

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

# The Impact of Stress on our Well Being: Will You Accept the Wellness Challenge?

As we begin another new year many people are setting goals. Many people tend to focus on physical goals like one's appearance, measure of wealth, or getting ahead at work. But how many of you plan to focus on your mental health this year? Here at the EAP, we believe that to be healthy you should focus on overall well being which includes mental health, physical health, stress management, and work life balance. According to the Stress in America survey conducted each year by the American Psychological Association, 39% of adults report that their stress has increased over the last year and 44% said that their stress has dramatically increased over the last 5 years. With such significant findings several questions come to mind: Why are Americans under so much stress? What can be done to improve this? And how can the EAP help employees combat this pressing concern?

The Emotional and Physical Toll of Stress: Impact at Home & Work

Major life and work changes (marriage, raising children, losing work, caring for a sick loved one, buying a home, losing a home and so much more) are contributing to our high levels of stress. One of the most significant sources of stress is money. Other sources of reported stress include work, the economy, relationships, family responsibilities, and family health problems. With all of these triggers coming from all directions, stress is bound to take a toll on our physical and emotional well being. Here are a few of the most common effects reported to the APA last year:

- Arguments with loved ones or co-workers
- Absenteeism and low work quality
- Disturbance in eating patterns
- Inability to sleep
- Decrease in sex drive
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Fatigue
- Muscle tension
- Substance abuse

Taking Control of Your Stress: Making it a Priority

The list above names just a few of the many serious concerns caused by stress and they need to be taken seriously. If ignored, chronic stress can lead to more serious health and personal problems. This year, we invite you to take on the challenge of making self-care and stress management a priority in 2013 and in years to come.

There are steps you can take today to start the road to improvement. You can make a small change in your diet, add a fun or relaxing activity to your weekly schedule, reach out to loved ones, or take a 10-minute break. Also make use of your EAP Program! There is an increasing need for employer benefits to focus on stress management and mental health as part of an overall health improvement – and your EAP does just that.

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