Do you find yourself feeling worn out and drained? Dreading going to work? You might be experiencing early signs of workplace burnout. A constant feeling of physical, mental, and/or emotional exhaustion and pessimism characterizes burnout in the workplace. It often results in a performance decline and loss of passion.

EARLY SIGNS OF BURNOUT

There are several early warning signs of burnout. Do you fear coming back from vacation? Are you experiencing interpersonal problems at work and home, growing irritable and impatient? Burnout symptoms can also include:

- No longer enjoying tasks you once did
- Difficulty focusing on assignments
- Feeling pessimistic about your coworkers and your performance

PREVENTATIVE BURNOUT MAINTENANCE

- Evaluate – Take a step back to see how you’re using your time. Where and when are you most productive? Being efficient does not equal being effective. Prioritize your time.
- Set vacations in stone – If you are financially able, plan that trip today. It will give you something to anticipate. Or, consider doing a “staycation,” and treat yourself to some rest and relaxation.
- Reward yourself weekly – Establish a routine that invests in you. Perhaps, schedule a dinner out with the family or coffee with a friend. You will be more motivated to complete a task when you have something fun to look forward to each week.
- Build community with coworkers – Relationships with positive people who inspire and motivate you is important. Negativity breeds negativity, so look for empathetic coworkers who can encourage you.
- Unplug your devices – Avoid checking your office email, voicemail, and logging in to do work when you’re not in the office. Maintaining a clear distinction between work and home allows you to be more fully present and enjoy what you’re doing.
- Good self-care – Take care of yourself with proper rest, exercise, and nutrition to reduce your burnout risk. Research has proven sleeping less than six hours a night increases your chances of burnout.
**COACH APPROACH**

**Becoming a Mentor**

Time is a commodity we all have. Are you investing or spending yours? Depositing a bit of your knowledge and expertise into the life of another is the heart of mentoring. While you may never gain back your time, many mentors would argue you receive much, much more in its place.

**WHY MENTOR?**

Guiding younger people or professionals toward greater insight and goals is invaluable. Often a mentor is able to help individuals find their strengths and build on those. Anyone can be a mentor. You can work with younger people in your social setting, subordinates in the workplace, or mentor others in the professional community. Many businesses highly encourage mentor relationships, as it improves workplace morale and productivity.

**MENTORING BENEFITS**

Besides the obvious benefit of investing in another’s life, there are several other positive side-effects for the mentor.

- **Hone your skills** – Teaching another can help you narrow in on your own gifts and skill set. You can also learn more about your designated field.
- **Grow organizational talent** – Employees you’ve invested in are more likely to succeed and stay with your business longer.
- **Promote good health** – Research shows that focusing on another and helping them reduces stress and interrupts your body’s patterns of tension. Also, mentors note an increase in overall happiness and pride in oneself.
- **Build relationships** – A community is only as strong as its people. Friendships often emerge from the mentor relationship.
- **Encourage learning** – Guiding others can grow both your teaching and learning skills. Become a better teacher and student simultaneously to promote your own lifelong learning.

Still unsure about mentoring? Remember, everything you know today is because someone taught you. Your life is a gift. Consider helping someone unwrap the potential in their life. Chances are, they just need a little help from a mentor like you.

**HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Dealing with Difficult People**

Let’s face it. We all encounter people who are challenging, negative, and even aggressive. Whether it’s a family member, friend, coworker, or neighbor, being able to differentiate between difficult personalities is helpful. When we better understand them, it frees us to not take things personally. We can also help create a safe and productive environment for others.

**THE NEXT STEP**

Some of the more challenging personality traits include people who are hostile, narcissistic, passive-aggressive, or negative. Knowing how to handle and react to difficult personality traits is beneficial in all environments. Here are some helpful tips to deal with all difficult personality styles.

- **Address concerns** – Don’t ignore problems and pretend they don’t exist. Chances are the challenges will only grow. The responsible thing is to address the person and the issue.
- **Express compassion** – Remember, you probably don’t have the whole picture of someone’s life. You may not know all that’s happened in the individual’s background, their mental health, or the past crises they may have faced. Empathize and express compassion.
- **Assess reactions** – Consider your own emotions. If you’re having a particularly stressful day and can’t seem to remain calm, it’s not the right time to address issues with a difficult person. Staying calm and neutral is the best way to approach and deal with challenging people.

**SOUND FINANCES**

**Daily Money Management Tips**

When it comes to money, who holds the power? Is it you or your credit card? Start today to take control of your financial future. There are small but significant money principles you can apply now to reach your long-range financial goals. Here are a few strategies to help you manage your money.

- **Track spending** – Record your outflow for one month to see where your money is going. You can use a software program or download a mobile app to track spending. Be mindful, if you do use your credit card to track your spending, pay the balance in full.
- **Make money** – Look for small ways to cut out any daily expenditures. Are you grabbing a coffee before work? Make your own at home. Hitting the vending machine for your mid-afternoon slump? Bring an energy-boosting snack from home. Simple changes like these are almost like making money.
- **Know your weaknesses** – There are triggers for everyone when it comes to overspending. Does the end of a stressful day often find you at the mall? How about online shopping during a sleepless night? Knowing where you’re most likely to trip up and avoiding those scenarios are keys to minimizing overspending.
- **Short-term goals** – Tackling debt, student loans, or saving for retirement can seem overwhelming to many people. Instead, focus on some shorter-term goals that work toward those larger financial goals. Achieving smaller goals gives you the positive energy and momentum you need to make big dreams seem attainable.
- **Identify emotions** – Just because you might make a poor financial choice today does not make you a failure. Guilt is not a helpful emotion. Focus on what you can change, rather than beating yourself up for past financial mistakes.

Applying these simple money management tools really do add up to significant change. While money may not buy happiness, using it wisely does alleviate unnecessary strain and stress.
It is that time of year where many people review their New Year’s resolutions. Usually they sound something like “I should be slimmer, fitter, more successful, smarter or better.” The list goes on. Would it surprise you to learn that New Year’s resolutions usually don’t work? The fact is that they often have the opposite effect.

Most of us don’t feel motivated to make positive changes after hearing a list of things we don’t like about ourselves. Self-criticism does not motivate us to make positive change. In fact, there is plenty of research to support the opposite; feelings of shame and inadequacy can lead to increased stress and worse outcomes.

We need to access our positive internal coach when thinking about approaching the New Year. One way is to review what we did well in 2015 and build on those things. Sociologist Margee Kerr, PhD, from the University of Pittsburgh, suggests that we make a list of what we did well last year to affirm those things. She suggests that we complete the following statements in writing:

**IN 2015, I MADE THE FOLLOWING POSITIVE CHANGES**

- I was brave when I...
- I was strong when I...
- I challenged my fear of... when I...
- I stood up for myself when I...
- I was scared, but made it through when I...

A positive change list could include small actions such as not yelling at your teenager, asserting yourself with someone who intimidated you, going to work every day (which isn’t always easy) or avoiding McDonald’s for lunch. After you make your positive change list, print it and tape it to your mirror or anywhere you will read it over and over. This will reinforce your belief in self-efficacy, your ability to create positive change. Then, make another list for the future; A list of your current fears. Confronting your fears will help you better understand what is holding you back. So, what are you afraid of?

Here is a list that will help you understand your fears and hopefully say goodbye to them:

- I’m afraid of...
- The worst thing that could happen is...
- The chance of this actually happening is...
- I can do this to protect myself...
- I can overcome this fear by...

Recognizing our human fears, such as fear of failure, fear of being close, fear of being excluded or fear of success is the first step. Creating small steps to overcome these fears will move us forward faster than anything else. One positive step would include scheduling an EAP appointment at 408-241-7772 to gain support for overcoming fear and creating positive change in your life.

Taking steps to reduce fears and worries frees up our mind to creative positive change. And it is a kinder way to treat ourselves. If you do this regularly you will start to notice that self-compassion can shift even the strongest self-criticisms and fears. This will allow you to feel more positive about your life and yourself. Isn’t this what those resolutions are about anyway?

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**COUNTY FOCUS**

*New Year’s Resolution? Don’t Make One!*

The County of Santa Clara’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a labor-management sponsored, confidential, professional resource that provides counseling, assessment and referral services to County employees and their families who want help in solving personal and/or work-related problems.

When people are suffering from problems, it is easy to lose perspective. Life may seem confused and difficult for a time. Work performance may be negatively affected. If you have any questions or to schedule a counseling appointment, please call EAP at (408) 241-7772.
Everyone feels down in the dumps sometimes. It’s normal to be sad or tired occasionally for unknown reasons. Whether you’re feeling post-holiday blues or something more, it’s worth exploring. Depression invades every area of your life, impacting your day-to-day affairs. Maybe you can’t get out of bed in the morning or your appetite is never satisfied. Overcoming depression isn’t just about willpower; it’s about getting the professional help and treatment you need for a happy, productive life once again.

QUESTIONS TO ASK
- Are you feeling depressed or down lately?
- Have activities you once enjoyed lost your interest?
- Are you struggling to fall asleep or sleeping too much?
- Do you feel lethargic, lacking energy to get through your day?
- Has your appetite changed? Eating too much or too little?
- Are you struggling to focus on work or activities like reading?
- Do you or others notice you moving or speaking more slowly?
- Have your thoughts leaned toward death or harming yourself in any way?

If you identify with these questions and answered yes to several, you might be struggling with depression. It’s important to see a physician or mental health professional for an official diagnosis, rather than self-diagnosing. They can rule out any other possible causes for your depressed mood.

THE NEXT STEP
Having a plan is a great start for treating depression. These suggestions can help you begin your journey toward a new beginning.
- Take notes – Write down all your physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms. Even if these don’t fall under the depression category, it’s still helpful information for your physician or psychiatrist to rule out other causes.
- Give yourself grace – Experiencing depression is no one’s fault. Improvement takes time. Celebrate the small victories, and be kind to yourself during the setbacks.
- Access resources – Confidential counseling is available through your Employee Assistance Program. Help is also available through community services, religious organizations and universities. Support groups can also be invaluable.