

Employee Advisory Service Newsletter

September 2016

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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

How to Make the Grade this School Year

Start talking in mid-summer about the upcoming school year. Listen closely for fears or concerns, advises Dr. Amie Duncan of Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

"It is important that parents listen to and respond to their child's potential anxieties about the new school year, especially if they are making a big transition such as from an elementary school to a middle school. It is perfectly normal to experience first day jitters," she said. These feelings can be relieved with some of these suggestions.

Preschoolers and kindergartners need to know what will happen.

- Visit the school together. Let them play on the playground, walk through the classroom, and meet new teachers.
- Go on a school shopping trip for a backpack and supplies. Designate a school prep area at home for supplies and lunchboxes.
- Tuck a small family picture in a backpack or lunch.
- Establish a school bed and wake-up routine 4 to 6 weeks before school starts.
- Be positive and excited for the new school year.

Elementary and middle-school children will need to adjust to new beginnings.

- Expect that your children may want trendy or "cool" school supplies.
- Take a quick trip to school before classes start to help locate classrooms, lockers, the cafeteria, and the bus drop-off location. Attend the orientation together.
- Right from the start, help your child get and stay organized by having a designated area to store their backpack and having a distraction-free area to complete homework.
- Talk to your child about high-risk behaviors, such as drinking, drug use, and sexual activity. Have this talk early and often.
- Encourage your child's participation in at least one extracurricular activity or school club of their choice.
- Don't hesitate to make an appointment with the school counselor right away if you have concerns about how your child is adjusting to school. Keep the lines of communication open.

High schoolers need and thrive on positive reinforcement.

- Help your teen set realistic goals on how to earn the best grades and complete assignments.
- Stay organized. Buy a daily planner and teach the teen how to use it correctly or teach them how to organize their schedule with a tablet computer or laptop.
- Encourage your teen to get involved in at least one extracurricular activity or sport because it will help them meet people.
- Continue to support and encourage good study habits with regular homework/study times. Look hard for opportunities to offer positive reinforcement.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Ask questions about what's going on in your child's life. (Use open-ended questions, rather than those that require only a "yes" or "no" response). Listen closely when the child expresses what is happening in their life.
- Stay in the center of your child's school life and you will know what is going on, and how things are going.

Health-e headlines™

Core Exercises: Why You Should Strengthen your Core



Core exercises are an important part of a well-rounded fitness program. Aside from occasional situps and pushups, however, core exercises are often neglected. Still, it pays to get your core muscles — the muscles around your trunk and pelvis — in better shape. Read on to find out why.

Core exercises improve your balance and stability

Core exercises train the muscles in your pelvis, lower back, hips and abdomen to work in harmony. This leads to better balance and stability, whether on the playing field or in daily activities. In fact, most sports and other physical activities depend on stable core muscles.

Core exercises don't require specialized equipment or a gym membership

Any exercise that involves the use of your abdominal and back muscles in coordinated fashion counts as a core exercise. For example, using free weights in a manner that involves maintaining a stable trunk can train and strengthen several of your muscles, including your core muscles. You may also try several specific core exercises to stabilize and strengthen your core.

A bridge is a classic core exercise. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Keep your back in a neutral position, not arched and not pressed into the floor. Avoid tilting your hips. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Raise your hips off the floor until your hips are aligned with your knees and shoulders. Hold the position for as long as you can without breaking your form.

Core exercises can help tone your abs

Want more-defined abdominal muscles? Core exercises are important. Although it takes aerobic activity to burn abdominal fat, core exercises can strengthen and tone the underlying muscles.

Strong core muscles make it easier to do most physical activities

Strong core muscles make it easier to do everything from swinging a golf club to getting a glass from the top shelf or bending down to tie your shoes. Weak core muscles leave you susceptible to poor posture, lower back pain and muscle injuries.

Core exercises can help you reach your fitness goals

Aerobic exercise and muscular fitness are the primary elements of most fitness programs. But to have a well-rounded fitness program, consider including core exercises in the mix as well. Whether you're a novice taking the first steps toward fitness or a committed fitness fanatic hoping to optimize your results, a well-rounded fitness program is the best way to reach your fitness goals.

Source: https://www.advantageengagement.com/p_content_detail.php?id_division=d04&id_

Clean Hands Save Lives

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps people can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It is best to wash your hands with soap and clean, running water for 20 seconds.

Health-e headlines™

20-20-20 Eye Health

Work at a computer?

Every 20 minutes, look about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds to reduce eyestrain, recommends the NIH National Eye Institute.

Health-e headlines™

Take a Free Mental Health Screening

Stressed? Take a free anonymous mental health screening at:

<http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NJEAS>

If you are struggling with stress or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact the EAS.



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Addictions and Emotions

People with addictions may also need to address mental health issues. Most people who have an addiction problem also have some sort of emotional problem. It's called dual diagnosis, meaning two problems at once.

A coexisting emotional problem can make it difficult to battle an addiction, especially if you're doing it on your own. That's why the two issues should be treated at the same time. It's called dual recovery and it offers real hope.

In some treatment programs, you may still hear the message that you need to get clean before you can work on an emotional problem, but that often doesn't work. Getting help for an emotional problem can actually boost your chances of recovery from addiction. For instance, if you're depressed and addicted, proper treatment for both can help you break the link between feeling sad and using substances.

You also may have heard that using prescription medication, such as an antidepressant, is as bad as abusing a substance. But that's false, too. Such medications don't make you high; they're delivered in a controlled way and are designed to help you feel normal and stable.

Steps to Take

If you suspect you might have an emotional problem, a good first step is to learn more about it through research. To determine if you have a mental health problem, you'll need a professional evaluation. You don't have to take medication or go to therapy if you feel uncomfortable with either of those options. Just finding out more may be helpful.

Some people worry that a diagnosis will mean they're "crazy," or mistakenly believe that they'll be taken to a hospital against their will. They may be afraid of medication or think therapy is only for weak people. These are misconceptions. If it turns out that you have an emotional problem, you can turn to new medications, psychotherapies, self-help groups, and books.

You may wonder which came first—the addiction or the mental problem. But experts say answering that question isn't as important as following this rule: If you have both, treat both.

Upcoming Webinar Reminders

Getting to Know Your Employee Advisory Service

A series of brief online sessions designed to inform New Jersey State Employees about the services available to them through the Employee Advisory Service

August Webinar:
EAS- New Resources for Employees and Their Families

Wednesday, August 31st
10:00 – 10:30 AM

Register here:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4722573241939277314>

Fall Employee Webinar Series- The Keys to Managing Your Stress

Stress & Its Impact on Your Health – A practical look at the effect stress has on individuals mentally and physically, along with helpful strategies for listening to internal alarm systems and proactively implementing stress management techniques that can improve health, productivity and life satisfaction.

Thursday, Sept. 15th
2:00-3:00 PM

Register here:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6380744528656597507>



Addictions and Emotions continued...

Common Emotional Problems

Here are some common problems that addicted people may have:

- *Depression*: Feeling down and blue and being unable to shake loose from it.
- *Post-Traumatic Stress*: After surviving or witnessing a physically harmful experience, such as a rape, assault, or child abuse, you keep reliving it in your mind.
- *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder*: You feel the need to keep doing some action over and over, such as hand-washing or checking that you turned off the stove.
- *Generalized Anxiety*: Trouble with nerves, which may feel like continual worrying; or frequent physical problems, such as stomach upset.
- *Phobia*: Your intense fear of something causes significant problems in your life. It might be snakes, flying, crowds, or blood, for example.
- *Eating Disorder*: You use food to cope with emotional pain. You may do this by bingeing and purging (eating large amounts, then forcing yourself to throw up) or not eating enough.
- *Personality Disorder*: You relate to others in ways that cause serious problems, which can include repeated criminal behavior, extreme dependence on others, or an inability to sustain friendships.
- Everyone has some emotional issues at times, but having a disorder means you have a serious, ongoing problem that interferes with living a normal life.

How to Get Help

There are many ways to get help. Contact the Employee Advisory Service (EAS) provided to you as a benefit by your employer. The EAS offers counseling, as well as a free mental health screening at <http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NJEAS>. In your community, call a mental health center or clinic (try the Yellow Pages for listings under “mental health”). Several national nonprofit organizations, including the National Institute of Mental Health, can provide information about screenings and referrals.

The most important thing to know is that you have choices. You can take medication, get therapy, or join a self-help group. Just learning about an emotional problem may be helpful, and you can decide from there if you want to do more.

If you’re already dealing with an addiction, you may not want to hear that you have another problem to deal with. But some dually diagnosed people actually feel a sense of relief to finally get an accurate diagnosis that puts them on the path to a true and lasting recovery.

For More Information

National Institute of Mental Health
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

National Mental Health Information Center (SAMHSA)
<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

Source: Najavits, L. (Reviewed 2016). Addictions and emotions. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

Clinician's Corner..

Monthly Advice from the EAS Clinical Team

Family Addiction



If you are one of the millions of Americans dealing with a family member who struggles with addiction, you may ironically feel very alone. While major advances have been made in the identification and treatment of addictive disease, these issues unfortunately continue to carry such negative stigma. Because of this, many family members feel the need to keep their concerns a secret as opposed to reach out for professional or community help.

The experience of being a family member of someone with an addiction can include a whole host of uncomfortable experiences. It is very common for family members to feel anger towards their loved one for “making a choice to continue using.” They may also feel excessive guilt, shame, grief for the loss of their “healthy” family member, depression, hopelessness, helplessness and/or anxiety. Or, loved ones can also find themselves enabling the addictive behaviors to avoid arguments and keep things in balance. In any case, family members of persons suffering from addiction often become stuck in unhealthy patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

Addiction is such a complicated illness because it has biological, social, emotional, and behavioral components, all of which create a vicious cycle that often feels as if it can never be broken. While out of love and good intentions, family members can easily get lost in the cycle by trying to force their loved one to change. Sadly, addiction cannot be changed overnight, or simply at the request of a family member. Therefore, the most important thing you can do if you have a family member with an addiction is to care for yourself.

Even though it may seem counter intuitive, getting help starts with you. There are so many organizations, locally and nationally, that can provide you with education about all of the layers of addiction. In addition to education, you may consider joining a support group where you can meet other people who are in exactly the same boat. Individual counseling may also be a helpful tool for family members to process their feelings, develop goals, and feel more supported. Want to learn more? The Employee Advisory Service is available to help.