



# EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission’s Employee Advisory Service (EAS) Newsletter contains useful articles and information for managing various well-being and work-life issues in order to create a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace. EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance.



## UPCOMING WEBINAR      WHAT’S INSIDE

### Advanced Communication Skills that Foster Collaboration & Teamwork

**About this webinar:**  
This important presentation will discuss the key differences between being a manager and a leader and provide several strategies for becoming more of a leader on a day to day basis. The topics to be covered will include core leadership goals, the mindset of effective leaders, the importance of using a collaborative approach, and methods for motivating your team.

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**Date:** January 26, 2023  
**Time:** 2:00 - 3:00 PM

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# Advanced Communication Skills that Foster Collaboration & Teamwork: An Overview

Communication skills are important in both your day-to-day personal and work life. They also happen to be the number one predictor of career success, as well as a main reason for job satisfaction, key to managing stress and staying healthy, and crucial to great teamwork and customer satisfaction.

Therefore, as we start a new year, a focus on evolving your interpersonal communication skills may be a beneficial New Year's resolution.

This article outlines six advanced communication skills that are key to learning to foster collaboration and teamwork at work.



## Proactively get to know people

In any interpersonal interaction, it is important for the communication to be sincere. You should prioritize getting to know the person/people with whom you are working. Take an interest in them as people by asking questions about their likes, dislikes, opinions, and feelings. Whenever possible, invest time in bonding and small talk before moving on to the business conversation. Get to know what's important to them beyond work.

## Be Sensitive to Interpersonal Differences

Your workplace is comprised of a diverse group of employees and managers. Therefore, it is important to remain aware of cultural, personality, and/or generational differences that could impact your communication with each person. Try to communicate in a way that is comfortable for both people and listen patiently to gain understanding.

## Be a Collaborator

It is important to acknowledge that we don't know it all. Each of us needs the opinions of other people in order to develop ideas and solutions. Therefore, actively solicit the ideas, opinions, and suggestions of others on your team and proactively look for opportunities to collaborate through brainstorming meetings, input requests, and surveys.

## Be Agreeable & Not Easy to Offend

Although we each have our own opinions and expertise, coming across as approachable and as someone who is easy to get along with is key to developing collaboration and teamwork among your coworkers and management. For example, being open to working together to brainstorm a problem without taking things personally or becoming defensive in order to develop a resolution.

## Manage Your Stress & Emotions

Being able to manage your stress and emotions will help you to remain calm and collected in your interactions with others. Be aware of your emotional state. If you're upset, angry, or stressed, be cautious in your interactions so you don't come across as disengaged or frustrated. If you're overly stressed or emotional, put off the conversation if possible for a moment when you are feeling calmer and have better clarity and ability to effectively communicate.

## Disagree Agreeably

Of course, there will be times when there is conflict. Everyone can't agree all of the time. However, the goal to approaching conflict is to respond calmly instead of reacting emotionally or defensively. Always be respectful of the other person's opinion even if you don't agree and remember, it's not always what you say, it's how you say it.



# New Year, New You!

## Planning a Successful Year with Effective Goal Setting

### Why Set Goals?

Science has shown that goal setting is the most effective performance-enhancing strategy available.

### How it Works

- It helps in the discovery of new strategies and techniques. “Without goals, and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination.”—*Fitzhugh Dodson, Author*
- Goals direct attention and energy on the most important thing. “Man is a goal-seeking animal. His life only has meaning if he is reaching out and striving for his goal.”—*Aristotle, Philosopher*
- Setting goals helps sustain effort and motivation by focusing on short-term objectives. “I learned that if you want to make it bad enough, no matter how bad it is, you can make it.”—*Gale Sayers, NFL Hall of Famer*
- Goals provide a measure to evaluate progress and success. “You measure the size of the accomplishment by the obstacles you had to overcome to reach your goals.”—*Booker T. Washington, Civil Rights Leader*

### Define Your Goal-Setting Mission

This article will assist you with being successful and understanding the importance of goal setting, and it will guide you through the steps of setting effective and meaningful goals.

Goal setting is a process that builds from figuring out what you want to accomplish and continues to guide how you get there. The steps in the goal-setting process encourage action and commitment for pursuing meaningful goals in many areas of your life, whether physical, social, spiritual, emotional, family, or otherwise:

- Understand the importance of setting meaningful and relevant goals.
- Understand the steps involved in setting meaningful and relevant goals.
- Take time to reflect on what values and dreams are important to you.
- Put effective goal setting into practice.
- Understand the importance of spending time thinking about and seeing yourself accomplishing your goals.



### Five Dimensions of Strength

Five key dimensions will serve as anchors to support your individual achievement throughout this planning process. These are as follows. (Note: Use them as a guide only; feel free to adapt them to reflect your own personal goals.)

#### Physical

Perform and excel in physical activities that require aerobic fitness, endurance, strength, healthy body composition, and flexibility derived through exercise, nutrition, and training.

#### Emotional

Approach life's challenges in a positive, optimistic way by demonstrating self-control, stamina, and good character with your choices and actions.

#### Social

Develop and maintain trusted, valued relationships and friendships that are personally fulfilling and foster good communication, including a comfortable exchange of ideas, views, and experiences.

#### Family

Aim to be part of a family unit that is safe, supportive, and loving, and provides the resources needed for all members to live in a healthy and secure environment. (Note that “family unit” can be expanded beyond a traditional family to include any network that counts as family to you.)

#### Spiritual

Spirituality refers to one's purpose, core values, beliefs, identity, and life vision. These elements, which define the essence of a person, enable one to build inner strength, make meaning of experiences, behave ethically, persevere through challenges, and be resilient when faced with adversity. An individual's spirituality draws upon personal, philosophical, psychological, and/or religious teachings, and forms the basis of the person's character.



## Steps for Setting Effective Goals

Goal setting is a process that builds upon itself. The process below encourages action and constantly changes as you change. Once you set a goal it is not set in stone; you can always come back and reassess or change your goals. True goal setting is a dynamic and fluid process that should continue throughout your life.

**Step 1:** Define your dream. These are your outcome goals.

**Step 2:** Know where you are right now.

**Step 3:** Decide what you need to develop. These are your priorities.

**Step 4:** Make a plan for steady improvement. Include actions and affirmations.

**Step 5:** Set and pursue short-term goals. These are your daily to-dos.

**Step 6:** Commit yourself completely. What is your commitment strategy?

**Step 7:** Continually monitor your progress. Ask yourself questions like these:

- Did you accomplish your daily goals? Take pride in these accomplishments.
- If not, what obstacles did you face? Can you plan ahead for those obstacles in the next day or week?
- Do any of your priorities or daily actions need to be adjusted? Setting and achieving goals is an ongoing process, so take time to enjoy the journey.



This goal-planning program is like a chain that becomes stronger with each link. Your actions mobilize effort on an immediate and regular basis to strengthen your priority areas, and your affirmations create a powerful attitude for accomplishing these behaviors. As each priority area improves, you move closer to reaching your outcome goal. The chances of success decrease when you set only one type of goal in only one dimension. Try to focus on the five dimensions of strength: family, social, spiritual, emotional, and physical. Tie together and encompass your entire life to get you to where you want to go.



## EXPERIENCING POST-HOLIDAY BLUES?

Call EAS to schedule a  
confidential appointment.

P: 1-866-327-9133

# Counseling Isn't For Me...Or Is It?

Many people have preconceived ideas about counseling, but hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life have successfully received assistance from a counselor at some point in their lives. Life is full of challenges, including pressures at work, financial worries, family problems, and personal issues. Even with support from family and friends, it can sometimes be helpful to talk with an independent counselor who can help you work out what's right for you, in an empathic and confidential setting.

Here are some of the common myths surrounding counseling.



## **Myth: Counseling is only for people with serious mental health issues.**

Reality: Not true! Many people attend counseling when they come to a point in their lives when nothing seems to be seriously wrong, but they don't know which way to turn next. Some people access counseling when simply struggling with a specific situation or problem in their life. Others use it as a means of personal or professional development.

## **Myth: Only weak people who can't cope with life seek counseling.**

Reality: The opposite is actually true! Sometimes life throws you a curveball that you can find difficult to manage on your own. It takes inner strength to acknowledge that there is something that you could benefit from addressing in counseling. It takes self-awareness to recognize this, and courage to be willing to proactively deal with the challenges you are facing.

## **Myth: Counseling is only for serious problems.**

Reality: While counseling can help people facing serious issues, most people who access counseling through their Employee Assistance Program (EAP)/EAS do so for assistance with everyday issues such as stress, anxiety, or work-life balance. You don't have to wait until things spiral out of control before seeking support; counseling can help nip things in the bud before things become too serious.

## **Myth: How can a stranger possibly help?**

Reality: Discussing your concerns with an impartial professional is one of the reasons that counseling is so effective. Counselors have the training and skills to provide you with unbiased insights and support, which may help you speak more openly about your situation without fear of being judged or criticized. This can then free you up to make the decision that's right for you. Counseling can often give you a fresh perspective, which can be extremely motivating.





**Myth: Counselors just sit there and never say anything.**

Reality: This is a stereotypical depiction of counseling and is far from the reality. Counselors are proactive and engaged in the two-way counseling process to help you focus on what you want to achieve.

**Myth: Counseling just goes on and on.**

Reality: The counseling offered through your EAP/EAS is based on a short-term, focused model. This enables you to discuss the problems you're facing, set a goal or focus to give you direction, and develop strategies and skills to improve your current situation. Counseling sessions last around 50 minutes and are generally on a weekly basis until you have attended the agreed number of sessions required to achieve your goal or focus.



**Myth: Everyone at work will know I'm seeing a counselor.**

Reality: The only person who will know you are seeing a counselor is you. No one at your workplace will even know that you have accessed your EAP/EAS unless you tell them. Your counselors are bound by a code of ethics and work within their confidentiality guidelines, which your EAP/EAS strictly adheres to. This would be explained to you fully when you contact the service and prior to your starting any counseling.

**Myth: A counselor will fix my problems for me.**

Reality: A counselor will work with you to help you work through the challenges you face, but his or her role isn't to fix things or do it for you. The counselor will listen, guide, support, and ensure you stay focused. He or she can help you identify and draw on your own resources, as well as learn others. Ultimately this can enable you to make the right choices and decisions in a safe and supportive environment. The counseling process can help you feel more empowered and in control of your life by talking through situations, feelings, or concerns that might otherwise be keeping you feeling stuck, helpless, angry, or frustrated.

**Myth: I've tried counseling before, and it doesn't work.**

Reality: There are a number of reasons that may have led you to believe this, but as long as you are open to the counseling process, you can have a different and more positive experience this time around. On rare occasions, the fit between a person and a counselor might not be right, and that is one of the reasons why when you contact your EAP/EAS, a full assessment of your needs will be completed from the very start.

