

A Healthy Outlook

Characteristics of Emotional Wellness

Most of us have some sense of what physical health is, but what about emotional wellness? Here are some traits that indicate emotional wellness:

- **THE ABILITY** to step back and look at yourself honestly
- **THE ABILITY** to change
- **THE ABILITY** to maintain reasonable boundaries with others
- **THE ABILITY** to tolerate stress
- **THE ABILITY** to be flexible

- **THE ABILITY** to take responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, and actions
- **THE ABILITY** to recognize when you have a problem
- **THE ABILITY** to delay gratification and control impulses
- **THE ABILITY** to be resilient

If you feel that you are not managing things as well as you would like and it is interfering with your ability to feel good or enjoy life, please contact us at 240-314-1040. ●

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.

George Washington Carver
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Carver

Managing Chronic Complainers

While it is common to have some complaints about a job, it can be problematic, and even annoying, if you work with someone who complains all the time. The complainer may irritate you and cause you to lose patience and react

to go. With that in mind, here are some thoughts on how to manage a complaining coworker:

- **LISTEN**—sometimes complainers do not feel heard, so this might be a different experience for them. Within every complaint lies possible improvement, so do not just ignore them.
- **BUT**—do not try to convince them that things are not as bad as they think. This may prompt a litany of further complaints.
- **ASK QUESTIONS**—ask what they want done? Show interest and make them think about what they want.
- **DO NOT JUST AGREE**—be careful. If you reinforce the complaining, down the road, your name could be dropped as someone who agreed with them.



in ways that do not make you feel good. Trying to be calm and patient and getting them to move toward solutions is a better way

In This Issue

- 1
Characteristics of Emotional Wellness
Managing Chronic Complainers
- 2
Single-parent Survival Skills
Upcoming Events
- 3
Seasonal Affective Disorder
Ask the EAP

- **BE DIRECT**—say what you can and cannot do.
- **ENFORCE A TIME LIMIT**—do not let this continue on and on. Show interest. Show that you take them seriously, but make sure they know that your time is valuable too.
- **SET AN EXAMPLE**—try to keep your composure. Breathe deeply and try to stay calm. Focus on understanding them, asking questions, and moving toward solutions. There are limits on what you can do. ●

Single-parent Survival Skills

Be-coming divorced or wid-owed and then facing years of single parenting is a shock to anyone who experiences it. You will need to recover and heal. Here are some suggestions:

1. Some churches, synagogues, counseling centers, and therapists offer free and low-cost divorce-recovery workshops and grief-support groups.
2. Look for local peer-support groups and networks.
3. Search online for support services in your area.
4. Search online for chat rooms or bulletin boards where single parents post messages and share ideas.
5. Find library books for kids about divorce and single-parent families, and read them together. Take the time to talk about how they relate to your situation and encourage your kids to talk about their feelings.
6. Find a support group for children of divorce.
7. Tell your children's teachers and the school counselor that you are a single-parent family. Let them know that you welcome feedback and suggestions on coping with your circumstances.
8. When you are ready, investigate groups like Parents Without Partners for single adults. It could be helpful to be with other adults who have similar interests.
9. Learn to help your kids talk about what is happening to them.
10. Learn conflict resolution and problem-solving skills.

UPCOMING EVENTS

● Caregiver Support Group

The MCPS EAP offers a Caregiver Support Group designed to provide helpful resources and establish connections among the caregivers within our MCPS community. The meetings are held from **4:30 P.M. TO 5:30 P.M. AT 45 WEST GUDE DRIVE**. Guest speakers present on important topics related to caring for a loved one. *All are welcome to attend. For more information or to register, please call 240-314-1040.* ●

● DEPRESSION Screening Day

ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019, the MCPS EAP will conduct screenings for depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The screenings take less than 30 minutes and are available for all MCPS employees and their family members. Screenings are free and confidential. This is an opportunity to learn more about depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders; complete a brief screening questionnaire; and speak one-on-one with a mental health professional. If appropriate, referrals will be made for a complete evaluation.

CALL THE EAP AT 240-314-1040 if you have questions and to schedule an appointment. Appointments are available from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. at the EAP offices, 45 W. Gude Drive, Suite 1300, Rockville. ●

● Single-parent Survival Strategies

In addition to recovering from the loss of a partner, you will need to take action to survive and thrive in the coming years. The following strategies provide a starting place.

- **WATCH OUT** for too many changes in your life as you recover from both the loss of your spouse and the resulting changes in your life circumstances. Change causes stress, and you have enough right now.
- **REALIZE AND ACCEPT** that you must get help with your single-parenting responsibilities. It is unrealistic to think that you can do it alone.
- **MANAGE YOUR OWN EMOTIONS** so you will be

able to help your child manage his or her struggle. Learn as much as you can about how children respond to divorce, the death of a parent, or life in a single-parent home. Do not expect your child to respond the same way you do. Take your child's developmental stage into consideration when responding to his or her behavior.

- **GIVE** your children permission to talk to you about their feelings.
- **KEEP** appropriate boundaries.
- **FIND** another adult to be your sounding board.
- **DO NOT GIVE IN** to the temptation to let your child take care of you.
- **LET YOUR CHILDREN BE CHILDREN.** Avoid burdening them

continued on page 3

Single-parent Survival Strategies

continued from page 2

with your feelings and the facts of the divorce or death of your spouse.

- Even though you are unable to be present as much as in the past, your children still need adult supervision. Look for ways for other adults to look in on your kids when they are home alone, even when they are teenagers.
- Just because your children appear to be handling their emotions well, do not assume that they are okay. Some kids respond to parent loss by becoming overly responsible or by closing down their emotions. They may need to hear, “Tell me how you’re feeling.”
- **SET PRIORITIES.** Do the most important things first.
- **SIMPLIFY** as many things as possible in your life. You cannot afford to keep it complicated.
- **REMIND YOURSELF** that recovering from divorce

or the death of a spouse will take time. Your recovery will happen on its own schedule, and it will happen. You will get through this intact.

- **TEACH YOURSELF TO LET GO OF GUILT.** You do not have time for it, and it is not necessary.
- **FOCUS** on issues that you have control over. If something is beyond your control, do not waste your emotions on it.
- **FIND WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY.** Get regular checkups and make time to exercise. You need rest now more than ever. Watch your alcohol intake.
- **DO AT LEAST ONE FUN THING** for yourself every week.
- **GET TOGETHER** with other single-parent families. Sharing times with people facing similar issues can make you feel normal.

Article written by Lucy Goldberg, PhD, from the Therapists Newsletter Kit, printed with permission. ●

ASK THE EAP

Q. What kinds of recommendations does the EAP make?

A. After the initial assessment, an EAP counselor may recommend that you receive some type of counseling or treatment from a clinician in the community. The MCPS EAP maintains a large network of providers, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, substance abuse experts, support groups, and other treatment programs. EAP counselors will attempt to make referrals to providers within the MCPS insurance plans. EAP staff also may refer you to other resources, which include but are not limited to child care; elder care; and legal, financial, and housing resources. Remember that, while EAP services are free, when you accept a referral from outside the EAP network, you are responsible for any costs. ●

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that comes and goes with the seasons, typically starting in late fall and early winter and



going away during the spring and summer. Depressive episodes linked to the summer can occur, but are much less common than winter episodes of SAD.

SAD is not considered as a separate disorder. It is a type of depression that displays a recurring seasonal pattern. To be diagnosed with SAD, people must meet full criteria for major depression coinciding with specific seasons (appearing in the winter or summer months) for at least two years. Seasonal depressions must be much more frequent than any nonseasonal depressions.

● Symptoms of Major Depression

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Low energy
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Problems with sleep
- Experiencing changes in your appetite or weight
- Sluggish or agitated
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide.

continued on page 4

Seasonal Affective Disorder

continued from page 3

● Symptoms of the Winter Pattern of SAD:

- Low energy
- Hypersomnia
- Overeating
- Weight gain
- Craving for carbohydrates
- Social withdrawal (feel like “hibernating”)

● Treatments and Therapies

There are four major types of treatment for SAD, which may be used alone or combined:

- Medication
- Light therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Vitamin D

● Medication

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are used to treat SAD. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) also has approved the use of bupropion (another type of antidepressant) for treating SAD.

As with other medications, there are side effects to SSRIs. Talk to your doctor about the possible risks of using these med-

ications for your condition. You may need to try several different antidepressant medications before finding the one that improves your symptoms without causing problematic side effects. For basic information about SSRIs and other mental health medications, visit National Institute of Mental Health’s Medications web page. Check the FDA’s website for the latest information on warnings, patient medication guides, or newly approved medications.

● Light Therapy

Light therapy has been a mainstay treatment for SAD since the 1980s. The idea is to supplement the diminished sunshine of the fall and winter months using daily exposure to bright artificial light. Symptoms of SAD may be relieved by sitting in front of a light box first thing in the morning, on a daily basis, from the early fall until spring. Most typically, light boxes filter out the ultraviolet rays and require 20 to 60 minutes of exposure to 10,000 lux of cool-white fluorescent light—about 20 times greater than ordinary indoor lighting.

● Psychotherapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a type of psychotherapy, is effective for SAD. Traditional CBT has been adapted for use

with SAD (CBT-SAD). CBT-SAD relies on basic techniques of CBT, such as identifying negative thoughts and replacing them with more positive ones, and a technique called behavioral activation. Behavioral activation helps the person identify activities that are engaging and pleasurable, whether indoors or outdoors, to better cope with winter.

● Vitamin D

At present, vitamin D supplementation by itself is not regarded as an effective SAD treatment. It is used because low blood levels of vitamin D were found in people with SAD. The low levels usually are due to insufficient dietary intake or insufficient exposure to sunshine. However, the evidence for its use has been mixed. While some studies suggest vitamin D supplementation may be as effective as light therapy, others found vitamin D had no effect.

If you think you might be dealing with SAD, please consider speaking to your doctor about it.

You also may contact the EAP at 240-314-1040 to talk about and create an action plan.

Article adapted from “Seasonal Affective Disorder” from the National Institute of Mental Health website. For more information on mental health topics, go to <https://bit.ly/2KqjYzC>



*HELP when you need it
with life’s challenges—
BIG OR SMALL*

A HEALTHY OUTLOOK

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EAP • 45 West Gude Drive, Suite 1300 • Rockville, Maryland 20850
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You may contact us or send your questions and comments to Jeffrey_Becker@mcpsmd.org

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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