

HEALTHY

EXCHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**SPRING 2009**

For Your Information

REDUCE STRESS

Recognize the things that upset you. If something is increasing your stress, ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do to change the situation?" If there is, figure out what you can do. If not, find ways to accept this



lack of control. Important: Be sure to identify what really is the problem. For example, you may feel that the problem is work overload, but perhaps the real problem is your inability to say "no."

COUPLE CARE

Ask for support. Your partner is not a "mind reader." Let your partner know how you want to be supported.

RECOGNIZING CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

Do you or one of your family members have an alcohol or drug problem?

1. Each time you drink or use drugs, does it take more and more to get drunk or high?
2. Do you find yourself using alcohol or drugs to reduce anxiety?
3. Do you ever lose control over alcohol or drug use?
4. Do you ever drink or use drugs first thing in the morning to steady your nerves?

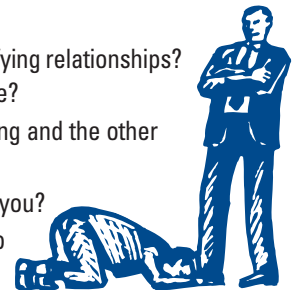


If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, you may have a problem with alcohol or drug addiction. If you need help, you can contact your EAP for confidential counseling, referrals or information.

RELATIONSHIP IMPROVEMENT

Signs of a Codependent Relationship

- Do you have difficulty developing or sustaining healthy and satisfying relationships?
- Do you become obsessed with fixing and rescuing needy people?
- Do you find yourself in relationships where you do all of the giving and the other person does all of the taking?
- Are you trying to control someone? Is someone trying to control you?
- Would you do anything, or tolerate almost anything, to hold on to a relationship? Do you fear being abandoned?



The questions above represent some of the signs of codependency. Codependency is an emotional and behavioral condition that affects a person's ability to have healthy, mutually-satisfying relationships. Also known as "relationship addiction," codependents often form or maintain relationships that are grounded in control and neediness rather than love and respect.

Takers and caretakers

Codependent relationships are made up of "takers" and "caretakers." Takers have an excessive need to control the people around them, including their spouse, children and co-workers. The taker attempts to control getting love, attention, approval or sex from others with anger, blame, violence, criticism, irritation, righteousness, neediness, invasive touch, incessant talking and/or emotional drama.

Caretakers, on the other hand, give up their own needs and wants to satisfy the needs and wants of others. They live for and through others, not for the sake of giving itself, but because they want validation and love in return. Because it is nearly impossible for caretakers to say "no" to people, they may find themselves the victims in physically and emotionally abusive relationships. They believe that if they can be good enough, or loving enough, they can change the other person's behavior.

Repressed emotions

Social scientists explain that codependent behavior is frequently caused by growing up in a dysfunctional family. A dysfunctional family is one in which the family members suffer from fear, anger, pain, or shame that is ignored or denied. The underlying problems may include alcohol or substance abuse, chronic mental illness, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, divorce, or a hypercritical or non-loving environment. Dysfunctional families, do not acknowledge that problems exist. They don't talk about them or confront them. As a result, family members learn to repress emotions and disregard their own needs. The codependent's obsessive need to control or "help" others – their fixation on others – is the codependent's

Continued on back page

SIGNS OF A CODEPENDENT...

Continued from front page

learned way to avoid or “not feel” the emotional pain, emptiness or low self-esteem they have from childhood.

Characteristics of Codependent People

According to Mental Health America, the characteristics of a codependent person may include:

- An exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others
- A tendency to confuse love and pity, with the tendency to “love” people they can pity and rescue
- A tendency to do more than their share, all of the time
- A tendency to become hurt when people don’t recognize their efforts
- An unhealthy dependence on relationships. The co-dependent will do anything to hold on to a relationship; to avoid the feeling of abandonment
- An extreme need for approval and recognition
- A sense of guilt when asserting themselves
- A compelling need to control others
- Lack of trust in self and/or others
- Fear of being abandoned or alone
- Difficulty identifying feelings
- Rigidity/difficulty adjusting to change
- Problems with intimacy/boundaries
- Chronic anger
- Lying/dishonesty
- Poor communications
- Difficulty making decisions

What to do

If you identify with several of the characteristics above or are dissatisfied with yourself or your relationships, begin by learning more about codependency. The more you understand codependency the better you can cope with its effects. Consider seeking the help of a professional counselor experienced in helping people with codependency. A professional counselor can help you become more aware of non-helpful actions and behaviors, and work with you on developing new, healthier ways of coping. Self-help groups for codependency can also be an invaluable source of learning and support.

Your EAP is here to help

For help and support with issues related to codependency, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. We’re here to help you.

Managing Stress About Money and the Economy

According to data from the American Psychological Association (APA), when asked about the recent financial crisis, almost half of Americans say that they are increasingly stressed about their ability to provide for their family’s basic needs. Eighty-two percent say that the economy is a significant cause of stress.

How can you protect yourself from the health consequences of financial stress? Below are tips from the APA for managing stress during tough economic times:

- ◆ **Be mindful of your stress level and symptoms.** Don’t ignore the physical and emotional symptoms of too much stress, which may include the following: irritability, problems sleeping, changes in appetite, headaches, stomach aches, intestinal problems, nervousness, excessive worry, or feeling sad and depressed.
- ◆ **Pay attention, but don’t panic.** There has been a constant stream of negative stories in newspapers and on television about the state of the economy. Pay attention to what’s happening – particularly as it directly relates to you – but refrain from getting caught up in doom-and-gloom hype, which can lead to higher levels of anxiety and bad decision making.
- ◆ **Identify your financial stressors and make a plan.** Take stock of your particular financial situation and what causes you stress. Write down specific ways you and your family can reduce expenses or manage your finances more efficiently. Then commit to a specific plan and review it regularly.
- ◆ **Recognize how you deal with stress related to money.** Determine if you are using unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling or over/under eating) to cope with financial stress. Be alert to these behaviors – if they are causing you trouble, consider seeking professional help before the problem gets worse.
- ◆ **Find healthy ways to manage stress.** Consider healthy, stress-reducing activities such as exercise, yoga, meditation or talking things out with friends, family or trusted advisors.

Contact your EAP

Remember, your EAP is available to help you or your immediate family members with most-any type of personal, family or work-related concern, including financial difficulties. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help.



CONCERN⁺ EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Your partner in finding solutions to work, family, and personal matters

CONCERN provides professional and confidential assistance with:

- ➔ Marital and Relationship Issues
- ➔ Alcohol and Substance Use
- ➔ Job Concerns
- ➔ Parenting
- ➔ Stress
- ➔ Depression and Anxiety

You and your household members can access service free of charge. We are a phone call away.

Call us at:

1-800-242-7371

CONCERN is a service of

