

UPDATE

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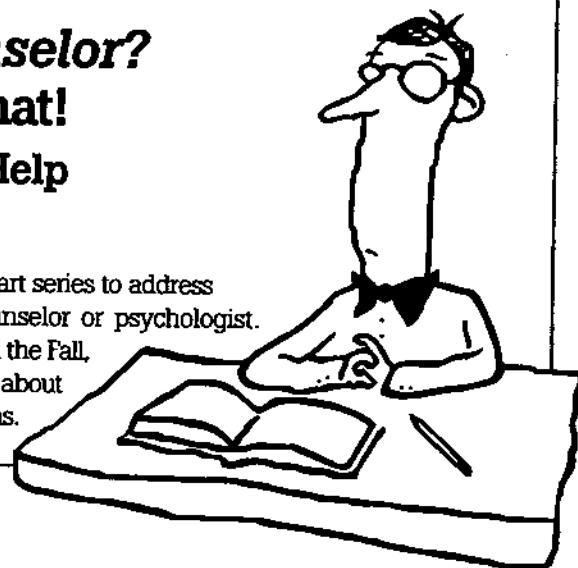
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What! See A Counselor? I Don't Want to Do That! **The Stigma of Seeking Help**

by Susan Barbour

This article represents the first of a two-part series to address the stigma of seeking the help of a counselor or psychologist. In the second part, which will be printed in the Fall, I will address key concerns that come up about Employee Assistance Program Consultations.



Part I. Myths & Taboos

If asked what the most commonly experienced emotional concerns among employees are, would you likely name depression and stress? Depression and anxiety are leading mental health issues that affect employees here and elsewhere. However, I would add that the most prevalent problem is being shy about seeking needed help or advice. These individuals never make it to the door.

The stigma of seeking help is not a new problem. We all suffer from it at one time or another and in one way or another. We are embarrassed by our need. We may feel we want or need assistance and even so, something drives us to attempt to figure things out on our own. People have all kinds of fears, thoughts and expectations that contribute to their overall hesitance to see a counselor or psychologist. A myriad of thoughts, like "I will feel stupid," and fears, like "my supervisor or colleagues may hear that I went to the EAP," affect people's inclination to seek out help. There are also many myths about mental health and illness. All of these thoughts and fears, collectively form the "stigma," and lead to individuals' biases.

The media impacts our reactions as well by sensationalizing horror stories. Once a person is skeptical about getting help they may have a tendency to notice stories that confirm that skepticism. Information presenting an alternate perspective may not be recognized or if received, may be discredited. In this way, gradually, and without much conscious thought, people's biases, whether or not they are founded, become stable, fixed and unchanging.

When people look for a counselor or psychologist they want: ■ To be respected, recognized for their knowledge & receive personal validation ■ Renewed hope ■ To feel better about themselves ■ To have or regain choice ■ To improve mood ■ To know the terms of the counseling relationship and meeting ■ Privacy and assurance of confidentiality ■ To be listened to and taken seriously ■ To be respected as the primary agent in problem resolution ■ To make a plan to rectify the situation.

This list is not exhaustive. Employees who have family members struggling with alcoholism, depression, schizophrenia, or a child with attention deficit disorder may believe that they are to "blame" for the problem and refrain from getting the support they need. It is also the case that when we hurt the most, we are most self-conscious about how our life appears to other people.

The fear of failing leads us to think that if our life is not "ideal" then others will think less of us. The consequence of this kind of thinking is to present a solid facade and/or a tendency to withdraw from others so they will not know how we really are. This protective measure can lead to more serious problems. Because of the stigma of going to see a psychologist, counselor or of seeking advice from the EAP, routine problems are often left to fester until they become more severe and necessitate a degree of intervention that would otherwise have been unnecessary.

Ten things you can do to increase your confidence to seek out a counselor or psychologist: 1.) Select a psychologist or counselor who is professionally certified and licensed by the state. The staff of UW Oshkosh Employee Assistance Program hold professional credentials to provide mental health services.

Our Biases Speak a Very Different Language.
Typical Fears Include:

"SHRINKS"
are eccentric and mentally unstable themselves.

My problems are worse than other people's problems.

Others will see me and it will reflect badly on me at work.

I should handle problem on my own.

People will think I am stupid.

What good will it do? There is nothing anyone can do anyhow.

GETTING HELP is a sign of inadequacy.

2.) Word of mouth is valuable. Go to someone who was personally recommended to you by a friend as trustworthy. 3.) Be up front in your first meeting that this is a good faith effort. 4.) Ask questions. No question is too silly and no question is unimportant. 5.) Do not hesitate to talk with the counselor about how they understand your situation, problems and what your options and resources are. 6.) Find out what to expect regarding frequency, time and length of meeting and anticipated number of sessions. 7.) If your concerns are not fully satisfied, tell the counselor or psychologist. 8.) If you are unsatisfied with the person you meet, ask to see someone else. 9.) Read any initial paperwork you are offered about your rights and be aware of what you are signing. 10.) Take a minute to honestly complete any follow-up anonymous satisfaction survey that the provider makes available to you.

There are personal reasons why each of us, in our own way, is uncertain about asking for assistance. In addition, Employee Assistance Programs are susceptible to being stigmatized because they exist both in and for the workplace community and employees are concerned about the effect that a visit may

have on their job. They worry about privacy, confidentiality and record keeping. These are valid concerns and will be addressed in the Fall issue of the EAP Update. ♦

Brown Bag Lunches

SEPTEMBER

Everything You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask!

Gail McNutt, M.D.
Diane Zanto, A.P.N.P.
Joan Killinger, M.S.E.



September 16, 1998
Noon-1:00 p.m.
Reeve Union 222

A forum to answer questions on medical and mental health, illness and treatment. Submit questions in advance of the meeting by writing anonymously to:

Employee Assistance Program
c/o Everything You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask!
201 Dempsey Hall

(See article on back page for additional information.)

OCTOBER

The EAP will host Brown Bag Lunches to discuss conflicts in the workplace from two perspectives, that of supervisors and employees. The series will be offered October 8 and October 22, 1998.

Conflict Resolution Series
Jayne Lokken, Ph.D.

We tend to associate negative feelings with conflict and see it as a destructive force. The premise of these discussions is that conflict can be useful, productive and can enhance relationships. The specific reasons people do not address conflict vary and at times these reasons may be tied to issues of power.

Additionally, it may be difficult to raise issues publicly because a person could feel committed to a course of action that he/she had not anticipated or explored.

Participants may submit questions prior to the Conflict Resolution Series discussion to maintain anonymity.

Send questions to: Jayne Lokken, Employee Assistance Program, 201 Dempsey Hall.

Co-worker Conflict
October 8, 1998
Noon-1:00/1:30 p.m.
Reeve Union 220



A forum for employees who experience conflict with co-worker/s or supervisor/s.

Supervisory Conflict
October 22, 1998
Noon-1:30 p.m.
Reeve Union 220



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

NOVEMBER

Your Financial Portrait: A Discussion on Diversification and the Art of Investing
Mary Wiedener, C.F.P.

November 18, 1998
Noon-1:00 p.m.
Reeve Union 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.

A Word from the EAP Director

In the last issue, I invited you to contribute to the EAP Update! Mary Koepf's contribution is an example. We benefit from your contributions. We can know each other a little more and learn some interesting things from each other. I hope you will think about offering an article.

Topics may vary and can be about things you have learned, hobbies, specialties, interests, or about your research. Share a poem you like or wrote, or an experience. If you have come across information that is relevant to us write a note about that. Send your submissions to the EAP Office: c/o 201 Dempsey Hall.

The 28 Hour Day



by Mary Koepf

Have you been wondering lately why you've been so stressed? Maybe it's because there aren't enough hours in a day!!! Feeling stressed myself awhile back, and thinking I needed more time in a day to get everything done that I wanted to accomplish, I made a log of what I 'needed' to do in one day. Here goes:

Task	Hours Needed
Get ready for work — hair, makeup	1/2
Personal Hygiene (shower, etc.)	1
Cook/eat or prepare two meals	2
Floss teeth (3xs/day) (I have dental problems)	1/4
Work	8+
Travel to and from work	1
Time for self	1 (if really lucky)
Time with husband	1 (if lucky)
Bond with children (I have two daughters)	2 (one hour each)
Attend children/spouse/work activities	2
Exercise (right???)	1/2
Walk or play with the dog	1/2
Get ready for bed	1/2
Sleep	7-8

Now if you have parents, nieces, nephews, volunteer commitments, or want to read the paper or keep up with current affairs (like watch TV) add those minutes and hours to your day...and build in some fun time to so-called relax...How many hours are you up to?

...AND YOU WONDER WHY YOU'RE STRESSED!!!



Did You Know?

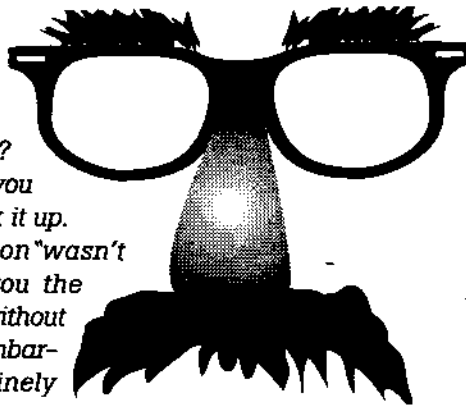
The EAP staff offers employees evening hours for consultations. Monday & Tuesday evening appointments are available during the academic year. Call 424-1078 to make an appointment.

Now Accepting Questions for September's Brown Bag Lunch Meeting:

"Everything You Always Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask!"

How often have you had a question about your health, sleep, exercise, illness, nutrition, diet, medication, mood, stress, schizophrenic aunt, alcohol consumption or about a sexual concern?

You may have stifled the question because you were afraid to ask, didn't know where to look it up. Then you decided that maybe the question "wasn't so important anyway." The EAP offers you the opportunity to ask that question and to do so without identifying who you are. No question is too embarrassing or too mundane if you are genuinely wanting a reply.



Ask general questions on any aspect of medical and/or mental health illness or treatment no matter how involved or how basic the topic. You may opt to attend the brown bag lunch meeting and ask your question in person, but if you are squeamish, let us introduce your question for you. Submit your questions *in advance* to give the group time to research an accurate response. In doing so, please know that questions that require a medication assessment and/or personal history need to be addressed by your family physician or appropriate professional provider.

EAP will accept anonymous questions by mail. As many questions as time will allow will be drawn from a hat and answered in a public forum on Wednesday, September 16, at Noon. Send your questions to the attention of: **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, c/o Everything You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask!**, 201 Dempsey Hall.

Respondents will be Gail McNutt, M.D., and Diane Zanto, A.P.N.P. from the University Student Health Center and Joan Killinger, M.S.E., from the University Employee Assistance Program/Counseling Center. Dr. McNutt is board certified in Internal Medicine, Allergy and Immunology and joined the Health Center staff in 1997. Diane Zanto is a Family Nurse Practitioner with prescriptive authority and 23 years of experience. She is Director of the Student Health Center. Joan Killinger has her masters in professional counseling and worked as a nurse for a number of years, primarily in family education. She has been a staff member of the EAP/University Counseling Center since 1991. ♦

Weight Watchers Program Continuing

If you are interested in joining the Wednesday Noon hour Weight Watchers Program, call Paula Hayford at 424-2424.



TIP: Exercise In Front of The TV.

Cancer Support Group...

"I received a request that EAP host a cancer support group. I would like more information about your request. Would the person making the request call or e-mail me?"

— Susan Barbour, EAP Director

424-1078

Barbour@vaxa.cis.uwash.edu

Meet the EAP Staff

by Susan Barbour

Other than the counselors of the EAP and myself, there are a number of employees active "behind the scenes of EAP." It is time they were recognized. An Advisory Board consults to EAP. The Advisory Board is a standing committee and meets monthly during the academic year.

EAP Advisory Board

Frank Church, News Bureau; **Dawn Dettlaff**, Chairman, Res. Life; **Bunny Hansen**, Continuing Education; **Diana Hartman**, Vice Chanc. Office; **David Horner**, Psychology Dept.; **Maureen Kartheiser**, HPER-Kolf; **Mary Koepp**, Personnel; **Kevin McDougal**, Mathematics; **Don Merz**, Counseling Center; **Karen Rauscher**, Psychology; **Karen Reiter**, LLR-Polk; **Diane Zanto**, Student Health Center.

Two committees work hard to make you aware of the EAP and to assure that services are confidential and well organized. The committees are the *Public Relations Committee* and the *Quality Assurance Committee*. Join me in recognizing and thanking these people:

Public Relations Committee

Sally Fox, Chair, History; **Norris Batts**, Admissions; **Paula Gonyo**, College of Nursing; **Pam Goode**, Advisement/Registration; **Sharen Harwood**, Foreign Languages; **Mike James**, Blackhawk Commons; **Connie Schuster**, Reeve Union; **Rosalie Slomski**, Student Health Center; **Tom Witte**, Residence Life; **Penny Wood**, Document Services.

Quality Assurance Committee

Ray Perry, Chair, COEHS; **Julie Allen**, Reeve Union; **Diane Bunck**, Personnel; **Frank Church**, News Bureau; **Jeanne Foley**, LLR-Polk; **Don Merz**, Counseling Center; **George Philip**, College of Business.

