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EAP EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



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**DEER OAKS EAP PRESENTS:
April On-Demand Seminar**

*Finding a Hobby:
How It Impacts
Your Life*

**Available on-demand starting on April 19th
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How to be More Engaged at Work

It's a great feeling to be engaged at work. You're energized, focused, and motivated. That can have ripple effects on the people around you: your work colleagues, family, and friends. Feeling disengaged, on the other hand, is disheartening and draining.

It's easy to blame forces outside yourself when you're feeling down about your work. It's true that your employer and manager have roles to play in building employee engagement. However, you have a critical role, too, and there are steps you can take to be more engaged at work.

Remind yourself why you're there.

Look at the big picture of your work—why you are there and how the work is valuable:

- Think back to your reasons for taking the job in the first place. Was it to learn new skills, help people, contribute to innovation, or maybe simply to provide for your family? Are those reasons still important to you? Might you set new goals for yourself?
- Connect with the larger significance of your work. How does your work contribute to something bigger that may not be easy for you to see? If you're not clear on how your work adds to the value your organization delivers, ask your manager. Ask how you might add even more value in your work.

Collaborate and build social connections.

A key element in engagement at work is your relationship with coworkers:

- Pay attention to which individuals make you feel worse and which make you feel positive. Cultivate friendships with energizing and uplifting coworkers and people with whom you can be yourself. That's a two-way street that will push you to be helpful, positive, and supportive. Friendships at work can be one of the biggest drivers of employee engagement.
- Think about which people and groups are doing well in your organization. Seek opportunities to work with them. If that's not possible, talk to them, observe them, and learn what they're doing that is bringing them success.
- Consider acting as a mentor to a new or less experienced coworker. You'll be helping the other person, adding value to the organization, and making your work feel more meaningful.

Speak up.

Ask for what you need. Don't wait and expect it to come to you:

- Talk with your manager about ways you could be more efficient or about low-value tasks that are getting in the way of more important (and satisfying) work.
- Ask what's expected of you. Seek feedback from your manager and coworkers on what you're doing well and where you might try to improve or redirect your efforts.
- Think about your strengths and how those might be applied to help your organization succeed. This will require both self-reflection and a big-picture understanding of your organization.

Take care of yourself.

If you're feeling exhausted and burned out by your work, it might be because you're not taking care of yourself:

- Take breaks. Five-minute stretch breaks and short walks are good for your body and can clear your mind. Meditation and mindfulness exercises can calm and refresh you. Time in nature can be soothing and invigorating. Vacations are important to reenergize you for renewed effort and creative thinking. Even one day off when you're feeling worn down can give you a boost.
- Attend to your health. Eat healthy foods, stay hydrated, engage in regular physical activity, and adopt healthy sleep habits. Wellbeing is a critical foundation for engagement.

Celebrate progress.

People tend to ruminate on setbacks and let successes slide past without noting them. Do the opposite:

- Every so often, maybe at the end of each day or each week, think back on your progress. That might be something you accomplished, a deadline met, a new skill learned, a step you took in improving yourself, a positive interaction with a customer or coworker, or any win—large or small—you may have had. Celebrate and feel good about that progress.
- Practice and show gratitude. Notice and compliment coworkers on their accomplishments. Thank them when their efforts help you and your team. Take time to feel grateful for what is good in your life—at work and outside of work.

Manage your reactions and your thinking.

You can't control how the people around you behave, but you can control how you react. You also have more control than you may realize over how you think about events at work:

- When your immediate reaction is defensive or angry, force yourself to pause and come up with a different, more productive response. What can you say or do to resolve the conflict or overcome the obstacle?
- Look for the positive side of any setback or change. Is there an opportunity to be found? Something you can learn and apply in the future? Try to be open and curious rather than negative or resistant. This is known as positive reframing.

Seek variety and new opportunities.

Look for ways to add variety and opportunities for growth:

- Try doing your tasks in different ways, both to find efficiencies and ways to make them more enjoyable and satisfying.
- Volunteer for projects that will give you a chance to work with new people and learn new skills. Extra work that adds variety and opportunity to your work life can be invigorating rather than tiring or overwhelming.
- Ask your manager if you can be trained in a new skill so that you can provide coverage for a coworker when they are out or so that you can help the team extend its capabilities.

Make time for a personal passion.

Work is not the only place to seek engagement and satisfaction in life. Finding passion and energy outside of work can be just as important, and that can help improve your outlook in the workplace:

- Make time for a personal interest or passion. It might be a hobby or creative activity. It might be returning to a sport you love or learning a new way of cooking. Immersing yourself in an activity you enjoy can put you in a mental state called flow that takes your mind off worries and negative thoughts. Building new skills, making things, and reaching personal goals can all help enhance your self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.
- Volunteer. Get involved in your community as a volunteer or volunteer your skills for a cause you care about. Applying your talents and time to help others can give your life meaning and make you feel good about yourself—feelings that can help you take a positive approach at work.

Source: Morgan, H. (2021, October). How to be more engaged at work (C. Meeker & B. Schuette, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.



National Alcohol Screening Day

April 7, 2022

Deciding to Quit Drinking

Many people with drinking problems cannot tell when their drinking is out of control. You likely have a drinking problem when your body depends on alcohol to function and your drinking is causing problems with your health, social life, family, or job. Recognizing that you have a drinking problem is the first step toward being alcohol-free.

Talk with your health care provider about your drinking. Your health care provider can help you find the best treatment.

Are you ready to change?

You may have tried to stop drinking many times in the past and feel you have no control over it. Or you may be thinking about stopping, but you're not sure if you're ready to start.

Change takes place in stages over time. The first stage is being ready to change. Important stages that follow include:

- Thinking about the pros and cons of stopping drinking
- Making small changes and figuring out how to deal with the hard parts, such as what to do when you're in a situation where you would normally drink
- Stopping drinking
- Living an alcohol-free life

Many people go back and forth through the stages of change several times before the change really lasts. Plan ahead for what you will do if you slip up, and try not to be discouraged.

Lifestyle Changes That Can Help

Here are some tips to help you control your drinking:

- Stay away from people you normally drink with or places where you would drink.
- Plan activities you enjoy that do not involve drinking.
- Keep alcohol out of your home.

- Follow your plan to handle your urges to drink. Remind yourself why you decided to quit.
- Talk with someone you trust when you have the urge to drink.
- Create a polite but firm way of refusing a drink when you are offered one.

Getting Help From Others

After talking about your drinking with your health care provider or an alcohol counselor, you will likely be referred to an alcohol support group or recovery program. These programs:

- Teach people about alcohol abuse and its effects
- Offer counseling and support about how to stay away from alcohol
- Provide a space where you can talk with others who have drinking problems

You can also seek help and support from:

- Trusted family members and friends who do not drink
- Your place of work, which may have a program (like the Employee Assistance Program), that can help employees with personal issues such as alcohol use
- Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): <http://www.aa.org/>

Alcohol Withdrawal

You may be at risk for symptoms of alcohol withdrawal if you stop drinking suddenly. If you are at risk, you will likely need to be under medical care while you stop drinking. Discuss this with your health care provider.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health, MedLine. (Reviewed 2016, February 6). Deciding to quit drinking alcohol. Retrieved October 27, 2017, from <https://medlineplus.gov/>

Learn to Manage Stress

Everyone feels stress at one time or another. It's a normal and healthy reaction to change or a challenge. However, stress that goes on for more than a few weeks can affect your health. Keep stress from making you sick by learning healthy ways to manage it.

Learn to recognize stress.

The first step in managing stress is recognizing it in your life. Everyone feels stress in a different way. You may get angry or irritable, lose sleep, or have headaches or stomach upset. What are your signs of stress? Once you know what signals to look for, you can start to manage it.

Also identify the situations that cause you stress. These are called stressors. Your stressors could be family, school, work, relationships, money, or health problems. Once you understand where your stress is coming from, you can come up with ways to deal with your stressors.

Avoid unhealthy stress relief.

When you feel stressed, you may fall back on unhealthy behaviors to help you relax. These may include:

- Eating too much
- Smoking cigarettes
- Drinking alcohol or using drugs
- Sleeping too much or not sleeping enough

These behaviors may help you feel better at first, but they may hurt you more than they help. Instead, use the tips below to find healthy ways to reduce your stress.

Find healthy stress busters.

There are many healthy ways to manage stress. Try a few and see which ones work best for you:

- **Recognize the things you can't change.** Accepting that you can't change certain things allows you to let go and not get upset. For instance, you cannot change the fact that you have to drive during rush hour, but you can look for ways to relax during your commute, such as listening to a podcast or book.
- **Avoid stressful situations.** When you can, remove yourself from the source of stress. For example, if your family squabbles during the holidays, give yourself a breather, and go out for a walk or drive.



- **Get exercise.** Getting physical activity every day is one of the easiest and best ways to cope with stress. When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel good. It can also help you release built-up energy or frustration. Find something you enjoy, whether it is walking, cycling, softball, swimming, or dancing, and do it for at least 30 minutes on most days.
- **Change your outlook.** Try to develop a more positive attitude toward challenges. You can do this by replacing negative thoughts with more positive ones. For example, rather than thinking, "Why does everything always go wrong?" change this thought to, "I can find a way to get through this." It may seem hard or silly at first, but with practice, you may find it helps turn your outlook around.
- **Do something you enjoy.** When stress has you down, do something you enjoy to help pick you up. It could be as simple as reading a good book, listening to music, watching a favorite movie, or having dinner with a friend. You can also take up a new hobby or class. Whatever you choose, try to do at least one thing a day that's just for you.

- **Learn new ways to relax.** Practicing relaxation techniques is a great way to handle daily stress. Relaxation techniques help slow your heart rate and lower your blood pressure. There are many types, from deep breathing and meditation to yoga and tai chi. Take a class, or try learning from books, videos, or online sources.
- **Connect with loved ones.** Do not let stress get in the way of being social. Spending time with family and friends can help you feel better and forget about your stress. Confiding in a friend may also help you work out your problems.
- **Get enough sleep.** Getting a good night's sleep can help you think more clearly and have more energy. This will make it easier to handle any problems that crop up. Aim for about seven to nine hours each night.
- **Maintain a healthy diet.** Eating healthy foods helps fuel your body and mind. Skip the high-sugar snack foods, and load up on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy, and lean proteins.
- **Learn to say no.** If your stress comes from taking on too much at home or work, learn to set limits. Ask others for help when you need it.

Resources

If you can't manage stress on your own, you may want to talk with your health care provider. Consider seeing a therapist or counselor who can help you find other ways to deal with your stress. Depending on the cause of your stress, you also may find it helps to join a support group.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Library of Medicine (NLM), Medline Plus. (Updated 2021, July 2). Learn to manage stress. Retrieved August 6, 2021, from <https://medlineplus.gov>