



EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

September 2020

FrontLine

Wellness, Productivity, & You!

Employee

City of Saskatoon Employee & Family Assistance Program 306-975-3327

When Tragedy Strikes at Work

There are best practices for coping with tragedy in the workplace, and communication is crucial for all of them. 1) Share all appropriate information. It facilitates healing discussions among workers.



2) Don't judge others' reactions. There is no "correct" way of reacting to tragedy. Each person is unique, and the reasons why are complex. 3) Use counseling resources and self-help groups. They can speed your way to a healthful return to your pre-tragedy emotional state. 4) Even if you feel no support is needed, consider a "check-in" that can help keep you from overlooking a reaction that later interferes with social or job functioning. 5) Because tragic events can adversely affect focus and performance, give it time, and be patient with people.

Kid Solutions to Coping with COVID

"Back-to-school" means something dramatically different this fall, but coping well with changes requires discussing them together as a family. After school, ask the kids how things are going, but expect the usual "hmm ... fine."



To identify hidden worries, like bullying or social skills gaps that are causing distress, use open-ended questions that can't be answered with yes, no, or fine. Work on solutions together. Try brainstorming as a family or a group, or one on one with your child. You'll be surprised at the solutions kids imagine for solving their problems, ones that fit perfectly with their circumstances.

Use "Distancing" to Think Calmly Under Pressure

There is another kind of distancing worth knowing about: "distancing" as a job skill, and a means of functioning well under pressure. Distancing is the mental task of separating oneself emotionally from severe interactional stress (e.g. a verbally irate customer) so you maintain focus on a task. (Navy SEALs learn this skill.) To develop the distancing skill, take a deep breath when under pressure; acknowledge the situation ("Okay, the pressure's on. I can do this."); challenge yourself to be calm and visualize calmness; and focus on positives and the temporary nature of the event. Employers value workers who can perform well under pressure. Now you know how to do it.



Drug of Abuse Resurgence: GHB

Gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) is a colorless liquid or white powder that is often associated with the club scene and rave parties. It is an illicit drug that has had a resurgence recently. GHB can easily be placed in a beverage, and has been associated with date rape. The drug produces euphoria and memory loss, among other effects, but a drop too much can cause seizures and death. Hundreds have died after being unwittingly dosed by others. Other drugs used to facilitate sexual assault include Rohypnol and ketamine, but the most common drug used to facilitate rape *is still alcohol*.



Source: DEA.gov [search "GHB"]

Reduce Squabbles to Increase Productivity While Working from Home

Working remotely is the new normal for many employees. This change is requiring millions of workers to adapt. However, when family time increases, so can domestic stress. Add social isolation mandates, and you have a recipe for increased bickering and family squabbles. Have you experienced this “quarantine quarreling”? Has it affected your work productivity? We’re all familiar with bickering. It’s about the small stuff: “Whose turn is it to walk the dog?” and “How come no one put the wet laundry in the dryer?” Reducing bickering begins with understanding it is normal. Feeling less guilty about it can help you focus on intervention strategies. The inevitable is fewer incidents of its occurrence, fewer interruptions of your job, and more instances of members of your family communicating healthily. Even children can learn conflict resolution skills, and all can build the resilience necessary to cope with twists and turns in how the world responds to the pandemic. To these ends: 1) Have regular family meetings to discuss the need for a private, quiet workspace. Refresh and reinforce agreements about the rules to keep your remote workspace a productive one. 2) Take planned breaks to attend to family needs, which don’t vanish while you are working. Even 30 minutes spent attending to chores will reduce frustrations or resentments attributed to your being “always unavailable.” 3) Decide on definite work hours, if possible. Inertia often makes it easier to keep working after hours than to switch gears in favor of work-life balance. 4) Plan events on a family calendar so that everyone can look forward to and anchor themselves on them. This increases resilience and the ability to be more patient in the present. 5) Exercise with family members. The positive effects of exercising together are well documented in research. There is perhaps no more efficient way to accomplish three important goals at once—improving health, managing stress, and building bonds with those you love.



Source: nih.gov [search “PMC4552681”]

Find the Answer with This Brainstorming Tool

Brainstorming is powerful stuff. A group of people gather to find a solution by generating ideas without filtering, qualifying, judging, or feeling embarrassed about wild ideas. This resource does the same thing—you don’t need others to use this “fast idea generator” tool. Find it at www.nesta.org.uk/toolkit/fast-idea-generator. The worksheet prompts you to think differently in order to help you create ideas to solve problems.



Benefits of Brisk Walking

“Walk faster and

live longer” is a popular health tip. Now, research seems to support it. A three-year study of 92,000 people found that those who walked briskly for seven minutes daily within a 12-minute walk had a 30% lower likelihood of death. A two-minute brisk walk within a 35-minute stroll lowered risk of early death by 21%! If you don’t have an easy exercise program, it’s likely not a problem of capability. Instead, it is a problem of motivation. Overpower your resistance by identifying something you truly enjoy, and combine it with the exercise routine—music, books on tape, or mind-blowing educational content you’ve always wanted to hear or study. Let your doctor approve any exercise program, but find one that makes an impact like this one!



Research: www.nature.com [Search [s41591-020-1012-3]]

Tips for Making Better Impressions at Work

Embrace these overlooked work habits to impress company leadership: 1) Put away the smartphone before the meeting begins. You might be producing good work as you’re tapping away, but phones are also fun, leisurely browsing devices. Many managers who have to compete with your phone might assume you’re indifferent, but they may not remark on it. 2) Bring more solutions to the table along with problems you identify. This solution-oriented mindset will elevate your reputation. 3) Focus on quality in your work, rather than quantity. Make it a part of who you are, but resist the temptation to direct others in noticing it. They do. 4) Show excitement for the job, focus on the positive, be willing to tackle tough assignments, and see opportunities in disappointment.





Running (and finishing) the COVID Marathon By Bernie McCann – EAP Manager

After six months of isolating, social distancing, being careful, being scared – we have a new name for what we are all experiencing – COVID fatigue. This continuing pandemic situation means we are now facing a double challenge – not just the current ongoing daily stress of the virus but also the prolonged uncertainty about how long it will last. And being able to deal with this is important both for our personal health and to beat the coronavirus. Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions, as cases are still rising. One reason may be that COVID fatigue is leading some people to be careless. But that doesn't mean we don't have ways to help ourselves, our families, and others. Knowing why we feel that everything is abnormal can help us feel normal. Especially as the continued difficulties and ongoing stress of being in a pandemic build up – it's easy to lose our optimism, to get discouraged, and start having negative (or even angry) reactions. So perhaps it's time to revisit some helpful coping skills. Perhaps the best ones for this particular time include:

Exercise is one of the best things we can do to better cope. Physically moving our bodies releases soothing endorphins, helps blow off some of that stressful adrenaline when frustrations build up.

Talking Sometimes just discussing what's going on with an understanding person can really help too. Find the right place and time, since ignoring our feelings won't make them go away. It's like trying to hold a beach ball underwater – eventually it pops out – and then you can't control where it goes or who gets hit.

Positive thinking We may think it's the virus that causes our negative feelings, but actually, our feelings come from our thoughts about the pandemic. We can't change the situation, but we can try to adjust our thinking. Remind yourself, that most of us are doing the best we can in a difficult time.

Staying in the moment Feeling better can start by just being aware of, and by being easy on yourself. We can put ourselves through a lot of unnecessary misery by overthinking about the future or the past. For now, try to just take life one day at a time.

Step out of yourself by looking out for your friends and your family. Helping others cope with their stress, by providing support, not only makes them stronger, but will help boost your own happiness. During times of increased social distancing, people can still maintain social connections. Reaching out with phone calls or video chats can help you and your loved ones feel socially connected, less lonely, or isolated. A big part of COVID fatigue is the lack of control we feel when we realize we don't know how long this situation will continue. So if you find yourself wanting to go out, visit family, get back to work, eat out or travel again, remember there really is only one way each of us can make that happen – by staying safe and following health guidelines. Wear your mask, maintain proper distance, keep your social interactions outside, wash your hands frequently, and do everything else to stay safe. That's how you can take back control and finish the COVID marathon. Need someone to talk to about dealing with COVID? Or any work/life issue? Your Employee Family Assistance Program is here to listen.

Stress Management Technique #6: Catch, Examine, Re-create.

Step 1. Catch Yourself

Catch yourself having a good day and take notice of it along with any moments that you are aware that you're feeling happy.

Step 2. Examine

When you've caught yourself having a good day or feeling happy, joyful, having fun, etc., pause for a moment to examine the elements that contributed to the feelings.

- Where were you when you noticed?
- Is it a work day, evening, weekend?
- What were you doing leading up to this?
- What were you thinking or saying to yourself?
- Who was you with?
- Was there anything in the environment that influenced how you were feeling?
- Is there anything else that you noticed?

Step 3. Re-create

Based on your findings...what can you do to recreate the feeling? Or to have another good day? For example, you caught yourself having a good day at work, and as a result of your examination you find that:

- you were well-rested when you woke up
- you exercised in the morning before coming in to work
- your thoughts were positive and confident on your drive to work
- you were energized by the type of work or tasks you were doing
- you took breaks during the day to clear your head
- and you met a favorite person for a glass of wine after work

Based on the information you gathered, you are now aware of what you need to thrive. Now that you know what elements or circumstances contribute to you having a good day, you can intentionally include some or all of those elements again so that you can recreate the good feelings you enjoyed.

It's as easy as rinse and repeat.

Given the amount of stress we're all under now...we can all use more 'Good Days'.

Let's not wait for them to happen or leave it up to chance.

Let's make them happen when we can.

Take care of yourself,

Penney

Penney Murphy, B.A., B.S.W., M.S.W., R.S.W.

President / Owner, Penney Murphy & Associates

P.S. All of our Counsellors have awesome stress and anxiety reducing techniques, tips and exercises. If you'd like to learn to tame the stress in your life, [book an appointment](#). We'd love to share our tools and techniques with you. We are offering In Person sessions, as well as Phone, ZOOM Video and FaceTime sessions for your comfort and convenience.

EFAP NEWS

City of Saskatoon Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) Office
#310 820 51st Street
(Northstar Business Centre)

Website—www.cityofsaskatoonefap.com

EFAP IS CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO CITY OF SASKATOON EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Upcoming Meetings

EFAP Peer Advisor mtg - September 9, 2020, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. Microsoft Teams mtg.
Andy Field will discuss effective strategies to manage events, trauma, positive news; how we can live well now, resilience, adaptability, flexibility.

EFAP Admin Committee mtg - September 14, 2020, 1:15 p.m. Microsoft Teams mtg

EFAP Board of Director's mtg – October 5, 2020, 1:00 p.m. Microsoft Teams mtg

2020 Board of Directors Meetings

Board of Director's meetings are typically held the **3rd Thursday** of **March, June** and **September** and the date for **December's meeting is yet to be determined**. Meetings commence at **2:00 p.m.** (Exception this year is Sept mtg moved to Oct 5)

2020 Peer Advisor Meetings

Meetings are held the **2nd Wednesday of each month** at **1:00 p.m.**

To access counselling services, please call the counselling agency directly to book your appointment. The contracted agencies are:

Broadway Counselling & Therapy — 306-653-3232

Crossroads Therapeutic Solutions — 306-665-6661

Family Counselling Centre — 306-652-3121

Penney Murphy & Associates — 306-242-1010

Professional Counselling and Associates — 306-934-5898

Professional Psychologists and Counsellors — 306-664-0000

If you have any questions or would like Maria to recommend a counsellor please call the EFAP office at 306-975-3327