

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Understanding and Improving Your Quality of Life

The decisions we make every day, including big ones like where we live and work, and how much time we spend with family and friends have a big effect on what we call our quality of life.

For some people, being able to walk or cycle to work or to the corner store is key to their quality of life. For others, having a high-end car or being able to take annual vacations abroad is their quality of life indicator.

In broad terms, quality of life pertains to the way in which people experience satisfaction with their life situation. People who perceive themselves as having a high quality of life tend to believe they are actualizing their potential, achieving their goals and satisfying their basic needs. People who perceive themselves as having a low quality of life see a discrepancy between what they want and what they currently experience.

Where We're Happiest

Studies show that we're happiest with our family and personal lives, and least happy with our household financial situation. Our jobs, health and overall standard of living fall somewhere in between.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

To understand quality of life, it's important to understand what you have (e.g., financial security, quality relationships, self-knowledge, etc.) and how you feel about yourself in relation to your expectations. Two people may have identical life situations while one feels satisfied and the other does not. It is the perception of satisfaction that determines your quality of life. Research suggests:

- In terms of quality of life, your sex, height, education, occupation, etc. are unimportant. Your quality of life is, rather, more connected to how you feel about yourself.
- Your annual income is not directly important to your quality of life. However, those who perceive their general financial situation as bad, have a lower quality of life.
- The type of job you have has no direct bearing on your quality of life. The essential thing is that you are content with your work, and have good relations with your colleagues.

To help improve your quality of life, consider the following:

- Be fully present in the moment. Being fully in the present means that you have no thoughts about the past or future; you are fully engaged in what's taking place at this exact moment.
- Take steps to eliminate clutter, noise, distractions and people who drain your energy. Clear off your desk, skip television and radio for a week, and distance yourself from those who use you to meet THEIR needs.
- Develop a sense of pace—relaxation. Approach everything and everyone in a relaxed manner and you'll be amazed how different it (and they) feels.

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- Periodically, withdraw and recharge. In order to keep your calm and to be fully present, it's important to withdraw and recharge, regularly.

Though few people are fully satisfied with their life all the time, by taking steps to think about what matters to you, and then putting your values into action, your are bound to increase your enjoyment of life and your quality of life.