

## IMPACT

Employee Newsletter

January - March 2004

### *Did you know?*

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## Workplace Goals for the New Year

The new year brings hopes and dreams for the future. You've made your resolutions—to lose weight, exercise, plan a dream vacation, for example.

Don't forget, however, that you also spend one-third of your day at work. You can improve your on-the-job enjoyment and your productivity by making the following work resolutions.

### **Learn new skills**

To keep your career moving forward and prevent burnout, learn some new skills. Investigate which ones you'll need for a promotion or for your dream job, then make sure you acquire them. Make a resolution to always be learning something new.

### **Keep organized**

Most people don't function well in the midst of chaos. The clutter on your desk likely distracts you and muddles your thinking. If your office is disorganized, the time you spend getting organized will be paid back in less stress and increased productivity.

Make a resolution to spend the last 15 minutes of every day clearing your desk and getting organized for the next day.



### **Take daily breaks**

Human beings aren't built to sit at a desk for hours at a stretch—that's why the coffee break was invented. But, there are better ways to use your breaks—quick, simple techniques that rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit so you can return to work refreshed and ready to accomplish great things.

The following energizing breaks take less than two minutes: Count down from 10 to one, taking a deep breath with each number. Read affirmations, inspiring quotes or poetry. Read a couple of pages of a book. Put your hands over your eyes and visualize a favorite vacation spot. Gaze out a window. Listen to your favorite music. Stand up and stretch your muscles. Doodle. Drink a full

glass of water. Eat a healthy snack. Take a short walk. Structure your time

Are you wasting time taking care of things that just aren't important? If so, you'll be frustrated when you fritter away your workdays doing things your boss would consider insignificant.

The solution is to block off one or two hours of quiet time each day that you spend focusing on your important tasks. Since most people concentrate best in the morning, choose your quiet time early in the day. Then transfer your calls to your voice mail and put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door.

Make a resolution to set aside quiet time every day to work on your important projects.

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**We're on the web**  
**[www.ClaremontEAP.com](http://www.ClaremontEAP.com)**

## Workplace Goals for the New Year

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### Keep an accomplishment journal

Buy a separate notebook for an Accomplishment Journal. At the end of the day, write the date on a new page and write something that you accomplished. It doesn't have to be something major. Even little steps of progress need to be acknowledged.

For example: "I dealt with Mr. Jones, a difficult customer, in a very kind and professional way." "I wrote two pages of a special report."

Writing such a journal increases your enthusiasm as you look for things to accomplish and write in your journal. Your focus will be on what you did instead of what you didn't do. Keeping the journal will also give you more confidence during employee reviews or when asking for a promotion.

One last thought: When you follow through on your work resolutions and make them daily habits, you'll experience increased productivity, more energy and enthusiasm and the joy of accomplishment.

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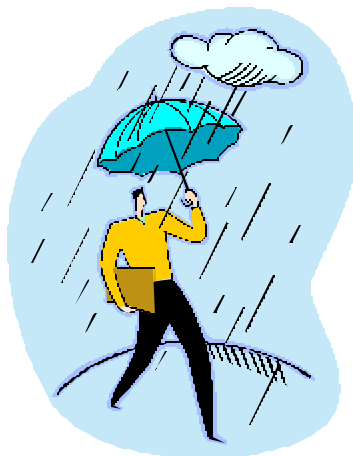
## When a Loved One Suffers From Depression

Each year, 19 million Americans ages 18 and older suffer from depression—a lingering feeling of intense sadness that can interfere with daily life by keeping people from going to work or school or caring for their children. But nearly two-thirds of people with depression don't get help.

"The stigma of mental illness holds many people back from getting treatment," says Stephen Schlesinger, PhD, a psychologist in Oak Park, Ill., and a faculty member at Northwestern University Medical School.

Many people believe they can shake it off, "but depression is more than 'the blues.' It's an illness that requires individual or group psychotherapy and/or antidepressant medication to treat it," says Dr. Schlesinger. "And in 80 percent of cases, such treatment is effective."

Depression can cloud thinking, so people suffering



from it can't always help themselves. If you suspect a friend and/or family member is dealing with it, here's what you can do to ease the person's suffering.

### Take quick action

Symptoms of depression include persistent sadness or irritability, being unable to concentrate, withdrawal, difficulty falling and staying asleep, poor appetite, weight loss, slowed speech and/or intense feelings of guilt.

In extreme cases, those

suffering from depression may talk about ending their lives, hurting themselves or others or giving away their possessions. Fifteen percent of people with depression experience this kind of suicidal behavior, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Get involved if you know someone who fits this description. "It's not normal for people to be talking about ending their lives," says Dr. Schlesinger.

For starters, approach the person and say, "You seem depressed. You're talking about ending your life. I think it's time to get help," suggests Dr. Schlesinger.

Call 911 or the police if the person refuses to seek help. Contacting your state's local office of mental health is another option. The office may have a mobile crisis unit that disperses a team of mental-health professionals to evaluate a person in danger.

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*"Depression can cloud thinking, so people suffering from it can't always help themselves."*

## When a Loved One Suffers From Depression

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You may feel funny working behind a loved one's back to arrange treatment." But you don't want to be looking back saying, 'I wish I had done something,' Dr. Schlesinger says.

### Get involved

"Don't ignore it if you know someone showing non-suicidal signs of depression, such as persistent sadness or irritability or withdrawal," says Marvin Lipkowitz, Ph. D., chairman of psychiatry at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, NY.

Out of concern, approach the person, but tread lightly. "You might say, 'You look different. Is there something

wrong?" says Dr. Lipkowitz. If your friend or loved one says nothing's wrong, you might say, "Are you sure?" Then get specific.

For instance, you might say, "I've noticed you're not yourself at work lately. You seem depressed. I'm concerned and want to help." Don't press the issue if the person doesn't want to discuss it.

"There's little you can do," says Dr. Lipkowitz. Under these less extreme circumstances, you can't force a person to get help.

But hear your loved one out if he or she is receptive. Then, "be the provider of honest information," says Dr. Schlesinger. As a starting point, suggest the person contact a

doctor or psychotherapist. Provide a name and telephone number for the latter. "Sometimes, you only have one shot," says Dr. Schlesinger. "At the end of your spiel, you have to have a plan that's ready to roll." You might also offer to go with your loved one to the therapist appointment or find another therapist if the one you recommended doesn't work out.

Don't feel like you're interfering. "Getting involved like this can strengthen the bond you have with people who are depressed," says Dr. Schlesinger. "They see you care."

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*“Teach children that members of a family can work together to make decisions and create thoughtful solutions to problems.”*

## The Family Meeting: A Great Communication Tool

A regular family meeting can help transform a chaotic household into a more cooperative team. Schedule a meeting once a week to discuss goals, problems and family events. Use the meeting as a time to talk about menus and assign household errands. Try to make the meeting fun. Order your favorite take-out meal or serve a special dessert.

Family meetings serve another function besides providing a way to assign household chores. They teach children that members of a family can work together to make decisions and create thoughtful solutions to problems. While they don't substitute for intimate time

with each other, family meetings help create a climate of cooperation while smoothing the way for busy families with too much to do.



### Involve the Kids

As soon as children are old enough, include them in family decisions, such as whose turn it is to help with the shopping. Discuss how you can share responsibilities and improve weekly routines, such as meal

preparation, laundry and bathing. Children who participate in these discussions will develop a sense of teamwork.

### Use the Time to Organize

Discuss household chores and schedules. Ask your spouse and your kids if there are any particular tasks they like, then let them have responsibility for those jobs. Plan weekly menus and post them on a master calendar. Also post doctor appointments and school events. Discuss changes in parents' and kids' work and school schedules.

### Clear the Air

Use this time to review family goals. Discuss annoyances and

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## The Family Meeting: A Great Communication Tool

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 problems that have cropped up during the busy week. For example, this is the perfect time for a family member to complain if they feel they've taken out the garbage too many weeks in a row.

### Make Plans for Fun

Use family meetings to make long-range vacation plans and schedule weekend excursions. Plan picnics and parties; decide what your family would like to buy a grandparent as a birthday gift; talk about holiday celebrations and plans to entertain family friends of all ages.

*“Understand it’s impossible to achieve perfection... just because you can conceive it doesn’t mean you can achieve it.”*

## Do You Have a Problem With Perfectionism?

Many Americans consider themselves to be perfectionists.

But striving for perfectionism often leads to frustration, procrastination and stress-related symptoms, such as anxiety, anger and depression. And because perfectionists can be hard on others when they fail to measure up, perfectionism can also lead to loneliness.

“A perfectionist is someone who demands of himself or herself and others a higher quality of performance than is required by the situation,” says Steven Hendlin, PhD, a clinical and sports psychologist in Irvine, Calif. “Anything short of perfection in their performance becomes unacceptable.”

Some perfectionists don't require perfection in every aspect of their lives. Some people are perfectionists only in their personal lives—for example, striving to raise perfect children or find the perfect mate. Others are perfectionists in the workplace and often are regarded as super competitive, poor team players



and unable to handle constructive criticism.

Because being the best is a part of the collective consciousness, “to some degree, perfectionism affects everyone,” Dr. Hendlin says. With this in mind, the following suggestions can help you escape the perfectionism trap.

### Lower your expectations

As a first step, stop making perfectionism a virtue. “Understand it’s impossible to achieve perfection,” Dr. Hendlin says. “Just because you can conceive it doesn’t mean you can achieve it.”

Instead, tell yourself you’ll vie for excellence by setting attainable goals.

For example: You’ve been assigned to write a report. The person who strives for excellence works within the limitations of a deadline and aims to have the report accepted by the supervisor. The perfectionist, on the other hand, attempts to turn in a flawless report, then misses the deadline after second-guessing the report’s thoroughness and eloquence.

### Face your fear

To disarm the fear that motivates perfectionism, ask yourself: “If I don’t do a perfect job, who’s going to get angry? Who’s going to disapprove?”

Then dig deeper by asking: “Will my supervisor really dislike me because I didn’t do a project perfectly?” And “How much am I substituting my supervisor for the parent I’m really trying to please?”

“Most perfectionists can trace their underlying chronic apprehension to critical parents who had unrealistically high

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## Do You Have a Problem With Perfectionism?

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 expectations,” Dr. Hendlin says. “They have the unconscious hope that performing perfectly will finally win their parents’ approval and then, indirectly, everyone else’s.”

### Collect your due

At the heart of a perfectionist’s credo is the idea that the better you do something, the better you’ll feel. Yet perfectionists derive little satisfaction from past accomplishments. “They’re in a hurry to get to the next challenge,” Dr. Hendlin says.

People who strive for excellence, on the other hand, are “motivated by success and the good feelings related to it,” he says. To loosen the grip of perfectionism, take a break after you’ve completed a difficult task; enjoy the rewards of a job adequately done. Congratulating yourself and giving yourself much-needed downtime serve as psychological nourishment.

### Adopt an affirmation

Perfectionism is a learned behavior. “It’s not genetic,” Dr. Hendlin says. Still, to shake the habit, it pays to adopt an affirmation that can keep you on track.

Dr. Hendlin suggests two: “My performance isn’t who I am,” and “A fallible human being is a normal human being.” Say either one to yourself when the going gets tough, or post one at your desk or somewhere you’ll see it often.

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*Claremont distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.*

For more information or for confidential help call  
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