

BALANCE

NEWSLETTER

Information and resources to support a healthier, more balanced life.

Volume 28, Issue 2



Welcome to *Balance*, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) newsletter. *Balance* highlights important topics related to personal and professional wellness, offering tips and resources for managing life's challenges. Your EAP is a confidential, free resource designed to help you navigate a variety of issues. If any of these topics resonate with you, consider reaching out to the EAP for further information, including referrals to local EAP counselors.

HOW HABIT STACKING MAKES CHANGE EASIER

If you want to build a new habit but struggle to stay consistent, try “habit stacking.” Habit stacking is a simple method that pairs a new behavior with something you already do automatically. For example, after you brush your teeth, spend two minutes tidying one area of your room. After you log into your computer, stand up and do 10 squats or a short stretch. Linking habits this way helps your brain form quicker associations, making new routines feel more natural and less overwhelming. Over time, small, stacked habits can lead to meaningful improvements in energy, organization, and well-being. To learn more about this technique, explore James Clear’s overview of habit formation: <https://jamesclear.com/habit-stacking>.

Reference: <https://jamesclear.com/habit-stacking>

DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT ALCOHOL ADDICTION

Myths and misconceptions still fuel stigma about alcoholism (now called “alcohol use disorder” or AUD). Are you surprised by any of these myths?

1. *Only ‘heavy drinkers’ develop alcohol use disorders.* **Fact:** Moderate drinkers can experience health problems related to alcohol, such as liver disease, high blood pressure, and certain cancers.
2. *AUD is a choice.* **Fact:** People do make the choice to drink, but they do not choose to become addicted, which is a disease.
3. *AUD only affects adults.* **Fact:** Teenage-only alcoholism treatment programs have existed for decades.
4. *You can cure an AUD by going cold turkey.* **Fact:** Delayed withdrawal symptoms can occur weeks, months, or years after the last drink, and they often explain relapse. If you think you or a loved one is dealing with an AUD, your EAP can help.

Reference: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>

SUPPORTING GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief doesn’t fit into neat stages or follow a precise timeline, and it doesn’t only happen after the loss of a loved one. People may grieve the loss of relationships, health, routines, or significant life changes. Grief



can affect concentration, energy, and mood often in unexpected ways. Allowing yourself space to process emotions and seeking support can help you move forward while honoring your experience. The following are practical ways to support yourself through grief:

- **Acknowledge your feelings** – It’s okay to feel sadness, anger, confusion, or relief. Naming your emotions can help you process them.
- **Create small routines** – Maintaining daily structure, even in simple ways, can provide stability and comfort.
- **Stay connected** – Reach out to trusted friends, family, or support groups; sharing memories or talking about your experience can be healing.
- **Give yourself permission to rest** – Grief is exhausting. Rest, sleep, and gentle self-care are essential.
- **Consider grief journaling** – Write down one thought or memory about your loss each day. You don’t need to structure it, just letting it out on paper can help process complex emotions.
- **Seek professional support** – Your EAP provides confidential counseling for grief and loss. Speaking with a trained professional can help you navigate complex emotions and find coping strategies that work for you.

Reference: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/related_grief_reactions.asp

WHEN STRESS BECOMES MORE THAN “JUST STRESS”

Everyone experiences stress, but when it starts affecting sleep, mood, concentration, or relationships, it may be time to pause and check in with yourself. Ongoing stress can show up as irritability, headaches, constant fatigue, or feeling overwhelmed by everyday tasks. The earlier you address it, the easier it is to manage. Talking with a counselor can help you sort through stressors, build coping

strategies, and regain a sense of balance.

Reference: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>

MINDFULNESS IN EVERYDAY MOMENTS

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment with intention and without judgment. It helps reduce stress, improve focus, and create a greater sense of calm by bringing your attention out of autopilot and into what’s happening right now. Mindfulness practice doesn’t require long meditation. Small moments of awareness throughout the day can be just as effective.

Try pausing for 30 seconds to notice your breath before opening your email, taking a mindful walk by paying attention to sounds, colors, and movement around you, or bringing awareness to everyday routines like noticing the sensation of water as you wash your hands, the taste and texture of your food while eating, or the feel of your toothbrush in your mouth. These moments of present attention help calm the nervous system and improve focus, especially during stressful periods. For a beginner-friendly overview, visit Mindful.org’s “Getting Started” guide: <https://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>.

Reference: <https://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>

QUICK TIP: TRY A ONE-MINUTE RESET

Feeling tense or overwhelmed? Try this quick reset to help you refocus:

- Take three slow breaths (try counting in for 4 and out for 7)
- Drop your shoulders and unclench your jaw
- Ask yourself, “What’s the next small step I can take?”



SUPPORTING KIDS THROUGH BIG EMOTIONS

Children and teens don't always have the words to explain what they're feeling. Big emotions may show up as irritability, withdrawal, or behavior changes. While their challenging behavior often grabs our attention, it's usually just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface are unmet needs, big feelings, and experiences they may not have the words to express. By looking beyond the behavior and tuning into what's underneath, parents and caregivers can respond with empathy, support, and guidance that addresses the root cause, not just the symptoms. This approach helps

children feel seen, understood, and safe, laying the foundation for growth and connection. Creating a safe space for open conversation, without rushing to correct or fix the problem, can help them feel understood. Consistency, patience, and reassurance go a long way. For a deeper look at supporting children through big feelings, check out the book *Good Inside* by Dr. Becky Kennedy. If family stress feels overwhelming, your EAP can help parents and caregivers build effective strategies and find additional resources.

Reference: Kennedy, B. (2022). Good Inside: A Guide to Becoming the Parent You Want to Be. HarperCollins. <https://www.goodinside.com/>

ACENTRA HEALTH PODCASTS

Acentra Health produces podcasts covering a variety of well-being topics. Listen to this month's podcasts by visiting: eap.acentra.com/podcast/.



Employee Assistance Program

Your EAP is a complimentary service available to you through your employer. The EAP provides counseling sessions at no cost to you, as well as offering a wide variety of services to enhance overall well-being and support healthy work-life balance. The program is completely confidential and available to you, your household family members, and dependents.

Access the EAP anytime for no-cost, confidential support from a highly qualified counselor or visit the website for tools and information designed to address life's pressing concerns.

 **Phone: 1.800.833.3031**

 **Website: EAPHelplink.com**

 **Company Code: IOWA**

