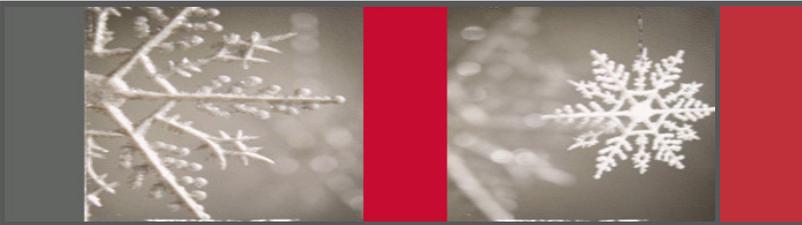


Solutions

Health and Wellness Information from
Family Services Employee Assistance Programs (FSEAP)

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Newsletter



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The Gift of Relationships

As social beings, we have a myriad of relationships across our lifetime. Whether this is with our partner, children, parents, siblings, extended family, friends, work colleagues, team mates, the checkout person at our local store, or the regular bus driver, we are surrounded by relationships.

Positive relationships are one of the key determinants of good physical and mental health, as they raise our self esteem and bring great satisfaction in life. Research has shown that positive social contact is equally, if not more, important than reduction of stress for balance and stability in life.

Healthy relationships are characterized by physical, emotional and psychological attachment. Much of our innate relationship behavior supports the forming and maintaining of our attachments to others. Gordon Neufeld, a psychologist, states "attachment is at the heart of relationships and of social functioning". Attachment provides a foundation for trust, emotional development, confidence, and a balance between independence with interdependence. These benefits form a reinforcing pattern of development between the self and our relationships.

Early attachment research focused on the relationships between parents and young children. However, further work has shown that the need for

and benefit of, positive attachments in our relationships does not diminish over time nor with aging.

As important as they are to our wellbeing, our relationships sometimes can cause us difficulty, or we may coast along not paying too much attention to those in our lives, taking them and the relationship for granted, or vice versa feeling taken for granted and uncared for. Relationship issues are common in counselling; in fact, they are usually within the top presenting issues every month at fseap, accounting for at least 35% of the total cases seen. The reality is everyone at some point in their life will face challenges with the attachment of one relationship or another.

Christmas is traditionally a time for family and friends to get together to celebrate and have a good time. "There's a sense that at this time of year we can overcome family tensions to celebrate our relationships," says Professor Bren Neale of the School of Sociology and Social Policy at Leeds University. "We express our love at Christmas, all our un-Scrooge-like qualities come to the fore." Therefore, Christmas is an ideal time to try to reflect and focus on our relationships. Not just on how to get along with your mother-in-law for Christmas dinner, but also to take stock, be grateful for, and enhance the connections which we have in our lives.



fseap Now we're
talking.

From time to time we all deal with difficulty in life. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk with a trained professional – someone who is objective, caring and experienced at helping with the particular issue you are facing. Contact us to find out more about our counselling and work/life services. Call 1-800-667-0993.

Enhancing Your Connections

Release the Concept Of the Perfect Relationship:

Perfectionism brings unrealistic expectations, discontent and procrastination. Realise and embrace that life and relationships are a journey full of ups and downs. Nothing has to be perfect all the time. Releasing perfectionism frees you to enjoy the moment, and move forward, nurturing and empowering self fulfillment. Be prepared, expect imperfection.

Mindful Moment:

Focus on an expectation of 'mindful moments' not of sustained good will. Have an expectation that things go wrong, relationships have bad times, but you can find one moment to enjoy. Say: "Only in this moment, for this moment, I will enjoy our interaction." Experience a moment of heightened awareness of little things you often take for granted, for example, hearing someone laughing, a shared cup of tea, setting the table together, observing someone else's positive interaction, the feel of a hug, etc.

Collecting:

Gordon Neufeld describes the set of behavior which we use to attach in our relationships as "collecting": "The first step begins with moving into a person's space in a friendly way. Our next step is to 'collect' this person's eyes, then we smile and receive a smile in return. We now continue the dance by giving a touch of proximity, conveying the warmth we feel towards this person and the pleasure that comes with being in this person's presence. The deep attachment instincts that exist in us are now engaged".



You can consciously use these steps to 'collect' others and enjoy a moment of shared connection.

Responding Rather than Reacting:

Building a space of awareness allows you to reduce emotional reactivity and bring conscious thought to your actions. You can move from your emotional brain into your wise, thinking brain, choosing a response rather than rash reaction which you may often regret.

Simple strategies to help you build a space of awareness are: becoming aware of your own emotional reactivity, then taking a breath, "stop, think, do", closing your eyes for a moment (slow blink), or counting to 10.

Compassion for Ourselves and Others:

Taking spaces and pauses in your interactions with others can also help you to understand the dynamics of any situation: What you bring, what others bring, and how these things interact. You can hold an understanding of others' actions without judgment. You can hold awareness of your own thoughts, emotions and triggers. It allows you to be aware of where you start to make up stories about why you don't feel attached in your relationship, and are consequently less likely to be taken away by negative rumination. Instead, by taking each moment as it comes, with awareness and understanding, you can cultivate empathy, insight and compassion within yourselves and extend this to others.

Self Care:

Relationships take work. Christmas takes work. Life takes work. You give and give and give. Taking the time to rest and replenish is not a luxury but a necessity so you can face the day with renewed energy bringing tolerance and balance to yourself and your relationships.

Create a Christmas Tradition:

Every Christmas and holiday period be conscious of having mindful moments, showing compassion, and consciously collecting in your relationships. Plan activities or times which build attachment.

Create a Lasting Legacy:

These techniques and reflections are not just for Christmas. They can be used every day of the year. This will help you to reset your relationships and yourself in a consistent, proactive way.

How your EFAP can help

- ✓ Confidential services
- ✓ Information to help with work and life
- ✓ Immediate assistance 24/7/365

To access **fseap** services, just call
1.800.667.0993 | TTY 1.888.234.0414
For information visit: www.fseap.bc.ca