) is an alternative. The UEHPP offers group exercise and a personalized approach and style of instruction tailored to your needs and activity preferences.

For more information, contact Alex Inciong (7141) or Dan Schmidt (0834)

REMINDER:

Contributions (informational, creative) to EAP Update invited! Send your article any time!
Submit to:
EAP, 201 Dempsey Hall.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER

Conflict Resolution

Jayne Lokken, Ph.D.

EAP will host Brown Bag Seminars to discuss conflicts in the workplace from two perspectives, that of supervisors and supervisees. The second in the series is upcoming.

Supervisory Conflict

October 22nd, 1998

12:00 - 1:30

Reeve Union: 220

A forum for supervisors who are responsible to address conflict between supervisees.

NOVEMBER

Your Financial Portrait: A Discussion on Diversification and the Art of Investing

Mary Wiedenmeier, CFP

November 18th, 1998

Noon

Reeve: 220AB



Successful investing blends a number of different investments in order to create a portfolio that is consistent with the investor's goals and objectives. When making investment decisions, there are a variety of factors that can dictate your particular course of action. These factors include your own needs, your views on taking risk, and your current financial situation. Attend this program to explore your investment personality.

PREVIEW OF TENTATIVE COMING ATTRACTIONS!

Fran Nelson speaks on Herbs, Vitamins, Minerals and Supplements
Spring Health Fair - booths, samples, prizes and free screenings

John Zupanc speaks on managing Stress!

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