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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>

## Ten Ways to Avoid Saying "I Love You"

1. Give your loved one eye contact; sit beside them when listening to them
2. Do it their way this time
3. Ask how their day was, how they are feeling at the end of the day
4. Leave a short note in their lunch, briefcase, school back pack, to let them know you are thinking of them
5. Pick up after them without nagging them to do it
6. Offer to get them something, before they ask
7. Work with your loved one on a project that is important to them
8. Give a hug for no reason
9. Tell your loved one something you admire about them
10. Smile at them, just because you LOVE THEM!



## A Good Night's Sleep

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 70 million Americans of all ages suffer from chronic sleep problems. Trouble falling or staying asleep is the most common issue followed by a wide range of others:

- Sleep apnea
- Restless leg syndrome
- Narcolepsy
- Sleep loss due to TV, computer, and cell phone use

Most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep to function at their best. Anything less increases the risk of work inefficiency, irritable mood, accidents, and ill health. Although genetics and aging affect our basic sleep rhythms, scientists have observed that certain developmental phases require different amounts of sleep.

**Childhood**— Between age 7 and puberty, melatonin production peaks and sleep at this age is usually deep and restorative. Ten hours of sleep is generally adequate for this group.

**Adolescence**—This age group often shows signs of tiredness during the day because of rapid growth and development. Eleven hours of sleep is desirable for teens, but most are lucky if they get nine.

**Adulthood**—Since 1910, the average length of time Americans spend sleeping has dropped from approximately nine hours to about seven hours today.

### Dangers of Sleep Deprivation

A number of studies have linked long-term sleep deficits with significant health problems.

- **Viral infections:** People who slept less than seven hours per night on average were three times more likely to get sick as those who averaged at least eight hours.
- **Weight gain:** According to an article in the journal *Obesity*, not getting enough sleep makes you more likely to gain weight. The link appears to be very strong among children. Lack of proper sleep can disrupt hormones that control hunger and appetite.
- **Diabetes:** *Diabetes Care* found a sharp increase in the risk of type 2 diabetes in people with persistent insomnia.
- **Heart disease:** Sleep deprivation results in an increase to blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides, all contributing factors to heart disease. Sleep apnea can trigger irregular heartbeat and increase the risk of stroke and heart failure.
- **Mental illness:** Sleep problems in teenagers and adults increase the likelihood of depression and anxiety.



### Simple Ways to Improve Sleep

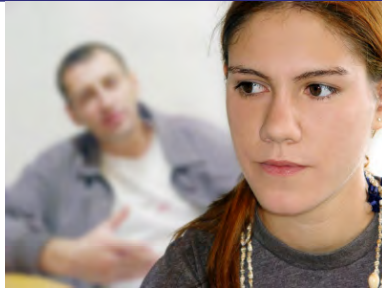
There are many factors which interfere with a good night's sleep. A rotating work schedule or important project may keep us tossing and turning. Our daytime habits may hold the key to solving the nighttime blues. Try some of these tips to improve the quality of your sleep.

- **Cut down on caffeine.** Caffeine blocks the effects of adenosine, a neurotransmitter that promotes sleep. Caffeine also increases the need to urinate during the night.
- **Stop smoking or chewing tobacco.** Nicotine is a central nervous system stimulant that can cause insomnia. People who kick the habit fall asleep more quickly and wake less often during the night.
- **Use alcohol sparingly.** Alcohol suppresses REM sleep, a necessary phase of sleep for brain function. Alcohol is responsible for as much as 10% of chronic insomnia cases. Alcohol can worsen snoring and other nocturnal breathing problems.
- **Be physically active.** Regular aerobic exercise provides three important sleep benefits: you fall asleep faster, sleep more deeply, and awaken less often at night.
- **Improve your sleep surroundings.** Remove the television, telephone, and office equipment from the bedroom. Minimal clutter as well as a room that is quiet, dark, and cool promotes a good night's sleep.
- **Stick to a regular schedule.** People with regular sleep patterns report fewer problems with insomnia and fewer depressive symptoms.
- **Reduce stress.** If work, relationship, financial or other concerns are keeping you awake at night, ask for help. Your EAP is a good place to start.

Sleep is not a luxury but a basic component of a healthy lifestyle. Make sure you allow enough time for sleep and stick to a regular schedule as much as possible. Sleep is a quality-of-life issue. Most importantly, seek a doctor's help if you are experiencing persistent problems in obtaining a good night's sleep and conventional steps to change the situation are not working.

## Improving Family Communication

Families are under constant stress due to many factors. In two thirds of families, both parents work outside the home. Thirty percent of American households are single-parented. More than ever, family members need communication skills to meet the multiple challenges of family life and to learn to how to share their emotional lives. Stress, disagreement and tension are not unusual in families, but they can become destructive due to unhealthy communication patterns.



### Strengthen Healthy Communication

1. **Speak directly.** Family members may not say what they mean. Rather, they use insinuation, questions, or criticisms to express their thoughts and feelings. Avoid confusion, misunderstanding, and doubt in family communication by talking with each other openly, directly, and authentically.
2. **Be available.** Just 10 minutes a day without distractions for you and your child or partner to talk can make a big difference in good communication. Turn off all electronics. Stop what you are doing and give your undivided attention.
3. **Be a good listener.** Listening to your child or partner can help them feel loved and valued. Ask about their feelings on a particular family matter. You do not have to agree to listen to them fully. This will help them calm down enough to listen to your thoughts later.
4. **Show empathy.** Do not tell the other person what to think or feel. Let them know that you understand what their feelings are. Give them a hug or gentle touch to acknowledge you understand their emotions. Do not minimize their



feelings by saying “that’s silly”, or “you shouldn’t be angry”. Their feelings are real and to be respected.

5. **Be a good role model.** What kind of example are you setting with your words and tone? Avoid screaming or name calling; use use feeling words such as “I am sad when you ...”
6. **Use family meetings to discuss issues.** This allows each member to be heard and their opinion respected, and also reinforces that the total good of the group is the focus. Do not finger-point or manipulate others to come around to your viewpoint.

### Keep Your Cool

When you feel a conversation getting heated, pause and step back.

- Take a few, slow, deep breaths. It works to calm the body and mind.
- Try to reflect back what you thought you heard the other family member say. What was intended and what was heard may have been very different.
- Respectful listening means just that. Do not use abusive language or yell.
- Do not hold grudges. Deal only with the present conversation. Dragging in disagreements from six months ago is harmful and distracting.



Daily life is full of stresses that require accommodation from family members. If your family is communicating in an unhealthy pattern that is creating more problems than solutions, perhaps it is time to take the next step and seek professional help. Your EAP is available to provide individual or family counseling to help create new pathways of communication and interaction within your family.



## Featured Service: Parenting Consultation

Caregivers of children can receive telephonic consultation with a team of consultants whose expertise includes child development, behavior modification, speech-language, sensory processing, education (both special and gifted), and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) processes. The parenting consultants provide information and guidance in understanding typical and atypical development and suggest strategies and resources to address those concerns.

Examples of what our team of professionals can provide include:

- Information on discipline, sleep issues, reinforcement strategies, potty training and temper tantrums
- Guidance in determining if overall behavior is typical for the child’s age and environment
- Assistance in identifying the potential cause(s) of behavior patterns
- Simple, positive parenting strategies that really work
- Information on developmental milestones such as language development, motor skills, sensory perception, and feeding skills
- Guidance and resources to determine when school age children may need an Individualized Education Plan
- Assistance in advocating for special or gifted services for children in daycare and school settings



A Service of Your EAP (800) 356-0845