State of New Jersey
Civil Service Commission

September
2020

EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the NJ Civil Service Commission's Employee Advisory Service (EAS) Newsletter! EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance. **The EAS Employee Newsletter** *contains useful articles and information for managing various well-being and work-life issues in order to create a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace.*

How to Manage Negative Thoughts and Emotions

We all have negative thoughts and emotions at times. If we don't manage them well, they can interfere with our peace of mind. This important session will discuss strategies for improving our self-talk and emotional self-management skills to brighten our moods and enhance our ability to communicate effectively with others.

When:
Tuesday, September 29th
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM ET

REGISTER NOW

Survey

EAS wants to hear from you!

We want to open up conversations on how positive habits drive happiness and culture change. We want to know how you are managing.

To start this conversation, please respond to our one-question survey using the following link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EASemployeesurvey620

Phone: 866-327-9133
Web: www.state.nj.us/csc
Email: EAS_help@csc.nj.gov

Think Positively

Positive thinking can be harder than it seems. Most of us let "reality" squash our career dreams before they've even had a chance to develop. You think of how nice it would be to go for your master's degree, but before you can even envision yourself in a cap and gown, you come up with a million reasons why you can't do it. Maybe you don't have enough time or money. Or you think you should wait until the kids are grown. Or you can't afford to cut back on work hours. Instead of listing all the reasons you can't do something, just this once, list all the reasons you can, and should. Maybe this degree will increase earning potential or open up exciting new career options. Maybe it'll help you to feel better about yourself.

Positive thinking takes practice. We all have negative thoughts from time to time, but it's possible to turn your negative thoughts into positive ones by following these simple guidelines.

- **Identify your negative thoughts.** Negative ideas can spring into your mind so fast and so often that you are hardly even aware of them anymore. Consider the last dream or idea you rejected. Maybe you thought about asking for a new assignment at work. Write down all the excuses and problems you came up with to reject the idea. For example, perhaps you didn't ask for the new assignment because you'd never done anything similar before, didn't know if you could handle the extra workload, and you weren't sure if it was already assigned to someone else.

- **Weigh each excuse for validity.** Take each item on the list and think through whether they are really obstacles that could block you from achieving your goals—or just excuses based on fear or procrastination. In the example above, not having enough experience could potentially keep you from getting the assignment. But fears about handling the extra workload or wondering if it has already gone to someone else will not prevent you from getting the assignment. Let's face it: they are simply excuses not to go for what you want.

- **Think of ways to overcome your obstacles.** So you don't quite have the experience to take on the project. How can you overcome this? Maybe you are willing to cooperate with a coworker who does have the experience, so you can learn what you will need to know on this project and you can work independently the next time. Or maybe you can take on a smaller project until you build up to the one you want. If your dream assignment has indeed gone to someone else, try to develop a few main reasons why that person had the advantage over you. Perhaps there are areas for you to focus on going forward to improve your chances for the next opening.

- **Reclaim your dreams.** Once you have successfully broken down all your excuses, re-imagine the dream. You are the savvy team leader of the most important assignment for the company. You handle it with expertise and efficiency. Is it still a dream that fits? Are you still interested in being the team leader? If so, it's yours for the taking.

Source: Women for Hire. (n.d.). Positive energy and self-promotion. Retrieved November 30, 2016, from http://womenforhire.com

Getting To Know Your Employee Advisory Service (EAS)

We invite you to learn more about the services provided to you and your family through EAS by attending our bi-monthly webinar orientations. Register below for the next employee and supervisor/manager sessions.

Employee Orientation
When: Monday, September 21, 2020 **Time:** 10:00 AM- 11:00 AM ET

REGISTER NOW

Supervisor/Manager Orientation
When: Monday, September 21st **Time:** 11:00 AM- 12:00 PM ET

REGISTER NOW

Stress at Work: Tips to Reduce and Manage Job and Workplace Stress

As you learn to manage your job stress and improve your work relationships, you'll have more control over your ability to think clearly and act appropriately. You will be able to break habits that add to your stress at work, and you'll even be able to change negative ways of thinking about things that only add to your stress.

Eliminate self-defeating behaviors.

Many of us make job stress worse with negative thoughts and behavior. If you can turn around these self-defeating habits, you'll find employer-imposed stress easier to handle.

- **Resist perfectionism.** No project, situation, or decision is ever perfect, so trying to attain perfection on everything will simply add unnecessary stress to your day. When you set unrealistic goals for yourself or try to do too much, you're setting yourself up to fall short. Aim to do your best; no one can ask for more than that.

- **Clean up your act.** If you're always running late, set your clocks and watches fast and give yourself extra time. If your desk is a mess, file and throw away the clutter; just knowing where everything is saves time and cuts stress. Make to-do lists and cross off items as you accomplish them. Plan your day and stick to the schedule—you'll feel less overwhelmed.

- **Flip your negative thinking.** If you see the downside of every situation and interaction, you'll find yourself drained of energy and motivation. Try to think positively about your work, avoid negative-thinking coworkers, and pat yourself on the back about small accomplishments, even if no one else does.

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things at work are beyond our control, particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control, such as the way you choose to react to problems.

Five Ways to Dispel Stress

- **Take time away.** When stress is mounting at work, try to take a quick break and move away from the stressful situation. Take a stroll outside the workplace if possible, or spend a few minutes meditating in the break room. Physical movement or finding a quiet place to regain your balance can quickly reduce stress.

- **Talk it over with someone.** In some situations, simply sharing your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust can help reduce stress. Talking over a problem with someone who is both supportive and empathetic can be a great way to let off steam and relieve stress.

- **Connect with others at work.** Developing friendships with some of your coworkers can help buffer you from the negative effects of stress. Remember to listen to them and offer support when they are in need as well.

- **Look for humor in the situation.** When used appropriately, humor is a great way to relieve stress in the workplace. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or funny story.

Source: Segal, J., Smith, M., Robinson, L., & Segal, R. (Updated 2013, August). Stress at work: Tips to reduce and manage job and workplace stress. Retrieved August 17, 2016, from http://www.helpguide.org/

National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month September 2020

Responding to a Suicidal Loved One or Friend

When a loved one or friend talks about ending their life CONSIDER IT A CALL TO ACTION. You can help and support them by following the Five Action Steps below. These steps are supported by evidence in the field of suicide prevention:

Ask—It may be a tough question, but it is important to ask someone directly if they are having suicidal thoughts or contemplating ending their life. Studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.

Keep them safe—Work with the person to remove any lethal means available to them (e.g. firearms, knives, medications, etc.). Take them to an emergency room, or seek help from a medical or mental health professional. Reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the at-risk person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.

Be there—Be present, listen with compassion and without judgment, and let them know you care about them. If possible, do not leave them alone. Findings suggest acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.

Help them stay connected—Work with them to connect to others who also care—friends, family, therapists, clergy, teachers, coaches, and the like. Also connect them with the 24/7 crisis care resources. Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's number in your phone so it's there when you need it: 1-800-273-8255. Also give the person Lifeline's number, and see that it is readily available to them anytime they might need it—in their cellphone, on their night stand, in the car, in a book bag, on the refrigerator, or wherever it makes sense.

Follow up—Check in regularly with the person you are concerned about. For the days and weeks after the crisis, let them know you are thinking about them and that you are there to help if needed. These check-ins will go a long way to help that person feel cared about and start on the road to recovery. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

How to Get Help for a Social Media Friend

Contact the social media site directly if you are concerned about a friend's updates, or dial 911 in an emergency. If you have found suicidal thoughts or intentions posted on Facebook, go to this website for specific directions: http://save.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FB-One-Pager-for-AAS-3-1.pdf.

Three Things to Remember

In instances where there is an imminent threat of harm to self or others, call 911.
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available at 1-800-273-8255.
NJ EAS is available for consultation and support 24/7.

Adapted from the following sources:

U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (Revised 2017, March). 5 action steps for helping someone in emotional pain. In Suicide prevention. Retrieved September 17, 2019, from https://www.nimh.nih.gov

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Website: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org

#CopingDuringCOVID

FOR EVERYONE

MHA Screening: Online screening is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine if you're experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. Our screens are free, confidential, and scientifically-validated – they're the same questions you would get in a doctor's office.

2019 Back to School Toolkit - Stress & Loneliness: The content in last year's Back to School toolkit is still relevant, especially during COVID times.

NotOK App: It can be really hard to ask for help, especially in our toughest moments. The NotOK app allows you to pre-select up to five contacts, and when you press a button in the app, it will text those contacts with your location and a message that says "Hey, I'm not OK. Please call me, text me, or come find me." It's a great way to let your support system know that you need some help, even if you can't put it into words.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: The Lifeline provides 24/7, free, and confidential support to people in distress – you don't need to be suicidal to reach out. Call 1-800-273-8255 to be connected with a crisis counselor.

Crisis Text Line: If you prefer texting to talking on the phone, text MHA to 741-741 to be connected with a crisis counselor who will help you get through your big emotions.

Domestic Violence Hotline: The stressors of COVID have the potential to increase violence between partners and in homes. If you're experiencing domestic violence, looking for resources or information, or are question unhealthy aspects of your relationship, call 1-800-799-7233 or go to their site to virtually chat with an advocate.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: If you or a child you know is being hurt or doesn't feel safe at home, you can call or text 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) or start an online chat to reach a crisis counselor. They can help you figure out next steps to work through what is happening and stay safe.

FOR TEACHERS & SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

CREATE – Creating Resilience for Educators, Administrators, and Teachers: The goal of CREATE is to nurture healthy, caring school communities that support social and emotional learning and teacher and principal wellness. They offer webinars, mindfulness practices, and workshops.

Supporting Safety and Well-being of Children and Families During COVID-19: Some children are at higher risk for child abuse and neglect during this time of crisis. People who work with children play an important role in making sure they are safe at home, but it's hard to know how they are truly doing when you only have virtual contact. This guide has tips to help you check in on your students and families.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): CASEL defined social and emotional learning (SEL) over two decades ago and continues to advocate for making it a priority in all schools. Their site has information on how to integrate SEL into classrooms and they recently released Reunite, Renew and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School, a guide to support students during the transition back to school (in whatever form that is for your district).

Classroom Mental Health: This site has information on mental health in the classroom, helping students manage their emotions and behaviors, and how to support students who open up to you about their feelings.

Tips for Teachers: Ways to Help Students Who Struggle with Emotions or Behavior

Youth Mental Health: Emotions Matter (infographic)

FOR PARENTS

Back to School Planning: Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers: This guide from the CDC can help you and your children prepare for in-person classes or distance learning. It also includes resources on navigating stress and uncertainty.

Families in Schools – Coronavirus Learning Resources for Families: If you're looking to supplement your child's schoolwork, this site has online educational resources categorized by subject (from core subjects to nutrition to arts & culture) and age as well as guides on topics like supporting your child's reading and creating a new routine.

Child Mind Institute: The "For Families" tab has information on children's mental health and how to navigate those challenges as a parent. It includes concerns like attention, bullying, sleep, and grief as well as diagnosable disorders like anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and learning/development disorders.

Psychology Today: Psychology Today has articles on a number of psychology and mental health related topics as well as a "Find a Therapist" feature. If you or your child needs some professional support, you can use this tool to find therapists in your area and can even filter by insurance, concern, age they work with, and more.

MHA Screening – Parent Test: The Parent Test if from parents of young people to help you determine if you child's emotions, attention, or behaviors might be signs of a mental health concern.

Talking to Adolescents and Teens: Starting the Conversation

Helping at Home: Tips for Parents

6 Things to Know About Self-Injury

FOR STUDENTS

KidsHealth: We all have feelings and sometimes they can be hard to deal with. This site can help you figure out how to make it through tricky situations like fighting with your parents, not liking school, or feeling really sad.

Teen Mental Health: This site will help you learn more about mental health, the challenges that many teenagers face, and how to get through them. You can also find resources to help you help a friend if someone close to you is struggling.

Self-Care in Middle School: We all face tough situations like schoolwork or arguing with friends. It's important to take care of yourself so that you can deal with the stress. In this video, middle schoolers share their tips for self-care and overcoming challenges.

Guide of Things To Do at Home to Combat Loneliness & Boredom: If you're feeling trapped at home and missing your friends, check out this list for ideas of ways to add something fun to each day.

MHA Screening – Youth Test: This questionnaire can help you determine if you're having emotional, attentional, or behavioral difficulties.

Helpful vs. Harmful: Ways to Manage Emotions

Ideas for Building a Healthy Self-Image and Improving Self-Esteem

Time to Talk: Tips for Talking About Your Mental Health