

UPDATE

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Dempsey Hall

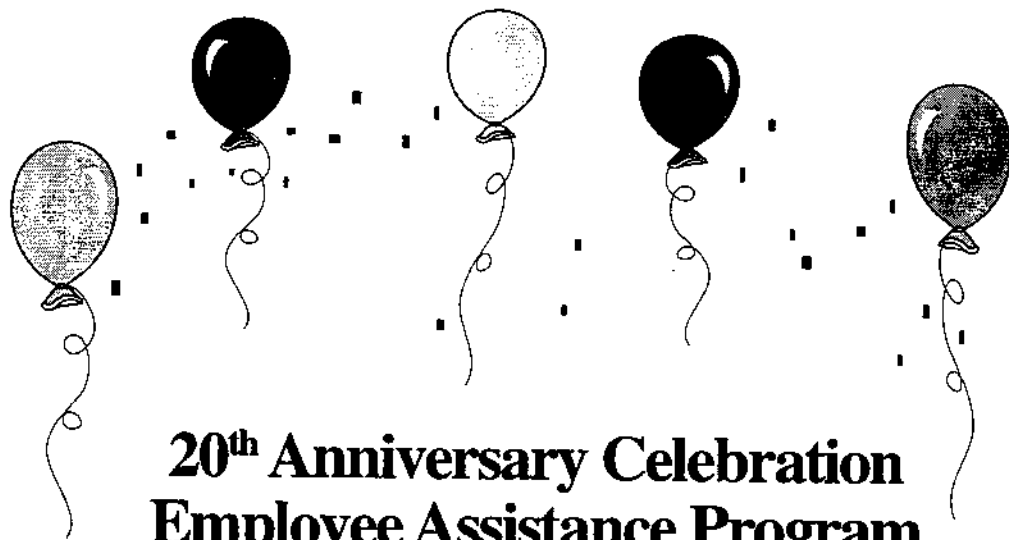
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20th Anniversary Celebration Employee Assistance Program

It's a birthday of sorts. (Oh, to be twenty again!).

This is an EAP birthday.

**Twenty years of providing assistance to
UW Oshkosh Employees.**

You're Invited

EAP extends an open invitation
to all employees to celebrate with us

At a reception to be held
April 21st - 3:30PM-5:00PM
Pollock House

Brief program at 4:00PM
Refreshments
Music provided by: Charles Combe

When Stress is more than Stress

by Susan Barbour,
EAP Director



Everybody knows what it's like to feel stressed. The demands of deadlines, the desire to accomplish more, please others, or meet expectations can keep us up nights and lead to physical distress. It is true that we can be our own worst enemy. Persistent ongoing stress requires that you rethink your priorities, because sooner or later stress takes a toll on your body. Studies point to a positive correlation between increased stress and increased illness.

Everyone also knows what it is like to be worried and anxious – the butterflies in your stomach before an important occasion, the tension you feel when your boss is annoyed over a misunderstanding, and the way your heart pounds if you're in danger. Stress is uncomfortable. Persistent stress and worry, however, may be a form of an anxiety disorder. The difference between stress, persistent stress and an anxiety disorder is a matter of: duration, severity, the symptoms you experience and how the stress affects you.

Stress has to do with too much demand or pressure and may affect each person differently. Demands that exceed our ability to tolerate them are experienced as stress. Tolerance levels vary from individual to individual and what is stressful for one person, is a breeze for another. What this says is that there is the possibility that you can learn new or different ways of coping that are more effective. Counseling for stress is called "stress management."

Anxiety is a word people use to describe a kind of stress. When a person is nervous, they are under stress. Anxiety has the purpose of rousing you to action and accordingly, there is a physical response preparing you for that action. Anxiety gears you up to face a threatening situation. It prepares you for a special event, and keeps you on your toes when you're making a speech. Anxiety typically helps you cope and do a better job.

However, if your anxiety is continually reoccurring, the helpful physiological responses become counterproductive. The physiological responses can keep you from coping and can disrupt your daily life. Anxiety disorders aren't just a case of "nerves." They are related to the biological makeup and life experiences of the individual, and they frequently run in families. There are several types of anxiety disorders, each with distinct features.

Many people misunderstand these disorders and think the individual should be able to overcome the symptoms by sheer willpower. Wishing the symptoms away does not work – but there are treatments that can help.

There are a number of ways that anxiety can intrude on your life.

General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Some people are troubled by worries, feel keyed up and unable to relax. This feeling goes on for days. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is much more than the normal anxiety people experience day to day. It's chronic and exaggerated worry and tension, even though nothing seems to provoke it. Having this disorder means always anticipating disaster, often worrying excessively about health, money, family, or work. Sometimes, though, the source of the worry is hard to pinpoint. Simply the thought of getting through the day provokes anxiety. It is often the case that physical symptoms such as diarrhea and upset stomach accompany the worries. GAD comes on gradually and most often hits people in childhood or adolescence, but can begin in adulthood, too. It is diagnosed when someone spends at least 6 months worrying excessively about a number of everyday problems.

Panic Disorder

When a panic attack strikes, most likely your heart pounds and you may feel sweaty, weak, faint, or dizzy. Your hands may tingle or feel numb, and you might feel flushed or chilled. You may have chest pain or feel; smothered, a sense of unreality or fear of impending doom, or loss of control. You may genuinely believe you're having a heart attack or stroke, losing your mind, or on the verge of death. Attacks can occur any time, even during non-dream sleep. While most attacks average a couple of minutes, occasionally they can go on for up to 10 minutes. In rare cases, they may last an hour or more. The attacks are unpredictable and seem uncontrollable to you.

Panic disorder is often accompanied by other conditions such as depression or alcoholism, and you can develop phobias to places or situations where panic attacks have occurred. For example, if a panic attack strikes while you're riding an elevator, you may develop a fear of elevators and perhaps start avoiding them. Some people's lives become greatly restricted – they avoid normal, everyday activities such as grocery shopping, driving, or in some cases even leaving the house. Or, they may be able to confront a feared situation only if accompanied by a spouse or other trusted person. When people's lives become so restricted by the disorder the condition is called agoraphobia.

Phobias

Phobias occur in several forms:

- A specific phobia is a fear of a particular object or situation.
- Social phobia is a fear of being painfully embarrassed or humiliated in a social setting.
- Agoraphobia, which often accompanies panic disorder, is a fear of being in any situation that might provoke a panic attack, or from which escape might be difficult if one occurred.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is characterized by anxious thoughts or rituals you feel you can't control. If you have OCD, as it's called, you may be plagued by persistent, unwelcome thoughts or images, or by the urgent need to engage in certain rituals.

You may be obsessed with germs or dirt, so you wash your hands over and over. You may be filled with doubt and feel the need to check things repeatedly. You might be preoccupied by thoughts of violence and fear that you will harm people close to you. You may spend long periods of time touching things or counting; you may be preoccupied by order or symmetry; you may have persistent thoughts of performing sexual acts that are repugnant to you; or you may be troubled by thoughts that are against your religious beliefs.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a debilitating condition that follows a terrifying event. Often, people with PTSD have persistent frightening thoughts and memories of their ordeal and feel emotionally numb, especially with people they were once close to. PTSD, once referred to as shell shock or battle fatigue, was first brought to public attention by war veterans, but it can result from any number of traumatic incidents. These include kidnapping, serious accidents such as car or train wrecks, natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes, violent attacks such as a mugging, rape, or torture, or being held captive. The event that triggers it may be something that threatened the person's life or the life of someone close to him or her. Or it could be something witnessed, such as mass destruction after a plane crash.

Whatever the source of the problem, some people with PTSD repeatedly relive the trauma in the form of nightmares and disturbing recollections during the day. They may also experience sleep problems, depression, feeling detached or numb, or being easily startled. They may lose interest in things they used to enjoy and have trouble feeling affectionate. They may feel irritable, more aggressive than before, or even violent. Seeing things that remind them of the incident may be very distressing, which could lead them to avoid certain places or situations that bring back those memories. Anniversaries of the event are often very difficult.

Treatment for Stress and Anxiety

There are a number of highly effective treatments for stress and anxiety. Relaxation, yoga, forms of meditation and deep breathing can be helpful for stress management as well as learning to evaluate and prioritize your commitments differently. Anxiety Disorders are successfully treated with medication accompanied by a variety of forms of psychotherapy including cognitive-behavioral therapy, relaxation techniques, and biofeedback to control muscle tension. Support from family and friends can help speed recovery.

For More Information

National Institute of Mental Health
Toll-free information services:

Depression: 1-800-421-4211

Panic and Other Anxiety Disorders:
1-800-647-2642

Acknowledgments

This information was adapted from a brochure written by Marilyn Dickey, a freelance writer in Washington, DC. Scientific information and review for that brochure was provided by National Institute of Mental Health staff members.

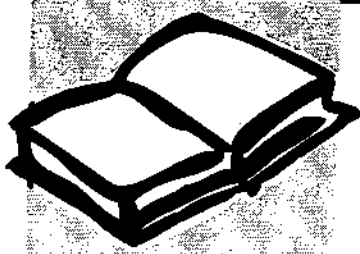
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Coming home from a hard, stressful day at work and jumping right into family issues might not be advisable. Instead, take a decompression break by going for a walk, taking a shower or changing your clothes. Give yourself time to cool down between stressful experiences.

The next time you're stuck in traffic, take a few deep breaths, loosen your grip on the steering wheel, listen to a radio show or play some audio cassettes.

When you're facing a stressful situation, try to imagine yourself feeling calm and confident. You'll relax more easily when the actual situation arises.



**Time for
a good read?**
A recommended book,
reviewed by Bill Treible

**MARGIN:
Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time
Reserves to Overloaded Lives.**

Author: Richard A. Swenson, M.D.
(Associate Professor (CHS) at the University of Wisconsin Medical School)

"A short synopsis would be:

Overload is not having time to finish the book you're reading on stress.
Margin is having time to read it twice,

Overload is fatigue.
Margin is energy.

Overload is red ink.
Margin is black ink.

Overload is hurry.
Margin is calm.

Overload is anxiety.
Margin is security.

Overload is the disease of the 90's.
Margin is the cure."

"Margin is the space that once existed between ourselves and our limits. It's something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations."

We have all been encouraged to have boundaries in our lives. Many of us are working to that end only to find that our noses are up against our boundary walls. Margin, when established, is the green space before we hit that wall.

Dr. Swenson builds the rationale for why our lives have more stress, and like the proverbial frog in the hot water we have lost our perspective as to what the reality of the situation is - we are being cooked by our "non choices" of how to live.

This book is not a self help book, as we have come to know them, but a book of insights shared, and solutions offered, which I have found very helpful. The solutions proposed are not the not-in-my-lifetime type, but something you can say yes to!! "Why didn't I think of that kind of solution," you tend to ask yourself after reading this book? I know that I can do this, so my journey to margin has started, and if only tenuously, it truly has started!!

**Creativity
Experience
FACT**

Write to the EAP Update with
your thoughts and experiences.

Send your article to:
EAP Update,
201 Dempsey Hall.

**UPCOMING
ACTIVITIES**

Brown Bag Seminars

When Someone you know has a
Drinking Problem

April 14th
Michael Altekruise, Ph.D.
Psychologist, EAP & Counseling Ctr.
Reeve Union - Room 222

**Pros and Cons of Hormone
Replacement Therapy**

May 12th
Diane Zanto, A.P.N.P.
Director Student Health Center
Reeve Union - Room 222

NOTE:

For those who attended the Brown Bag Seminar on November 18, 1998 by Mary P. Weidenmeier, Mary has informed me that there was an error in the Investment Personality Quiz handout. If you used this quiz or have any questions, please call Mary directly at 231-4646.

EAP Update Staff:

For further information contact
Employee Assistance Program
at 920-424-1078

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IRC - Layout

Document Services - Duplication

