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

Advanced Strategies for Managing Time, Stress, and Relationships

About the Webinar:
This important session is designed to help individuals to enhance both their personal and interpersonal success in the workplace. The topics to be discussed will include the keys to planning and prioritizing time, effective methods for coping with and managing stress, and several core communication skills that help to strengthen relationships, work collaboratively with diverse clients and co-workers, and better handle difficult conversations and conflict.

Date: April 27, 2023
Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

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5 Tips for Building Relationships at Work

Social support at work is one of the most important factors that contribute to satisfaction in the workplace, which can impact your general health and happiness. A close and friendly relationship with your coworkers can also help you stay dedicated to your job. As with most friendships, you can follow a few key steps to strengthen your relationships with your colleagues and encourage a better working environment for your team. In this article, we'll review how to build and maintain great work relationships.

Why are strong work relationships important?

When you build strong relationships with your coworkers, you're helping to encourage an open and collaborative environment for everyone on the team. This often leads to higher morale, which promotes productivity and more effective communication. Also, you may find that good relationships with your coworkers simply improves your work experience in general. Lower stress levels and greater enjoyment of your work can benefit everyone on your team.

How to build relationships at work
Follow these steps to build and develop strong relationships with your coworkers:

- Develop trust with your colleagues.
- Maintain consistent communication.
- Show appreciation and respect for others.
- Speak well of your team members.
- Be positive.

1. Develop trust with your colleagues
Be responsible for your work assignments and deadlines. Develop trust with and among colleagues with fair and honest commitments. Apologize if you can't complete your obligations on time, and do your best to find a solution. These steps will help you demonstrate that you are a responsible and reliable person.

When people trust you, they will be more likely to value your experience, judgment and opinions. Hard work, honesty and a positive professional demeanor are traits that will take you a long way in your career, and they will help you make an impact in any new role. If coworkers trust one another, they're more likely to make productive suggestions and share ideas during meetings.

2. Maintain consistent communication
One key factor in establishing a good relationship is communication on a daily basis, whether it is online or in person. Many interpersonal problems in the workplace can be solved with open and honest communication. To build a successful relationship, take care to show interest in your conversations and listen carefully to other people's opinions. You can adjust and level your conversation with the person you are speaking with and watch for important nonverbal communication signs.

Sharing about the things you do at work with your colleagues helps you build stronger bonds and relationships. Ask questions to better understand your coworker's viewpoints, or give them a chance to express their opinions by listening carefully. To be more productive and happy in the workplace, it is crucial to learn how to diplomatically communicate and acquire some skills for successful conflict resolutions. If any conflicts happen between you and your coworker, take the time to calmly discuss the issue and come to a solution that benefits both of you. This will help you ensure a more comfortable working environment in the future.

4. Speak well of your team members

If you ever speak about a coworker, always try to keep your comments positive. Gossip tends to travel quickly in the workplace, but the praise you give someone else can spread just as fast. When you speak highly of others, you can help establish yourself as a positive and supportive team member. If you have an issue with one of your coworkers, it will be far more productive to speak with them alone and try to resolve the issue peacefully.

5. Be positive

A key part of building healthy relationships is to retain a positive attitude towards your coworkers. Team members tend to experience increased motivation and satisfaction in the workplace when they're confident that they're part of a team. This affects an employee's desire to stay in the team and contributes towards the implementation of the work tasks.

People who understand each other and feel comfortable with one another are more likely to have a positive attitude and maintain a good mood at work. People function better when they are in the company of relaxed and satisfied peers. Congratulate colleagues whenever they've accomplished a goal. Such gestures will help you show your coworkers that you value them, and it can lead to stronger relationships.

Tips for building strong work relationships
Here are some additional tips to help you foster stronger relationships with your coworkers:

- Find opportunities to listen to others. Most people will be glad to tell you about their day if you give them the chance. If you listen well and respond appropriately, you can help your coworkers quickly build their trust in you.

- Suggest activities outside of work. You may find that bonding with colleagues outside of the workplace can help accelerate the growth of your relationship. When you learn about your team members' interests and hobbies, you may find it easier to appreciate them as friends instead of just coworkers.

- Maintain your commitments. If you promise a coworker that you'll finish a project or work on a presentation, make sure to follow through on time. If you discover that you won't be able to finish a commitment you made, however, show your colleague that you still respect them and care about their needs by giving them plenty of notice.

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Source: Indeed. (2022, July). 5 Tips for Building Relationships at Work. Retrieved March 29,2023, from https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/building-relationships-at-work

Achieve a Better Balance in Your Life

At times, short-term or permanent changes caused by family situations can make it difficult to find a balance between work and home duties. Changes in your child's school schedule, caring for an older adult, or expanding your family can be overwhelming, but small adjustments to your daily routine can help you regain the balance you lack.

Slow down.
Life is simply too short, so don't let things pass by you in a blur. Take steps to stop and enjoy the things and people around you. Don't make plans for every evening or weekend, and find some ways to distance yourself from the things that are causing you the most stress.

Learn to manage your time.
Avoid procrastination. For many people, most of the stress they feel comes from simply being disorganized and procrastinating. Learn to set more realistic goals and deadlines, and then stick to them. You'll find that not only are you less stressed, but your work will be better.

Share the load.
Even though you may sometimes feel you are the only one capable of doing something, it's usually not the case. Get your partner or other family members to help you with all your personal and family responsibilities. Taking care of the household, children, or parents should not be the responsibility of just one person.

Let things go don't sweat the small stuff.
It's simpler said than done, but learn to let things go once in a while. So what if the dishes don't get washed every day or that the house doesn't get vacuumed every week? Learn to recognize the things that don't really have much impact in your life, and allow yourself to let them go and then not beat yourself up for doing so.

Explore your options.
If you are feeling overwhelmed with your family responsibilities, get help if you can afford it, or enlist family members and friends for some tasks. Find a sitter for your children, explore options for aging parents, and seek counseling for yourself. In many cases, you have options, but you need to take the time to find them.

Talk to your employer.
Find out if there is a way of modifying your employment to better handle your current situation. These changes might include flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, or part-time employment, or just a temporary adjustment in your job duties.

Take charge.
Sometimes it's easier for you to allow yourself to feel overwhelmed rather than to take charge and develop a prioritized list of things that need to get done. You need to buck the trend. Develop a list. Set priorities. Then enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your list.

Simplify.
It seems human nature for just about everyone to take on too many tasks and responsibilities, to try to do too much, and to own too much. Find a way to simplify your life. Change your lifestyle. Learn to say no and to ask for help. Get rid of the clutter and baggage in your house and your life.

In the end, the key word is balance. You need to find the right balance that works for you. Celebrate your successes, and don't dwell on your failures. Life is a process, and so is striving for balance in your life.

Opening Up Appropriately

You probably know the importance of being a good listener, but you may not realize that being a good talker is just as critical to your relationships at work, at home, and with your friends.

A primary way to build rapport and connect with people is a skill called self-disclosure—the ability to tell people about yourself in a way that lets them to get to know you easily and naturally. Done appropriately, self-disclosure enhances trust and intimacy in your relationships.

Telling people about yourself also can boost your own self-esteem and personal development. Describing your values, goals, and dreams leads you to define them in terms that others can understand—and that you can act on.

It can be intimidating to tell people how you feel and think, and what you want out of life or a relationship. But you'll probably find that most people will accept you for who you are. In any case, it's up to you to choose what information to disclose.

Different relationships call for different levels of self-disclosure.
Consider these four levels of appropriate self-disclosure, so you'll feel comfortable telling people about yourself in professional, social and personal situations.

Level 1: Answering Ritual Questions

Ritual questions are often used in greetings such as, "How are you?" "How have you been?" or "How's the family?" Brief responses such as "Great!" "Okay" or even "Not so good" usually result in brief exchanges. However, if you disclose additional information in your response, the other person may pick up on it and ask a follow-up question.

Here are two examples:

- Ritual question: "How are you?"
- Additional information: "Great. I'm going on vacation next week."
- Follow-up response: "Oh really? Where are you going?"
- Ritual question: "How are you?"
- Additional information: "Not bad. I'm trying to figure out what to cook for dinner tonight."
- Follow-up response: "Do you want a good soup recipe that's easy to make?"

Try to remember not to disclose too much negative information in response to a ritual question. This usually dampens conversation and discourages future contact, particularly between people who haven't established a rapport.

Level 2: Disclosing Your Background and Preferences

This medium level of disclosure sets up the building blocks of relationships. Telling people about your family background, where you're from, your occupation, hobbies, marital status, some of your personal likes and dislikes, and the like paints a more specific picture that people can relate and respond to.

Perhaps you're worried that people will jump to conclusions or stereotypes about you, based on the limited information you share at this stage.
If so, consider the following:

- While self-disclosure requires taking a risk, it's necessary to build trust in a relationship.

- Not disclosing basic information about yourself suggests that you've got something to hide—and perhaps you do. Remember that it's up to you to decide what you tell people about yourself. You're entitled to omit sensitive or personal information, or save it for later.

- Some people may stereotype you based on what you tell them. The only thing you can do about that is to present more specific details, to paint a more accurate picture of who you really are.

Here are some examples of disclosing your background and preferences:

- "I was raised in a small town in Wyoming, but I've always been a city-person at heart."
- "I work in an office to pay the rent, but in my spare time I write short stories and enjoy cooking."
- "I enjoy traveling, reading, and college football and basketball."
- "My kids are grown. I'm divorced, living on my own, and enjoying every minute it!"

Level 3: Discussing Your Opinions and Values

At this level of disclosure, you reveal more of your views, personal attitudes, and experiences in politics, religion, money, health, hopes, goals, and relationships. These types of self- disclosures require more risk-taking and mutual trust. That's because most people have strong, sensitive and often differing views in these areas. You may find that you agree in some of these areas and disagree in others.

You can disclose your values by talking about some of your actions. Describing experiences that you're proud of often helps people see you in a positive light and shows them what's important to you.

Here are some examples:

- "I volunteer at the children's hospital."
- "I gave up a steady paycheck to go into business for myself."
- "I support our local Humane Society."

On the other hand, you can reveal your opinions by making direct statements, such as

- "I really feel strongly about..."
- "In my opinion..."

Level 4: Expressing Your Feelings

This high level of disclosure is often the most difficult and risky—yet often the most rewarding, too. Revealing your feelings about your close relationships, health, emotions, fears, desires, failures or frailties requires the greatest amount of trust and rapport. At the same time, when people share their feelings, the results frequently are deeper friendships and greater intimacy.

To reveal your feelings, you can say things such as

- "I'm happy (or sad, angry, elated, relieved, worried, thrilled, disappointed, etc.) about..."
- "I'm upset, and I want to tell you why."
- "I want to tell you how I feel about..."

A note of caution: In the area of romance, the more intense your feelings are, the more risky it may be to reveal them, because your feelings may not be mutual or even welcome. And if your feelings are inappropriate, or offered too early, revealing them may permanently damage the relationship.

Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some answers to questions people typically ask about self-disclosure:

My friend says I reveal too much personal information, especially to people I don't know that well. I say I'm just being honest. What do you say?

Telling near-strangers more than they want to know—about such things as your broken home, peptic ulcer, lousy love life—may be honest, but the results are predictable: "Check, please!"

Revealing too much personal information can scare people away. Remember the last person you met who launched into his life story after knowing you for five minutes? Most people feel it's a bit too much to take it all in.

On the other hand, if you reveal your background and some basic information a little at a time, people will feel more comfortable talking and getting to know you.

I'm not particularly anxious to go into the details of my childhood when I talk with people I don't know well, since it wasn't happy. How can I keep that part of my life private without sounding like I'm trying to hide something?
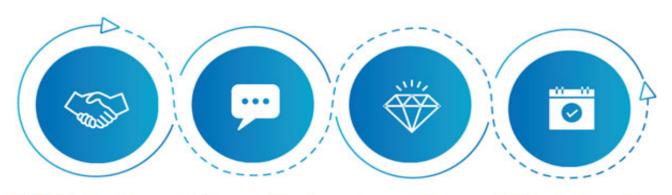
When you're exchanging background information with someone, glossing over certain periods of your life can send the message that the topic is sensitive and off-limits, at least for the time being. For example, you might say, "My family moved around a lot and it wasn't really a great time for me. But when I turned 20, I got a fresh start and moved to....", or "I got a job at ...," or "I became really interested in..."

I'm a recovering alcoholic. Is this kind of information okay to share with a coworker?

The decision to disclose a personal problem such as substance abuse to a coworker depends on your view of the person's character and the relationship.

If the coworker likes to gossip, for example, your self-disclosure could end up being a topic of conversation at the water cooler. On the other hand, if you've already established a foundation of trust, then disclosing it could expand your friendship. If you're not sure, keep this information to yourself.

Build Relationships   **Understand Needs**   **Create Value**   **Ask for the Commitment**

Your Employee Advisory Service

Employee Advisory Service (EAS) is a program designed to help employees and their immediate family members with personal, family or work-related issues that may adversely impact the employee's work performance.

EAS provides confidential assessment, counseling, and referral services and helps to restore the health and productivity of employees and the workplace as a whole. Problems are addressed in the quickest, least restrictive, and most convenient manner, while maximizing confidentiality and quality.

EAS can assist with:

- Work life Balance
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Grief Counseling
- Anger Management
- Critical Incident Stress
- Stress Management
- Substance Abuse
- Family Issues
- ob Performance Issues

SERVICE REQUESTS / MANAGEMENT REFERRALS   *Click Here*

Your confidentiality is protected by state and federal law and regulations. All of the services offered are guided by professional and ethical standards. EAS staff may not release details of your need for services without your prior written consent. Information concerning the date and time of your appointments and referrals can be released to your Human Resource Office.

EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE (EAS)
STATE OF NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
1-866-327-9133
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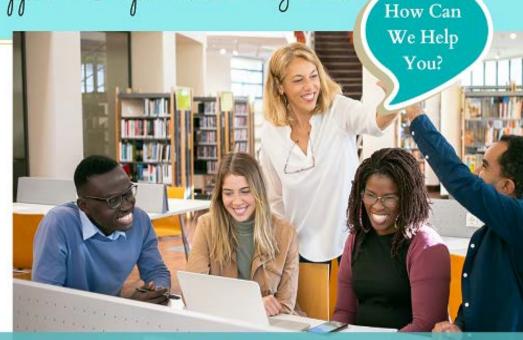How Can We Help You?

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