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About Your EAP



The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit set up by your employer to assist you in dealing with personal concerns that may

affect your work or home life. Use of the EAP is confidential and free to you and your immediate family members.

Visit our website for more information:
<http://www.paseap.com>

Living is a Present-Tense Activity

Do you ever feel like your mind is at least 4 hours ahead of your feet? Worrying about tomorrow can rob you of the blessings of today. Here are a few pointers to help keep your mind, heart and feet in the present:

- Plan for tomorrow, but don't let your mind worry. You CAN stop unproductive thinking.
- Practice mindfulness. Pay attention to the details of what you see, smell, feel, taste, hear. It will bring you back to this moment so you can live in the present.
- Check in with your heart. How are you feeling? Acknowledge if you are feeling sad, lonely, happy, tired, etc. Feelings are a part of being alive.
- Count your blessings. It's an old saying but no less reliable. Take a few minutes to list what is good in your life.
- Pay attention to what is happening right now—the person who is speaking to you; the stop sign you are pulling up to; the task you are working on at this moment.
- When life feels like it is moving too fast, take a few moments to breathe deeply and slowly, relax your shoulders, clear your mind. Bring your mind back to where your feet are.



The Benefits of Being a Positive Person

Are you a “glass half full” or a “glass half empty” kind of person? If you answered “half full”, you most likely view yourself as being positive and optimistic. If you're the half empty type, you may be viewed as more of a “Debbie-Downer”. So what difference does it make?

Thinking negatively causes you to feel down, gloomy, stressed and sick. Some common effects of stress include:

- Headaches
- Muscle tension or pain
- Fatigue
- Stomach upset
- Sleep disturbance
- Change in sex drive
- Restlessness
- Lack of motivation
- Anger, and
- Sadness or depression

Positive Power

Optimists—positive thinkers—tend to make lemonade out of lemons, giving situations and people the benefit of the doubt and viewing them in the best possible light. Being able to think positively, yet realistically, can be beneficial to our mental and physical health. Thinking positively decreases stress and has positive effects on the health and well-being of our minds and our bodies. Positive thinking provides a way to deal with life's challenges in a productive way.

According to research from the Mayo Clinic, positive thinking may contribute to increased life span, lower rates of depression, greater resistance to the common cold and reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease. It has been noted that positive thinkers tend to live healthier lifestyles, get more physical activity, eat a healthier diet, and avoid tobacco and excessive use of alcohol.

Nurturing Positive Attitudes

So are we born optimists or do we have to work at it? Lucy MacDonald, in her book, *Learn to Be an Optimist: A Practical Guide to Achieving Happiness* (Chronicle Books), points out that everyone is born with a particular type of temperament. Then your environment interacts with that temperament and you develop an attitude. “The good news is”, as pointed out by Martin Seligman, PhD, author of *Learned Optimism*, “that we can change from a pessimist to an optimist by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones to reprogram our brains.” He points out that thinking things are good and will get better leads to increased overall happiness.

So how can you become more positive?

- Replace negative thinking with positive self-talk focused on thinking the best is going to happen. Use positive self-talk to tell yourself the positive spin INSTEAD of the negative. For example, when your spouse comes home from work and is a bit grumpy, INSTEAD of thinking it's directed at you, think about asking what may have happened during the day to bring on his grumpiness.
- Challenge the assumptions that lead you to negative thinking; make sure your thoughts are based on rational, rather than irrational, beliefs.
- Replace worrying about the future with living in the present. Take note of what is positive about today.
- Add more humor to your life and try to smile and laugh more often. Watch a good comedy that you know will cause you to “LOL”—laugh out loud.
- Consider what you most often feel negative about and how you can think differently about those situations.
- Exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet. When your body feels good your mind feels good as well.
- Find positive people to spend time with. Make the time to be with the people you love and enjoy!

And finally, go out and enjoy a glass of lemonade with someone you love!



Retail Therapy or Compulsive Spending Addiction?

We've all heard the phrase "Retail Therapy"—and generally think of it as "shopping as recreation, a pastime or a pleasant diversion." In years gone by, this meant trips to shopping malls, but today it can also include on-line shopping or shopping via retail cable TV shows. We've also heard phrases such as "shopaholic," "compulsive shopper," "a problem with shopping," "spending too much" and other similar descriptions. How can we know if there is a problem and what can be done about it?

Beyond the veiled excuses for spending—"I just *had to have* it!," "the kids need that", "it was a girls' shopping weekend,"—compulsive shopping or spending is actually an attempt to find relief from some stressor or a painful reality. There is at least a brief sense of relief, escape or wellbeing. And it is often followed by a "let-down", guilt, or regret.

Shopping/spending behavior meets the criteria for a Compulsive Spending addiction when a person:

- Continues to shop and spend even though it is causing serious financial, relationship or other problems;
- Experiences distress when he/she is unable to shop and spend—irritability, anxiety, depression;
- Returns to the behavior after attempting to stop, promising to stop;
- Needs more of the behavior, in this case, shopping, to get same perceived benefit (known as "tolerance").

The Reward-Seeking Brain

Simply put, we are "wired for rewards." Food, shelter, safety, companionship, the recognition and affirmation of others, sex, entertainment—these are among our most basic needs that motivate us. When these needs are met, there is a feeling of satisfaction, contentment and self-approval. The meeting of these needs is a "reward" for our efforts to obtain them.

However, humans are all too prone to latch onto reward-seeking behaviors that can be self-defeating, even self-destructive. A few well-known examples are:

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Over-working
- Over-exercising

- Over-eating
- Self-starvation (anorexia)
- Gambling and, of course
- Over-spending.

These behaviors can be reinforced when it seems that the reward can be obtained easily and reliably. Simply put, this can be addicting. Compulsive spending, it is believed, works the same way.

What to do?

Consult with a professional who can assess for addictive behaviors. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is able to provide this service for you or your dependents. EAP consultants are professional, knowledgeable and compassionate.

An EAP consultant will recommend a plan for getting help that may include:

- Education about the differences between healthy, problem and compulsive spending;
- Referral to a doctor for evaluation of and medical treatment for depression, anxiety or similar problems that may be contributing to the addictive behavior;
- Referral to community support groups such as Debtor's Anonymous, which apply the 12 Steps of AA to compulsive-shopping/spending. Twelve-step groups provide a forum for speaking freely and confidentially about this problem with others who also suffer from it;
- Ongoing counseling to learn how one can cope with life's stressors without resorting to behaviors that just cause more trouble.

If you are unsure if your spending patterns or those of a loved one are problematic, call your EAP for a confidential consultation. Compulsive spending, like other addictions, can be overcome. It all starts with acknowledging the concern and asking for support and guidance.

Personal Assistance Services
(800) 356-0845 • www.paseap.com



Featured Service: Eldercare Management

Locating and paying for quality care for aging loved ones is important but it can be time-consuming and overwhelming.

PAS' affiliated geriatric care managers and caregiver consultants assist callers in coordinating services and finding payment options for the care of their aging loved ones. Elder care management services include:

Care Coordination

- Assistance in nursing home, retirement community or residential placement
- Needs assessment and development of a care plan
- Referral to community resources
- Support for long-distance caregivers
- Crisis intervention and prevention

Financial Consultation

- Medicaid/Medicare eligibility assessment
- Advice and assistance with Medicare Supplement insurance plans
- Assessment of Veteran's benefit eligibility
- Medicaid planning and asset protection

A Service of Your EAP (800) 356-0845

