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EAP News #102

The Impact of 9/11

What Can I do to reduce the impact?

Since September 11th many individuals have been talking about how the events of that day have affected them. In the weeks since then, we have seen the start of bombing in Afghanistan and bioterrorism threats here in the U.S. Many people have spoken about living with anxiety, anger and some confusion. The information below may assist you in reducing the impact of stress on you and your family.

- ? *Reducing anxiety.* Anxiety may be fueled by the continuing media coverage of the disaster and the new threats. Reducing the amount of time spent watching TV, reading and listening to news reports, can lower your overall level of stress. Stay informed, but do so with news summaries rather than continually listening to news radio.
- ? *Focus on the positive.* Think about the courage and commitment of the responders, police, fire, EMT's, medical staff and volunteers, etc. Remember that people of all nationalities, faiths and cultures have worked tirelessly to stand with and for those affected.
- ? *Recognize your own feelings.* Knowing that the emotional and physical symptoms you are experiencing are stress related helps to reduce their effect on you.
- ? *Talk to others about your feelings.* Remember that many others share this experience with you and you can support one another.
- ? *Accept help from others.* If you feel you need help putting things into perspective, or that you are continuing to have strong reactions and problems sleeping or working, talk to a mental health professional. Your coping skills are being stretched and your EAP is available to help.
- ? *Deal with your anger.* Do not take out your anger on family or other people. Strenuous physical activity is one way to deal with anger. Take a brisk walk, go for a run, kick a football, hit a tennis ball, scrub the floor, etc. Or try stress reduction techniques such as deep breathing exercises or meditation.
- ? *Reach out.* Listen to others who need to talk. Do not blame many for the acts of a few. Reach out to others

of different nationalities who are also struggling at this time.

- ? *Do something you enjoy.* Take a few moments to look out the window at the sunshine, to enjoy being with your family and friends. It is OK to smile and to laugh; in fact, it is good for you and is in no way disrespectful.
- ? *Stay connected with your usual support systems.* Go out with your friends; keep in touch with family members. Many people find support in religious activities. Share a meal or movie. Be together for mutual support.

EXCUSES FOR NOT EXERCISING

What excuses have you used for not exercising? If you've used any of these, we've given you something to think about.

Exercise is hard : Begin with ordinary walking. See where it might lead you.

I don't have the time: If you'll schedule some time to get started, you'll likely find more time than you realize.

I'm usually too tired: Often exercise gives you more energy and you'll actually feel less tired.

I hate to fail, so I just won't start: If you choose an activity you like, begin slowly, and set realistic goals, you reduce your chances of failing.

I don't have anyone to work out with: Maybe you haven't asked. Usually there are others out there who'd like to start but nobody has asked them.

There's no convenient place: Try your own neighborhood or nearby mall, or exercise in front of the TV.

I'm afraid of being injured: Walking is safe for almost everybody.

The weather's too bad: You can do many activities in your house. Of all home exercise equipment, a stationary bike takes up the least amount of space, and is easy to use in front of the TV.

Exercise is boring: Work out with a friend. Use exercise to get something done, like running an errand on foot.

I'm too overweight: You'll benefit so much from the exercise that soon it won't be considered a detriment.

I'm too old: You're never too old for exercise. People of any age can benefit from exercise.

Grief and Loss: How Can I Help?

A Guide for Family and Friends

People often feel awkward and ill prepared when approaching a grieving friend or loved one. This occurs for many reasons. We feel uncomfortable because as a culture we try to avoid death and the unpleasant feelings that go with it. We may want to make the person feel better. We feel we won't know what to do or what to say. But there are many things you can do to comfort the bereaved.

- ? Show your support. There is always a place for the usual activities. This may include making or sending food for the family or guests, sending a card with a personal note about the deceased if you knew her personally or making a donation to a cause of special interest to the deceased and family.
- ? Be available. Let the bereaved person know you are available for whatever she might need, be it a late night phone call, a ride to the store or a movie companion
- ? Give practical help. Ask what needs to be done or look around to discover what might be needed. And if you have a particular expertise, offer to share it. If you have an extra bedroom, offer out-of-town relatives a place to stay. If you have a financial background, offer to help a widow go through accumulated business papers. If your children are friends, offer extra carpooling.
- ? Keep your promise. If you offer to baby-sit, housesit or grocery shop, be there and do it. The bereaved person doesn't need to hear excuses about how other areas of your life interfere with helping out.
- ? Avoid clichés. Although well meaning, many people recite phrases they have heard but may sound hollow or untrue. Saying "it's for the best," "time heals all wounds," "I know how you feel," or "she lived a long life and it was her time" negate the person's strong feelings and may signal to her that you are not ready or able to hear her true feelings.
- ? Be honest. If statements are made with compassion and honesty, they will be understood, appreciated and received in that manner. Saying "I wish I knew what to say," "I'm so sorry," "please let me know if there's anything I can do to help" are more genuine and indicate a willingness to be there.
- ? Avoid judgments and comparisons. Everyone is different and has his own grief experience. Listening to someone tell you how he is doing is more helpful than spontaneously telling a story about how someone else handled a similar situation.
- ? Realize that it takes time. A grieving person has many emotions; their feelings and needs will change over time, sometimes in unpredictable ways. Therefore you should continue to maintain contact. Although a grieving person may reject offers to visit or go out in the first months, they may be ready in six months and feel uncomfortable about asking.
- ? Remember the grief process has no limits. Usually there is a great deal of activity in the first weeks after a death. Once this subsides, there can be a tremendous void for the grieving person. You may be the most helpful at this time, when others have moved on but the person who is bereaved is confronting the reality of the loss on a daily basis.
- ? Pay attention to significant dates. Although life goes on, particular events, especially in the first year, will never be the same. It can be of enormous comfort to the bereaved if you remember this will be his or her "first Christmas without" the deceased person. Offering to help make it easier or special in a new way can be greatly appreciated. One young woman says she will never forget when her childhood friend called the first time her deceased mother's birthday occurred, telling her she thought it might be a difficult day. They proceeded to reminisce about their childhood experiences with her mother.
- ? Suggest professional help. Signs that your friend may be having difficulty coping with a loss include depression, persistent anxiety, substance or alcohol abuse or deteriorating physical health. If you notice these signs, you can suggest professional help. This should be offered in the context of a general discussion of how she is managing her life. It should be done in a way that shows you care about the person, rather than as a criticism about how she is coping with her grief

HBA is your 24-hour employee assistance program. Eligible employees and family members may call for confidential assistance with personal, legal, childcare, financial, alcohol/drug and other problems. HBA has identified a variety of community resources and self help associations. Also available is a panel of professional counselors and hospitals that have agreed to provide free or low cost counseling and treatment services to persons who have been referred by Human Behavior Associates. Dial 1-800-937-7770 for information or assistance.