

# CONNECTIONS

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## Preventing Workplace Violence

by City of Madison EAP Staff

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reports that 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence each year. Workplace violence is commonly defined as any incident in which an employee or employer is threatened, intimidated, harassed, verbally or physically attacked, injured or killed. The City of Madison has had a Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Policy (**APM 2-25**) in place since 1996 which states that it is the responsibility of City employees to report incidents of workplace violence to their supervisors, their department or division head, the HR Director, EAP or the City Attorney. It is then the responsibility of City managers to investigate any such reports thoroughly and to take appropriate action according to the policy. There will be no retaliation against an employee who makes a good faith report of such behavior.

Potential sources of threatening behavior may be intruders, customers, suppliers/vendors, co-workers or supervisors, stalkers, or domestic partners/former partners. Workplace violence can start as small incidents involving negative remarks and inappropriate behavior. It may escalate to physical violence or psychological abuse. It is much easier to prevent violence by stopping small incidents than trying to deal with the aftermath of a major crisis.

In 2016, 500 workplace fatalities were due to homicide (**Bureau of Labor**). While this statistic is alarming, as are the incidents reported by various news outlets, there is a much greater risk that an individual will encounter threatening, intimidating, or harassing behavior while at work. Some examples of this behavior are pushing a co-worker in anger, damage to property, stalking, harassing phone calls, and domestic abuse that carries over into the workplace. These incidents may take place at work or at functions off site that are related to work.



Hello City Employees!

While there are many mental health tools and tips to combat general stress and anxiety such as meditation, mindfulness, or getting enough sleep, sometimes taking concrete steps to accomplish those important, yet “back burner,” tasks can be even more effective at reducing stress. As an example, engaging in the latest breathing technique while writing about your kids or your house in a gratitude journal is great, but if it reminds you every time that your will is not up to date or the office turned recreation room turned storage room is still not cleaned, it’s not going to be all that beneficial.

In addition to an article for Alcohol Awareness Month about the impact parental alcoholism can have on children, we have provided you with some articles and information on how to tackle some of the above-stated stressors. Being prepared for severe weather, knowing the warning signs of workplace violence, lifetime planning for a child with special needs, or knowing how to speak up about a co-worker with mental health struggles, while it may not seem like it initially, can actually reduce a lot of stress.



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### ***What can we do to prevent violent behavior in the workplace?***

While it is not always possible to predict a threat, there are warning signs that may serve as an indicator of trouble to come. It is extremely important to understand that the following behaviors do not mean a person will become violent, but they may indicate that the person is experiencing high levels of stress. Each situation is unique and professional judgement or outside assistance may be necessary to determine if intervention is necessary.

Always take particular note if:

- » There is a change in the person's behavior patterns.
- » The frequency and intensity of the behaviors are disruptive to the work environment.
- » The person is exhibiting many of these behaviors, rather than just a few.

Warning signs include:

- » Crying, sulking or temper tantrums.
- » Excessive absenteeism or lateness.
- » Pushing the limits of acceptable conduct or disregarding the health and safety of others.
- » Disrespect for authority.
- » Increased mistakes or errors, or unsatisfactory work quality.
- » Refusal to acknowledge job performance problems.
- » Faulty decision-making.
- » Testing the limits to see what he/she can get away with.
- » Swearing or emotional language.
- » Handles criticism poorly.
- » Making inappropriate statements.
- » Forgetfulness, confusion and/or distraction.
- » Inability to focus.
- » Blaming others for mistakes.
- » Complaints of unfair personal treatment.
- » Talking about the same problems repeatedly without resolving them.
- » Insistence that he/she is always right.
- » Misinterpretation of communications from supervisors or co-workers.

- » Social isolation.
- » Personal hygiene is poor or ignored.
- » Sudden and/or unpredictable change in energy level.
- » Complaints of unusual and/or non-specific illnesses.
- » Holds grudges, especially against his or her supervisor. Verbalizes hope that something negative will happen to the person against whom he/she has the grudge.

Sometimes it is not what a person says, but what their body is "doing". Use caution if you see someone who shows one or more of the following "non-verbal" signs or body language.

- » Flushed or pale face.
- » Sweating.
- » Pacing, restless, or repetitive movements.
- » Signs of extreme fatigue (e.g., dark circles under the eyes).
- » Trembling or shaking.
- » Clenched jaws or fists.
- » Exaggerated or violent gestures.
- » Change in voice.
- » Loud talking or chanting.
- » Shallow, rapid breathing.
- » Scowling, sneering or use of abusive language.
- » Glaring or avoiding eye contact.
- » Violating your personal space (he/she gets too close).

### ***What can you do if you're concerned?***

**Take action.** Report your concerns to your supervisor or Human Resources department. You can also get advice from our Employee Assistance Program (**EAP**). You must remember that it can be very difficult to know when a person is going to be violent. Perpetrators of violent acts do not always display the emotional and physical behaviors listed above. When any of these behaviors do exist, always take them "in context" while keeping an eye out for multiple warning signs and for signs that the behaviors are getting worse (**CCOHS**).

# FIRST RESPONDER FOCUS

## How to Speak Up If You're Worried About a Co-worker's Mental Health

**When an EMT or paramedic is in distress and suffering from mental illness, you have options to help them.**

by Ann Marie Farina for EMS1 (Used by permission)

Every four days a firefighter, EMT, or paramedic in the U.S. dies of suicide.<sup>[1,2]</sup> Our rate of post-traumatic stress is estimated to be on par with that of the U.S. military, which is about 15 to 20 percent of EMS providers. We need to look out for one another's mental health and safety just as much as we look out for dangers to physical safety.<sup>[3,4,5]</sup>

### Know the Warning Signs of Mental Distress

It is important to recognize potential warning signs and speak up if you become concerned about a co-worker's mental health. Look for these warning signs:<sup>[6]</sup>

- » Being late, sloppy appearance, not taking care of their ambulance or equipment.
- » Anger or a bad attitude towards colleagues, patients and facility staff.
- » A change in behavior such as refusing to work overtime, or not attending agency events.
- » Getting upset or angry when reminded of a certain call.
- » Admitting to increased stress outside of work.
- » Increased alcohol use, or substance abuse.

*(If you think a co-worker is under the influence on the job, report it immediately. No friendship or partnership is worth the risk of having someone under the influence of drugs or alcohol operating emergency vehicles or treating patients.)*

### Option 1: Talk to the person about what you see

Many times people who are having a mental health problem want to talk about how they are feeling, but they don't know how to start the conversation. They may fear being stigmatized. Approaching someone and letting them know you are there to listen and not judge may be enough for them to feel comfortable opening up and talking about what is going on.

Consider saying things like "I've noticed [describe a specific behavior], how are you feeling?" or "I'm concerned because of [describe a specific behavior or conversation], is there anything you want to talk about?" This allows you to give a specific example of why you are concerned and also ask an open-ended question.

Additional advice for a conversation:<sup>[7,8]</sup>

- » Plan ahead; think about what you want to say and how you're going to say it.
- » Talk to the person in private, during a time where you won't be interrupted.



- » Make sure you're sober and have a clear head.
- » Ask open ended questions and be prepared to listen.
- » Don't be afraid to ask "Are you thinking about suicide?" It won't put the idea in their head.
- » Don't be judgmental, accusatory, or dismissive.
- » Avoid platitudes like "God has a plan. Everything will work out on its own."
- » Have resources available, such as helpline numbers or the information for your agency's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- » Talk one-on-one. An "intervention" style talk involving a group of people can feel like a group attack and cause a defensive response.

## Option 2: Talk to a trusted intermediary

It can be difficult to approach someone you think is having a mental health problem. You may not want to overstep your bounds or worry you don't feel like you know the person well enough to say anything. Another option for broaching the subject is through a trusted third party; a co-worker, friend, family member, or significant other.

I've used this approach with a co-worker whom I didn't know well. Our mutual friend was appreciative that someone was looking out for my co-worker, and she was able to make sure everything was okay.

## Option 3: Talk to a supervisor/superior officer

Going a step up in the chain of command can be as difficult as talking to the person yourself. It can be hard to get rid of the feeling that you are 'ratting' them out. Remember, you are going up the chain of command because someone needs help, not because you want them to be punished.

It also has the advantage of talking to someone who has a bigger perspective than you do. You might not be the only person to approach a supervisor with concerns.

Having more than one person say "Hey, I'm worried about Bob" can make it easier for someone in a management position to approach a subordinate about any problems they might be having. Talking to a supervisor/superior officer may also be an option if you've already talked to the person but still have concerns about their mental health.

## Option 4: Call the authorities

If you feel that someone is at immediate risk of self-harm or harm to others, call the police. Hopefully you will never be in this situation but if you are, nothing is more important than life safety.

### IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

There are multiple ways to approach and assist a co-worker in getting the help that they need. Know your options and plan ahead to increase the likelihood that your intervention will result in the improved mental health of your co-worker. Don't be afraid to speak up.

Citations can be reviewed in the [original article](#).

To read more about PTSD and the risk of suicide in the fire service, see [this recent article](#) published in the Post and Courier, a Charleston, South Carolina newspaper.

## About the Author

Ann Marie Farina is a NR-P in Washington state. She has been in EMS since 2003 and has worked in a variety of positions in Alaska and Washington since then. Over the years her jobs have included working as a wildland fire medic, a dual-role firefighter/paramedic, a 911 transport medic, and as an educator. In March of 2014 Ann founded [The Code Green Campaign](#), a mental health awareness campaign that raises awareness about mental health conditions and suicide in first responders. Through Code Green, Ann has worked as an educator, researcher and consultant in order to assist agencies in improving their mental health programs. Ann is a member of the [EMS1 Editorial Advisory Board](#).



## Severe Weather Awareness Week April 9-13, 2018

by **ReadyWisconsin**

*Perhaps it is not a coincidence that April has been designated to highlight Severe Weather and Stress! If you have anxiety related to the threat of severe weather and don't feel prepared to respond to a weather-related emergency, consider spending a few hours this weekend pulling together the suggested items on the **ReadyWisconsin checklist**. Below, we provide specific suggestions for the documents you will want to include.*

How long would it take you to find copies of financial records, insurance documents, birth certificates and more if you had to evacuate at a moment's notice?

**ReadyWisconsin** recommends putting together a Grab-and-Go Folder that contains originals or copies of your important paperwork. Having these documents on hand through a disaster will help you get back on track if your possessions are damaged or you're forced to relocate after a storm. For added protection, store important documents in large plastic bags or other waterproof containers.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » Apartment or condo leases                     | » Copies of recent bills (power, water, etc.)       |
| » Home or other property deeds (mortgage, etc.) | » Government financial assistance award letters     |
| » Estate documents                              | » Birth certificates or proof of citizenship        |
| » Homeowner's or renter's insurance documents   | » Social security cards                             |
| » Wills   | » Employment contracts or other legal documents     |
| » Life insurance policies                       | » Military service records                          |
| » Inventory of possessions and their value      | » Medical records, x-rays, benefits documents, etc. |
| » Photos or video of your home and possessions  | » Education records (report cards, etc.)            |
| » List of important phone numbers               | » Passports/citizenship papers                      |
| » Flood insurance documents                     | » Duplicate prescription from doctor                |
| » Vehicle titles, leases, loan documents, etc.  | » Computer backup (on a CD, DVD, etc.)              |
| » Financial statements (accounts, tax returns)  | » Paperwork for your pets (e.g. medical records)    |
| » Stocks and bonds                              | » Copies of important keys                          |

An up-to-date inventory is a valuable resource when dealing with loss or destruction of your property. Photographs and videos should be included in your inventory. Keep your inventory current and in a safe place. A safe place is usually another location or a safety deposit box.



# The Single Best Strategy for Reducing Stress

## My clinical experience suggests that one stress-reliever works by far the best.

by Susan Heitler, PhD, [PsychologyToday.com](http://PsychologyToday.com) (Used by permission of the author)

The deadline is tomorrow. Your stomach is tight and cramping. Your throat is dry. That anxious feeling comes from stress. Stress arises when we experience a sense of pressure. It arises also in situations in which bad things seem to be possible ahead or where external circumstances impinging on your well-being trigger feelings of emotional or physical vulnerability. When we feel stressed, we feel anxious that we will not be able to accomplish what is needed to alleviate that pressure or to accomplish what feels necessary. What therefore is the single best strategy for reducing stress? You may be surprised. It's not a strategy that most therapists, blogposts or books about stress reduction even mention.

### What stress reduction methods do therapists usually suggest?

I'll start by reviewing key suggestions from an excellent, recently published book on managing stress. Authored by Melanie Greenberg, PhD, *The Stress-Proof Brain* offers understandings and suggestions for coping with stress. While my #1 stress-reduction technique is not included, all of Dr. Greenberg's stress-reducers are ones that I also teach to clients in my psychotherapy practice, so I agree with her that they can be helpful.

### What is your current stress level?

Dr. Greenberg begins her book, appropriately, in a manner that strong therapists would begin. She starts by offering readers a simple quiz to assess their stress levels. I like her set of 10 factors that indicate stress. These include, for instance, worrying that blocks you from relaxing into a solid night of sleep, experiencing a racing heart or stomach butterflies, and a feeling that you can't handle all that's on your plate. Clarification of your initial stress level is a good idea. Measuring your stress again after you have implemented stress-reduction procedures can clarify how much progress you have made.

Close your eyes and pick the number from 0 to 10 that sounds accurate for your stress level right now. My hunch is that if you, right now, close your eyes and ask yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 to assess your level of stress, you will come up with a useful stress-level number.

### What situations are triggering stress in your life currently?

Many life situations can trigger stress for people. The most common stress-inducers I see in my clients—and myself—include:

- » Feeling pressured because you do not have enough of something you need (time, money, affection, support).
- » Feeling like you have too much of something (time, money, etc.) and cannot properly manage it all.

- » Facing something new ahead on your life path.
- » Facing a threat to your health, physical safety, or emotional well-being—illness, a loss, a failure, etc.
- » Feeling that you have to do something that is too difficult for you.
- » Interacting with a spouse, child, boss, or friend who feels hurtful.
- » Will I or won't I ... (find a partner to marry, get divorced, get into the college of my choice, get good enough grades, etc.)?

### *Dr. Greenberg then offers her most-favored stress-reduction option.*

In chapter three Dr. Greenberg writes, "If I had to pick just one tool for dealing with stress, I'd pick mindfulness." (Page 57). In this regard, Dr. Greenberg represents well much of the current psychological thinking about what to do to feel calmer when stress seems to be overwhelming you. She gives particularly clear instructions on how to utilize mindfulness.

### Further options for reducing stressed feelings:

- » Suggestions for minimizing the stress you may put on yourself via guilt, self-imposed have-to's like "I have to be perfect," and more. Do you find yourself adding to your stress levels in this way?
- » Positive strategies like asking yourself, "For what do I feel grateful?" That technique can be surprisingly potent.
- » Reminders to check out physical elements like sleep, nutrition, and exercise. You can't go wrong by paying attention to these health-enhancing factors.

### What #1 stress reduction technique would I add to these strategies?

My #1 technique for dissipating stress is to solve the problem that is producing the stress. Unlike most stress-reduction methods, solving the problem removes stress at its roots.

## Problem-solving usually has three steps:

### 1. Face it.

Problem-solving begins with turning around to squarely face the problem that is causing the stress. Stress, like anxiety, generally indicates that you are aware of a problem but not yet focused on resolving it. Facing the problem squarely launches thinking about what to do about it. For example, you might face the problem of stress by saying, "I'm stressed because I have too much to do and not enough time to do it."

### 2. Clarify your specific concerns.

To accomplish this step, complete the following sentence:

"My main concern(s) regarding this problem is(are) \_\_\_\_\_."

For example, if you feel stressed from too much to do, you might say to yourself, "My main concern is that I have to finish doing my taxes. I also have to finish painting the kitchen before my relatives come to visit next month. And I need to clear out the extra bedroom so they will have a place to sleep."

### 3. Create a plan of action.

Now you are ready to create a solution, a plan of action with pieces of the plan responsive to all of the specific concerns that you have identified: "I think that I will get out a calendar and assign a specific day and time for doing my taxes. I'll also assign a specific day and time for each of the other items on my To Do list, treating each To Do like an appointment. Knowing when I will get each project done keeps them from feeling like too much pressure all at once. Phew. Now I feel lighter, like 'I can do this!'"

Yes, that's it. The #1 strategy for reducing stress is problem-solving, that is, finding a plan of action to address and resolve the problems that are causing your stressed feelings.

Let's review the three steps of problem-solving. The first step is to identify the situation that is triggering your stress. You may then have to do some seriously insightful thinking to clarify your underlying concerns. Lastly, it may take some major creative thinking to come up with a plan of action that will satisfy your concerns.

Here's another example. If your stress comes from having a boss who continually criticizes your mistakes and ignores your positive contributions, your concern might be how to keep the boss's criticisms of you from spoiling your day. What might you do then to feel better? Change departments? Change jobs? Start looking at the boss in a new way that entails you feeling bigger and the boss to shrink in size? Choose to feel fortunate that you have a boss who gives you so much feedback with regard to how to get better at what you do? Find an ally that enables you to regard the boss in a humorous way?

## What else can help to reduce the stress in your life?

For further help with problem-solving, the #1 strategy for reducing feelings of stress, you might want to check out my book *Prescriptions Without Pills*. In addition, my free website called [www.prescriptionswithoutpills.com](http://www.prescriptionswithoutpills.com) offers worksheets and videos designed to help you reduce the sources of stress in your life that challenge your emotional well-being.

The bottom line: stress is not for tolerating. Stress is a warning signal. It's a blinking yellow light that says, "Pay attention. Do something different. Take care of yourself!"

*Susan Heitler, PhD, clinical psychologist. For more information on managing anxiety and other negative emotions, see Dr. Heitler's book *Prescriptions Without Pills: For Relief From Depression, Anger, Anxiety and More*.*

*The #1 strategy  
for reducing stress is  
problem-solving.*



# RESOURCES

## For a Child with Special Needs

Being a parent is as tough a role as any, but what if you're the caregiver of someone with special needs?

Per the U.S. census bureau, one in every nine children today receives special education services. The knowledge and life experiences we typically impart to a child with special needs may run contrary to what he or she will need to know.

Your LifeCycle Connect website provides resources for a loved one with special needs on early intervention programs, applied behavior analysis therapy, educational services, transitioning to adulthood, and more. Let us help as your child reaches his or her potential.



# WEBINAR

04.18.2018 | 12:00pm EST

# REGISTER

### Lifetime Planning for Your Child with Special Needs

Having a loved one with special needs means navigating complex health care, educational and social services systems. Who—or what—is right? This webinar provides general expectations for the timing of important developmental, educational and legal milestones so families and caregivers have the information they need to further advocate for their loved ones.

**Ryan Atherton**

Account Manager, FEI Behavioral Health

**fei** workforce  
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**City of Madison**

1-800-236-7905 or 414-256-4800

[www.feieap.com](http://www.feieap.com)

username: madison





## How Children of Alcoholic Parents Can Be Profoundly Affected

**The emotional toll of having an alcoholic parent may carry into adulthood.**

by [verywellmind](#) (Used by permission)

One misconception that many alcoholics seem to have is that their drinking is not affecting anyone else. But their behavior *does* often affect others, and children of alcoholics tend to be the most vulnerable. In fact, the effects of alcoholism on children are sometimes so profound that they last a lifetime.

### Effects of Parental Alcoholism

To demonstrate just how hazardous parental alcoholism can be to children, consider the fact that many of the characteristics described by adult children of alcoholics are among those also reported by children who were physically or sexually abused by a parent.

Other contexts in which these outcomes have been reported include children who were adopted or lived in foster homes, children with parents who demonstrated compulsive behaviors such as gambling or overeating, children with a parent who had a chronic illness, and children who were raised by overly strict religious parents.

The big picture here is if you or a loved one has a drinking problem and have children, they may be affected and their quality of life may be impacted throughout adulthood. Here are some examples of how alcoholism may affect your children.

### The Need to Guess What Normal Is

Because they did not have an example to follow from their childhood and never experienced “normal” family relationships, adult children of alcoholics may have to guess at what it means to be normal. With that, they sometimes can’t distinguish good role models from bad ones. Also, some children grow up never being comfortable around families because they are uncertain how to act or what to say.

In addition, children of an alcoholic parent may find themselves thinking they are different from other people and not good enough. Consequently, they avoid social situations and have difficulty making friends. They may isolate themselves as a result.

### Judge Themselves without Mercy

Some adult children of alcoholics find it difficult to give themselves a break. They do not feel adequate and feel that they are never good enough. They may have little self-worth and low self-esteem and can develop deep feelings of inadequacy.

### Take Themselves Too Seriously

Some adult children of alcoholics take themselves very seriously and can be their own worst critics. Over time, this can lead to anxiety and depression. For example, one sign you may notice is that it may be difficult for a person who grew up with an alcoholic parent to lighten up at a social gathering. Perhaps this is because they witnessed so many holidays, vacations, and other family events sabotaged by the alcoholic parent.

### Have Difficulty with Intimate Relationships

In order to have an intimate relationship, one must be willing to look to another person for interdependence, emotional attachment, or fulfillment of their needs. Because of trust issues or lack of self-esteem, adult children of alcoholics may not be able to let themselves do that. In other words, they may struggle with romantic relationships and avoid getting close to others, in general.

### Have Trust Issues

After growing up in an atmosphere where denial, lying, and keeping secrets was the norm, adult children of alcoholics can develop serious trust problems. All the broken promises of the past tell them that trusting someone will backfire on them in the future.

### Become Terrified of Abandonment

Because their alcoholic parent was emotionally unavailable or perhaps physically not around, adult children of alcoholics can develop an absolute fear of being abandoned. As a consequence, they can find themselves holding on to relationships they should end just because they don't want to be alone.

### Become Frightened of Angry People

If a child's alcoholic parent was mean or abusive when they were drunk, adult children can grow up with a fear of all angry people. They may spend their lives avoiding conflict or confrontation of any kind, thinking it could turn violent.

### Constantly Seek Approval

Because they constantly judge themselves too harshly, some adult children of alcoholics are constantly seeking approval from others. They can become people-pleasers who are crushed if someone is not happy with them. They can absolutely fear criticism.

### Can Become Super Responsible

Perhaps to avoid criticism or the anger of their alcoholic parent, many children from alcoholic homes become super responsible or perfectionists. They can become overachievers or workaholics. On the other hand, they can also go in the opposite direction, becoming very irresponsible members of society.

**Contact your EAP at 266-6561**

**if we can help you with resources**

**related to alcohol addiction and/or being  
a child of alcoholic parents.**

### A Word from Verywell

The emotional and psychological scars that children can develop in alcoholic homes can be so deep that they can last well into adulthood. If you have an alcohol problem and you have children in the home, please try to find help. Focusing on the love of your children and how your drinking may be affecting them can go a long way in motivating you to scale back your drinking or stop it all together. They deserve that positive change—and so do you.

Likewise, if you are the child of a parent who is or was an alcoholic (or had other addiction problems) and are experiencing one or more of the issues above or any sort of psychological distress, please seek out support. You are not alone, and you deserve help and treatment.



### Sources

- ⚡ Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. **Helping Yourself Heal: A Recovering Man's Guide to Coping With the Effects of Childhood Abuse.** HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4134. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012.
- ⚡ Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. **Helping Yourself Heal: A Recovering Woman's Guide to Coping With the Effects of Childhood Abuse.** HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4132. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012.
- ⚡ **The Laundry List.** Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization.
- ⚡ Woititz JG. **The 13 Characteristics of Adult Children of Alcoholics.** The Awareness Center Resources for Adult Children.

*Thanks for reading,  
we hope you found the information useful!*

**You can reach any of us by calling the  
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