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Reclaim Your Family’s Health from Substance Abuse

The family of someone with a substance abuse disorder is in great danger of emotional damage. If someone you love has an addiction problem, following the pointers below will help you to initiate the healing process, both for you and for the ones you love.

Start the Healing Process Now
If someone you love is struggling with substance abuse, they need immediate help. Any delay allows the problem to worsen, so step in now before things deteriorate even further. Have a thoughtful talk with your loved one and let them know how their choices are hurting you and the rest of your family.

Keep Yourself Safe
Talking to your loved one is a healthy first step, but you have to remember to protect your own emotional health. Don’t become so focused and emotionally invested in fixing the issue that you forget to take care of yourself. Surround yourself with support, either from family members or close friends. Also, in your attempts to help your family member, don’t put yourself in physical danger either.

Remember It’s Not Your Fault
Your loved one made the choices that led to substance abuse on their own. You are not to blame. Additionally, if you are unable to help your loved one change, that’s not your fault either. Encourage your loved one in any way you can, but accept the fact that, in the end, you are not responsible for the change, rather they are the one who must make the decision to change.

Tactics to Avoid
Stay away from resorting to threats and bribes. Don’t shield your loved one from the consequences of their substance abuse problem. They need to face reality in order to move towards healing. Don’t use subversive schemes such as hiding or throwing out drugs.

Moving Forward
The most important step for you and your loved one is to seek professional help. Don’t let the situation get any worse before you take action to restore the health of your family.
4 Steps to Reduce Your Financial Stress

Dealing with finances has been deemed the greatest cause of employee stress. In fact, a recent article by Liz Pryor suggests that financial stress is also the leading cause of medical ailments. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your financial burdens, follow the advice below on how to make positive financial choices that will reduce your level of stress.

1. Don’t Keep Yourself In The Dark

Not opening that bill doesn’t make it any less real. Face your fear so you can take positive steps to reduce your financial stress, because the uncertainty of your financial status only makes your stress worse.

As you go forward, make a deal with yourself to stay informed. Check your balance regularly so that you are reminded when you make impromptu purchases. Seeing the money go out of your account every day can add extra motivation to be thrifty in your spending.

Finally, make a budget, and be persistent about it. People that adhere to a strict budget frequently find that they worry less about their finances since they have an exact plan. A budget will help you to live within your means so that you don’t increase your debt.

2. Make Big Cuts

There are plenty of small changes you can make that will instantly free up space in your budget, but you have to begin by stopping the big, impulsive purchases. You will immediately feel more peaceful when you face the fact that you aren’t able to pay for that expensive charge.

Examine your budget carefully to determine what changes need to be made. Perhaps you could run at the park instead of paying for a monthly gym membership or you and your spouse could plan fun meals at home instead of eating out. You don’t have to change your whole way of life, but these and other little changes can save you from immense debt.

3. Control Your Emotions

When you feel the stress rising inside you, remind yourself to stay in the moment. The future may seem scary, but you can take positive steps today to avoid all those failures that you fear. Don’t let your stress control your life.

One constructive plan for reducing your stress is to plan it into your day. Seriously. Pick 10 minutes in your day to think about the things that are causing you stress, and then put it out of your mind for the rest of the day. This idea doesn’t mean ignoring your problems; it simply offers temporary relief from the overwhelming burden of stress.

4. Put Money Towards the Important Things

Of course you can’t just completely stop spending. There are always bills that have to be paid and mouths that have to be fed, but cut your spending on things that you simply want and don’t need. Relieve your stress by proving to yourself that you are only spending money when you must.

If you are experiencing this kind of intense financial stress, don’t be afraid to seek help. A financial advisor can help you to devise a plan that will reduce your debt and worry.

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Tired? Try These Energy-Boosting Foods

It’s hard to make it through a long day in the workplace, but the choices you make about what you eat can make a huge difference in your energy. Boost your energy for the entire day by choosing these power foods.

**Leafy Greens**
- Dark, leafy greens like kale and spinach are vitamin superfoods.
- Vitamins, fiber, antioxidants, and minerals provide your body with an energy boost.
- Add kale to your smoothie or top your sandwich with spinach.

**Red Peppers**
- High levels of vitamin C, carotene, and lycopene help you feel healthier in no time.
- For a quick energizing snack, pair red peppers with some hummus for some extra protein and healthy fats.

**Nuts**
- Packed with omega-3 healthy fats, and fiber.
- Nuts can sustain your energy level throughout the day.
- Peanuts, walnuts, and almonds in particular help you feel full longer.

**Oatmeal**
- You can’t beat the complex carbohydrates found in oatmeal.
- Gets your metabolism started with plenty of protein and fiber.
- Top your oatmeal with blueberries, cinnamon, and a little flax for some extra nutrition and flavor.
Don’t Get Stuck on Blaming

Situation:

“It’s no wonder I have so many problems!” “Look at how awful I have been treated by my abusive father, my alcoholic mother, my cruel ex-husband, my crazy ex-wife, my ungrateful kids, my back-stabbing colleagues, or my micro-managing boss!”

There’s often no question that others have treated us poorly. When we are mistreated, we feel vulnerable, helpless, and angry. Continued mistreatment leaves scars that can last forever. We get frozen in our stories about “how awful it is or was.” However, repeated focus on how we have been wronged keeps us stuck in resentment and inaction. Blaming others for our current struggle may appear to get us off the hook. The past (or awful present) can be used as an excuse for our addictions, our irresponsibility or our bad behaviors. We can avoid the hard work of addressing the past and the challenge of learning more effective strategies.

Blaming is both exhausting and counter-productive. As challenging as it sounds, if we can find ways to forgive others, we can move forward. Forgiveness ultimately involves compassion and understanding. Forgiveness does not mean that we allow someone else to continue to hurt us. Letting go of the emotional charge of the past frees up energy for the present.

So What Should We Be Doing Instead?

1. Realize the past cannot be changed. The past is over unless we choose to prolong it.
2. Learn or refine communication skills: assertiveness, limit-setting, conflict resolution, and effective listening.
3. Become stronger physically, emotionally and socially through exercise, meditation/yoga/religious or spiritual practice, engrossing hobbies, volunteer work, counseling
4. Cultivate a support network of caring friends and family. Let them help us.
5. Take responsibility for our own actions without blaming others.
6. Work on forgiving those who hurt us…not for their sake, but for ours.
7. Work on forgiving ourselves for having been stuck in the struggle for so long.
8. Realize anger and complaining hurts us more than the other person.
9. Important: Give up saying “Ain’t it awful” and focus on what you can do now.

Solutions:

How does this work in actual practice? Let’s say we are focused on how poorly we were treated by an abusive mother. We acknowledge the truth of that statement. We then realize how much of our current self-defeating behaviors stem from the past trauma. We are repeating her bad behavior or we are cowering in fear with others or we are sabotaging our own efforts to be successful and happy by our repeated failures. Once we understand this dynamic, frequently with the help of a supportive counselor, we can then give up the litany of oft-repeated rehashes of the past. We commit to working on our own residual problems without focusing on blaming our parent. We eventually come to the realization that our parent came with their own set of baggage which they never managed to resolve. If we are lucky, we find a way to forgive…to let go of the damaging emotional charge of the past memories. Do we ever forget? No. But we let go of the grudge. We move forward to create our own more healthy life.

The EAP can help!

Are you ready to begin looking at the ways you keep yourself stuck in an infinite loop of blaming? Counseling can offer support for this challenging process.

The County of Santa Clara’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers up to five (5) free confidential and professional counseling sessions to County employees and their eligible dependents. Part of its mission is to help clients find new ways to behave, to communicate, and to connect with the significant people in their lives.

Give EAP a call at (408) 241-7772 to schedule an appointment. Don’t go through it alone.
Get Your Career on Track, Now

Careers don’t always go the way we intend. In the current economic climate, employees have to get creative in regards to their career path in order to achieve their ultimate goals. To get your career back on track, consider using some of these unusual strategies.

Take a Sideways Step
Accepting a position that is essentially equivalent to your former job is not necessarily a bad thing. A recent publication by Marc Cenedella of the Ladders suggests that a sideways move might allow you to gain a well-rounded experience of a company. Eventually, your ability to work in diverse situations may pay off with a higher-ranking position.

However, before you take that sideways step, be sure that the new position makes sense within your ultimate career goals. The new job should at least seem coherent with the rest of your resume. Make sure that you will be learning skills that will translate to your dream job, should you choose to move on.

Go Above and Beyond
Although it is good advice for any employee, you should especially take this idea to heart when aiming for advancement. Don’t just go the extra mile with your employer, though — show your clients how much you care as well, portraying an all-around positive presence in the workplace.

Build Visibility Online
Use your online presence to construct the image that reflects your ultimate goals. Make sure that you are consistent throughout social media and that your profiles seem professional — no embarrassing photos! Every potential employer is going to see your online presence, so present yourself as the dedicated, motivated employee that you are.

Get Creative
Don’t let yourself be held back by conventions. Follow through on that crazy idea to achieve a client’s goal. Find an innovative way to make your next assignment even better than expected. Be bold in instituting your ideas, because in the future, those creative improvements could be what set you apart in the job hunt.