

# EmployeeCare News

Keeping you informed from EmployeeCare, your employee assistance program, a benefit extended by your organization to all employees and their household members.



Marcia Zelman

## Strategies and Blueprints

...mapping the way to better stress management

By Marcia Zelman, Counselor

It's probably safe to assume most of us are challenged with some element of stress on a daily basis. The stressors will vary from slightly bothersome to overwhelmingly difficult. What we might not have in common is how we respond to stress. Some of us handle the scary and infuriating events such that we come out okay at the other end. Some of us feel we won't "survive" and respond to the stress with extreme moods and behavior. Many of us are somewhere in the middle and respond with manageable levels of fear, sadness or anger. We may eventually resolve the

problem, but might wish we had gotten there sooner.

It is a given when people come to EmployeeCare for counseling they will discuss their stressful event by sharing their feelings regarding the details of their experience. At the end of the first session they might say "I feel better just getting it off my chest". This is a valuable and important first step which is effective. Some clients feel their "job is done" and do not desire an additional session where they might want to take an even deeper look at their feelings and circumstances.



### Managing stress before, during and after...

Occasionally, a client might request learning about special techniques to deal with a stressful event. They might have already used a deep breathing exercise or simply walked away from an agitating person or situation. Although either of these might have been effective at the time, this person might still need to deal with leftover feelings at a later time. And if they don't prepare for the next stressful event, they won't be ready to deal with it. Managing stress can be viewed as a "before, during and after" preparation.

### Blueprinting your way out of stress...

The dictionary defines the word blueprint as a map. Maps show us where we've been, where we are now and where we want to go. The roads and



markings show us how to get there. Designing a map of our life or a particular stressful situation can help us understand and learn to find our way to a new place. Or in this case, a map we design ourselves can lead to a new way of handling a challenge that usually results in feeling sad, hurt, scared or angry.

### Preparation:

- You need paper and pens or pencils (a white wipe-off board and marker is an option for this process)
- Quiet, uninterrupted time and relaxing space for self-reflection
- Motivation to feel better and to be more in charge of your life
- Curiosity where you might take yourself by creating a customized map or diagram

### How to begin:

- Keep this process simple and begin with asking yourself “What’s the problem and what change am I looking for?”
- Once you have a sense of the problem and your feelings and behaviors associated with it, you can begin by using words or phrases to describe how you have been emotionally, physically and mentally affected by the event and write that description anywhere on the paper

- If you do not have words to describe your experience, close your eyes and see if any shape, color or form might represent your particular stress
- This does not require artistic ability: most people use circles, squares and stick people figures; scribbles are also common and can reflect inner turmoil or lack of mental clarity
- Place your markings on the paper
- Continue to “play around” with any additional markings that reflect your feelings and thoughts
- Close your eyes, relax and imagine how you would like the situation to be different: do you want to change your behavioral response to the situation or person who serves as your stress trigger?
- As images or words for alteration or change begin to emerge, do a second drawing somewhere else on the page (or use a new page, if you have run out of space)
- The second drawing will represent the new destination on your “map” or the changes you want to make in your response to the triggering stress
- Once finished, look at your “pictures” and any words you might have included. Ask yourself if the changes you are proposing are realistic and manageable; do alterations, if necessary, until you are satisfied with your plan
- As you look at the new images, visualize yourself engaging in the new behavior and be aware of any changes you are experiencing mentally or emotionally

This process can be simple and fun and individuals can also feel liberated by simply creating the new map before putting the changes into behavioral action. The map then serves as your personal blueprint that can guide you into feeling more in control of your life. The blueprint becomes your visual strategy in getting more on top of a situation. Once on top, we can exchange the initial “inner turmoil” for a feeling of inner peace. Please call EmployeeCare for an appointment at 208-6626 or 1-800-628-9343 to meet with a counselor.

# 12-Step Recovery Programs

By Patricia S. Seyfferle MA, Counselor Intern

Most people have heard of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon and similar groups such as Overeaters' Anonymous or Gamblers' Anonymous, but do you really know what they are and how they help people?

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) started in 1935 when two alcoholics, a New York stockbroker and a physician from Akron, met and began helping each other get and stay sober. They adapted and developed a series of steps helping them admit their inability to control their drinking on their own, developed their faith in a higher power to help them, admitted their wrongs and made amends to others, and helped others the same way. In 1939 they wrote Alcoholics Anonymous outlining their process. Many people call it "The Big Book," and it has sold over 25 million copies in many languages worldwide.

"Anonymous" is part of the name because it doesn't matter who any one is, as long as they are challenged with addiction. Since everyone has the same problem, there is no judgment; participants trust what they share will not be spread to others.

There are several different types of meetings; "open discussion" meetings for anyone interested in the issue, whether addicted or not. "Closed meetings" allow for deeper sharing. In a "Lead" meeting a member tells their story of addiction and the strength and hope found in recovery. Discussion meetings are led by a member who chooses a topic and participants take turns talking about their experience with that topic. Some meetings are dedicated to a certain topic, such as the steps themselves. Listening to others who have struggled with the same problems encourages and gives members the strength and courage to face their problems. Often one member will share what worked for him, giving ideas to try and encouragement to work toward sobriety.

An important principle of 12-Step recovery is sponsorship, which makes the program personal. A sponsor is a personal coach or mentor who helps a less experienced member work through the steps as they apply to his or her life. New members are encouraged to get a sponsor as soon as possible, and are advised to choose someone who has been in the program long enough to have solid recovery and who is "working a good program".

They should be of the same gender as the newcomer to avoid misunderstandings and awkward situations that can occur when people work closely together on emotionally charged material. Many people start out with a temporary sponsor to get them started working the steps while they get better acquainted with the members and later choose a permanent sponsor. The sponsor is most likely to be the person with whom they share their fourth step inventory, so it needs to be someone who is trustworthy and detached from the situation.

AA is a large network offering many meetings in most urban and suburban areas. If a new person goes to a meeting and isn't comfortable or doesn't like it, he or she should try another meeting at a different location or time to find the right fit. While all AA meetings use the same 12 steps and follow the same guidelines known as "the 12 Traditions," each meeting does it a little differently. Newcomers are encouraged to find a home group where they feel comfortable about opening up and sharing. Sometimes it takes several different meeting places and times to find the right one.

Other groups, such as Gamblers' Anonymous and Overeaters' Anonymous have adapted the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions to fit their specific addictions.

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Alcoholics Anonymous® is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other so they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; they are self-supporting through contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. The primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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An important offshoot from AA is Al-Anon, which is for the family members and friends of alcoholics. The alcoholic does not have to go to AA for their family members to join Al-Anon. Even if the alcoholic never quits drinking, Al-Anon helps those who are close to the alcoholic learn how to live with the harmfully involved person without letting that individual overly influence their life. Al-Anon does not teach its members how to get their loved one to quit, nor does it teach them how to make life easier for the alcoholic. It helps family members go through the same steps, but focuses on ways alcohol has affected their lives and ways their own lives have become unmanageable through trying to manage someone else's

behavior. Family members of people with addictions to other substances or behaviors can join Al-Anon, too. If you know someone who has a spouse, relative or friend who is addicted to gambling, pornography, video games, drugs, or anything else, he or she could benefit by attending Al-Anon meetings.

To find meetings in the Dayton area, call (937) 222-2211 to reach a 24-hour answering service, or go to [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) for information about meetings anywhere in the world. Or call us at EmployeeCare (937) 208-6626 or 1-800-628-9343 and we will be glad to talk or meet with you to help you find the best resource to meet your needs.

## Check Us Out on the Web!

Do you want to know more details about your Employee Assistance Program? Do you want more information about each counselor?

**Here's how to access our web site. Type in:**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>1.</b> Premier Health Partners       | <b>4.</b> Select: (A-Z)        |
| <b>2.</b> Select: Miami Valley Hospital | <b>5.</b> Select: E            |
| <b>3.</b> Select: Services              | <b>6.</b> Select: EmployeeCare |

## EmployeeCare

**Located:** 409 E. Monument St.  
Suite 201  
Dayton, Ohio 45402

We have satellite offices in Eaton, Springboro, Troy, Greenville and on the Good Samaritan Hospital campus

**Hours:** 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
Monday – Thursday  
8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Friday

All counselors provide evening appointment times

**Phone:** (937) 208-6626 or (800) 628-9343  
(24-hour, toll free)

### Services Include:

- Voluntary, confidential assessments. Short-term counseling and referral services for employees and household members covering a wide range of issues. Services are free and number of accesses unlimited.
- Substance Abuse and Wellness Education Groups
- In-service for sexual harassment, diversity, violence in the workplace
- Workplace wellness
- 24-Hour Crisis phone service
- Substance Abuse trainings that meet state and Bureau of Worker Compensation requirements for drug free workplaces

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