

CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER, 2019

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 10

Supporting the Transgender People in Your Life: A Guide to Being a Good Ally

National Center for Transgender Equality (Used with permission)

Learning to be an ally to the transgender people in your life, or to transgender people overall, is an ongoing process. Some ways to be a good ally are relatively simple and easy, while others require more time, energy, and commitment. Whether you're looking for information on supporting a transgender person in your life or looking for tools that will help you to change the world to be better for transgender people overall, this guide can help.

One of the most important parts of being an ally to transgender people is learning what it means to be transgender. For information on identity, language, and other issues facing transgender people you can visit [Frequently Asked Questions about Transgender People](#), [Understanding Non-Binary People](#), and our [About Transgender People hub](#), which has links to various resources and educational material.

The basics: things to remember about being an ally

There is no one way to be a 'perfect' ally. The transgender community is diverse and complex, coming from every region of the United States and around the world, from every racial and ethnic background, and from every faith community. This means that different members of the transgender community have different needs and priorities. Similarly, there is no one right way to handle every situation, or interact with every trans person. Be respectful, do your best, and keep trying.

You don't have to understand someone's identity to respect it. Some people haven't heard a lot about transgender identity, or have trouble understanding what it means to be trans, and that's okay. But all people, even those whose identities you don't fully understand, deserve respect.

You can't always tell if someone is transgender simply by looking at them. Many people expect that they'll "just know" when someone is trans, and may be surprised to learn that this isn't always true. Since there is no one transgender experience, there is no one way for transgender people to look, either. This also means that transgender people may be in groups or gatherings that you attend without you knowing it, making it important to be an outspoken ally and supporter even in spaces that you think don't have any transgender people in them.



Greetings City Employees,

Typically, the top two presenting issues that employees bring to the EAP are work stress and couple/marital relationship issues. Due to this trend, this month's newsletter includes an article on how work stress can affect your personal relationships. We also hear from employees that they feel general stress (another top issue) wanting to support their coworkers and peers, but not always knowing the best way to do that. This month we are featuring an article on how to be a transgender ally, as well as a First Responder Focus segment on how to support a crew member returning from a health-related leave. Though these two articles do discuss specific populations, the messages can be translated to assist many of us in better navigating how to be supportive of those around us with different life experiences. And, in observance of ADHD Awareness Month, we offer an insightful approach to facing the fear of change in order to achieve real freedom with the article "Shedding ADHD-Type Fears and Creating Change."

Thank you for the work you do.

~ The EAP Team



CITY OF MADISON EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
2300 S. Park St., Suite 111
Madison, WI 53703
www.cityofmadison.com/employee-assistance-program

Tresa Martinez, EAP Manager: (608) 266-6561
Hailey Krueger, EAP Specialist: (608) 266-6561
Sherri Amos, Confidential Program Support: (608) 266-6561

There is no “one right way” to be transgender. Some transgender people choose to medically transition, and some don’t. Some transgender people choose to legally change their names or ID documents, and some don’t. Some transgender people choose to change their appearance (like their clothing or hair), and some don’t. Likewise, some transgender people may want to do many of those things but are unable to because they can’t afford it or for safety reasons. A transgender person’s identity does not depend on what things they have or haven’t done to transition, and no two transgender people’s journeys are exactly alike.

Continue to educate yourself. One of the simplest ways to be a strong ally is to take your education into your own hands. It’s important to have conversations with the trans people in your life, but it’s also important for you to seek out resources and information on your own.

A few great places to start:

- [Frequently Asked Questions about Transgender People](#)
- [Understanding Non-Binary People](#)
- [About Transgender People](#)

Interacting with transgender people

This section includes information on respectfully interacting with transgender individuals one-on-one or when in a small group.

Use the language a transgender person uses for themselves. No two transgender people are exactly the same, and different transgender people may use different words to describe themselves. You should follow the lead of each transgender person, as they will best know the language that is right for them.

If you don’t know what pronouns to use, ask. A simple way to see what pronouns someone uses—he, she, they, or something else—is to wait and see if it comes up naturally in conversation. If you’re still unsure, ask politely and respectfully, without making a big deal about it. Sharing your own pronouns is a great way to bring up the topic—for example, “Hi, I’m Rebecca and I use she/her/hers as my pronouns. How about you?” If you accidentally use the wrong pronouns, apologize and move on. Making a big deal out of a pronoun mistake may be awkward and often draws unwanted attention to the transgender person.

Be careful and considerate about what other questions you ask. There are many topics—medical transition, life pre-transition, sexual activity—that you may be curious about. That doesn’t mean it’s appropriate to ask a transgender person about them, or expect a transgender person to be comfortable sharing intimate details about themselves. There are two questions you



can ask yourself that may help determine if a topic is appropriate to bring up:

1. “Do I need to know this information to treat them respectfully?” Asking someone’s name and pronoun is almost always appropriate, as we use that information in talking to and about each other every day. Beyond that, though, you may be curious about questions that are not things you truly need to know. For example, a transgender coworker’s surgical history is rarely information that you need to know.
2. “Would I be comfortable if this question was turned around and asked of me?” Another good way to determine if a question is appropriate is to think about how it would feel if someone asked you something similar. For example, it would probably not feel appropriate for a coworker to ask you about your private areas of your body. Likewise, it’s probably not appropriate to ask similar questions about a transgender coworker’s body.

Here are some specific topics that many transgender people are uncomfortable discussing with anyone but those closest to them:

- Their birth name (never call it their “real” name!) or photographs from before they transitioned
- What hormones they are (or aren’t) taking
- What surgeries they have (or have not) had
- Questions related to sexual relationships

Someone’s transgender identity is their private information to share, or not. Just because someone has told you that they are transgender does not necessarily mean that they have told everyone in their life. A transgender person may not choose to tell others that they are transgender because it is unsafe to do so, because they’re worried they’ll be mistreated or fired, or simply because they don’t want to share that information with someone. It is not up to you to decide who should or shouldn’t know that a particular person is transgender. Similarly, transgender people should be the ones to decide how much information is being shared: a transgender person may be open about being trans, but only want to discuss medical issues with certain close

friends. Simply because a transgender person has told you something about their experiences doesn't mean they want everyone to know.

Avoid compliments or advice based on stereotypes about transgender people, or about how men and women should look or act. People sometimes intend to be supportive but unintentionally hurt transgender people by focusing on their looks or whether they conform to gender stereotypes. Here are some examples of what to avoid, as they often feel like backhanded compliments:

- "You look like a real woman! I never would have known that you're trans."
- "You would look less trans if you just got a wig/shaved better/wore more makeup/etc."
- "No real man would wear clothing like that. You should change if you don't want people to know you're transgender."
- "I'd date him, even though he's transgender."

Being outspoken

This section includes information on being an outspoken ally in larger groups, at work or at school.

Speak out in support of transgender people and transgender rights. Politely correct others if they use the wrong name or pronoun for a transgender person. More broadly, it is important to challenge anti transgender remarks, jokes, and conversations. It can be scary to speak out, but loud and visible support for transgender rights can show transgender people that they are accepted, encourage other allies to speak out, and help change the minds of people who aren't supportive of transgender people yet.

Support transgender people who experience discrimination. Transgender people may feel that they don't have support from others when making complaints about discrimination or bringing their experiences to authorities, administrators, or others in position of power. Make it clear that you will support the transgender people in your life whether or not they decide to make formal complaints.

Think about how you use gendered language. Do you regularly greet groups by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen?" Do you have a coworker who refers to everyone as "guys?" Is there a particular gender based joke your friend loves to tell? Many transgender people are fine being called 'ladies' or 'gentlemen,' but you can't know without first asking. Consider changing your habits to avoid making assumptions about people's gender or pronouns, and encouraging the people in your life to do the same. This can take time and effort, but is an important way to be an ally and support transgender people outside of individual, face-to-face interactions.

Learn about policies affecting transgender people. Are there any laws that protect transgender people where you live? Any policies at work or school that are inclusive of transgender people? It's important to learn more about the challenges that transgender people face and the goals of transgender advocates, and, if you're comfortable with it, even help push to change bad laws and policies or support good ones.

Changing businesses, schools, and more

Rethink gender on forms and documents. When creating forms and documents, consider whether you need to include gender at all. Many times, we default to asking for gender without considering why or how that information will be used. If you do need to ask for gender information, consider using a blank space for people to fill in as they feel comfortable, rather than a boxes marked "male" and "female," or make it clear that people can fill in forms in a way that matches their gender identity.

Ensure everyone has access to bathrooms and other facilities. Everyone should be able to safely and comfortably use bathrooms and other gendered facilities. Push to allow people to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity rather than what's on their ID. In addition, providing gender-neutral or private bathrooms is a great way to provide safe and comfortable space for everyone (but never require anyone to use them if they don't want!). And if a restroom is designed for just one user at a time, make sure that it's gender-neutral-there's no reason to make it a men's or women's restroom. Take down that "Women" or "Men" sign and put up new signs that say "Restroom."

Push for support and inclusivity, not simply tolerance. A baseline of tolerance-allowing transgender people to exist-is an important start, but we can do more. If your school brings outside speakers or hosts events, make sure that some of them include transgender people and topics. If your business donates to nonprofits, look into partnering with organizations that support the transgender community. If your organization posts community events on social media, include some from the transgender community.

Craft a transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination policy. Shifting the culture of an organization takes time. Crafting a transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination policy can help clarify how your organization supports transgender people, and ensure that there's a way to respond to those who aren't supportive.

Changing the world

Call your elected officials. Call your elected local, state, and federal officials to thank them when they do support transgender rights and to provide important criticism when they don't. Visit [Make Your Voice Heard](#) for more information.

Work to pass laws in your city or state, and on the federal level, that outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education based on gender identity/expression. This could be as simple as calling your elected officials, or as involved as a letter-writing campaign or collecting signatures for a ballot measure.

Change the curriculum of medical, health, crisis response and social work programs, or bring in trainers, to teach these providers about transgender people and how to treat transgender people with respect and professionalism. Include information about the rejection, discrimination and violence that transgender people face and how to provide services and support to transgender clients.

Work with schools to make them safe for transgender students by implementing all the recommendations in our [Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students](#), and use the many other resources available in our [School Action Center](#).

Work with homeless shelters to make them safe for transgender people by implementing all the recommendations in [Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People](#).

Work with suicide prevention, HIV prevention and treatment, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, and anti-smoking programs to ensure that their work is trans-inclusive and their staff is knowledgeable about transgender issues. Find trainers and teach them how to deal sensitively with trans people seeking assistance.

Work with police departments to have fair written policies with regard to interacting with transgender members of the public, regardless if they are seeking assistance or being arrested, and make sure all police officers are trained on following the policy and treating transgender people with respect.

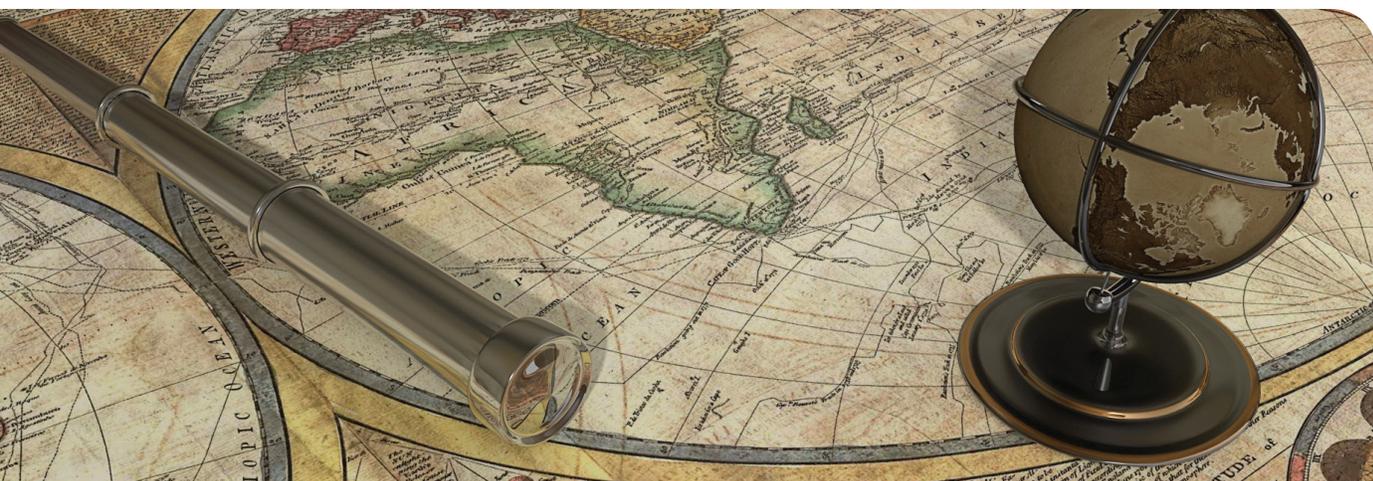
Work with jail and prison systems to ensure the respectful and safe treatment of transgender prisoners, starting with implementing the recommendations of [Standing with LGBT Prisoners](#).

Take a step back. Transgender people come from every population, and are of all races, religions, ages, and more. There are transgender immigrants, employees, prisoners, sex workers, and every other category imaginable. Make an effort to be as inclusive as possible of all kinds of transgender people when working to support transgender communities.

Putting it all into action

Hopefully by this point you feel armed with the tools and knowledge needed to be an ally to the transgender people in your life, as well as the larger transgender community. Remember: no one is able to be the perfect ally at all times, so it's important to provide as much support as you can and to learn from the mistakes you may make along the way.

Thanks for being a strong ally!



Why Work Stress Is Bad for Your Relationships

By Elizabeth Dorrance Hall, Ph.D., *Psychology Today* (used with permission of the author)

Research explains how and why work stress impacts relationships at home.

Work-life balance is all about finding ways to prioritize work while also prioritizing life outside of work (for example: health, pleasure, family, leisure). Although work-life balance looks a little different for everyone, a lack of work-life balance tends to be a common problem. Sometimes our problems at work bleed into our home lives, even when we try to keep them separate. If you have noticed that the challenges you face at work seem to be impacting your relationship at home, there is a model to help you make sense of why and how this happens.

But first, let's talk through two types of work-life conflict you might experience:

Work-family conflict happens when role pressures at work hamper functioning at home. For example, when working late several nights in a row to complete an important but time consuming project, you might fail to do your fair share of the housework. This type of conflict is more likely to happen to people who are Type A (ambitious, organized, high energy, competitive, impatient), have negative emotions or outlook, experience job demands including work pressure and/or having to "fake" emotions like staying positive even when dealing with rude customers, have an undesirable work time schedule, or feel overloaded at work. Work-family conflict is related to hostile interactions between partners as well as reduced marital and life satisfaction.

Family-work conflict happens when roles at home interfere with work. A good example of this is when you have a sick child and have to leave work to get him/her from daycare. Your role as parent is interfering with your role as employee.

The spillover-crossover model

Both of these types of conflict may lead to spillover and crossover, ideas central to the spillover-crossover model. The spillover-crossover model provides another way to look at the push and pull people experience between work and life. This model, developed by Drs. Arnold Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti, explains how and why stress at work can bleed into our home life, and even impact our partner's wellbeing. Let's break it down:

Spillover happens when you bring your work stress home with you and end up working at home, or worrying and ruminating about work at home. Spillover is an individual experience. The basic idea is that we don't always leave

work at work and instead end up focusing on work at the expense of focusing on our social or family lives when away from work.

Crossover happens when the work stress you brought home starts to affect your partner. The stress from your job is effectively crossing over to a completely separate person. This can happen through the transfer of negative emotions or even burnout (complete exhaustion due to overwork and job stress). Researchers have found that exposure to a burned-out partner increases one's own level of burnout. This is an interactive process between two people.

The model says that spillover leads to crossover. Spillover is contained within one person. When you feel stressed at work, you might also feel stressed at home. Crossover by definition must impact more than one person. In a study of spillover crossover among dual-earner parents, Dr. Demerouti and her team found that job demands impact life satisfaction and that experiencing work-family conflict explains how job demands influence life satisfaction. In other words, experiencing more job demands leads to increased work-family conflict which then impacts life satisfaction.

Fortunately, the spillover-crossover model is just as likely to work in a positive direction as a negative one. It is not all about bringing stress home and burdening your partner. Positive experiences at work like satisfaction can spillover to feeling more satisfied at home which can then influence your partner's satisfaction in a positive way. Other attributes that research has shown can spillover and crossover include quality of life, autonomy, social support, work engagement, and vigor.

This model shows that the good aspects of work can positively influence our lives at home and our partners. Perhaps more important however is to be aware of how the negative aspects of work can influence the rest of our lives and the people closest to us.

References

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- » Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2005). Spillover and crossover of exhaustion and life satisfaction among dual-earner parents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 67(2), 266-289.
- » Greenhaus, J. H., & Powell, G. N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work-family enrichment. *Academy of management review*, 31(1), 72-92.

**Madison VA
Hospital
Room B-2055**

Caregiver Day Off: Fri Nov. 1st 2019

**Free classes for
Caregivers of Veterans
Or
Vets who are Caregivers**

9am-12pm

**Lowering Stress,
Improving Mood**

1pm-4pm

Handling Emotions

CLASSES and refreshments provided in partnership with the Memphis VA Caregiver Center. **Please come to this event!**

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For more information, please contact:

Meghann Schmitt, CISW or Margaret Flood, LCSW
Caregiver Support Program at the

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital
2500 Overlook Terrace, Madison, WI

#608-256-1901 ext 13059 or ext 11485



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FIRST RESPONDER FOCUS

How to Support a Crew Member Returning From Treatment

IAFF Behavioral Health Program



If a member of your crew is returning to the job after time off to get help, you and others may be struggling with mixed feelings and questions. What should I say or not say? Is this person really ready to be back at work? How can I help? Regardless of the circumstances, IAFF members know the importance of being there when a fellow fire fighter or paramedic is in need. Supporting your brothers and sisters is what the firehouse family is all about. Here are some steps you can take:

Above all, follow their lead. Whether in recovery from addiction, a major loss, mental or physical illness, no two individuals respond the same. Depending on an individual's stage of recovery and comfort level, the member may or may not want to acknowledge their struggles to other peers in the station. This must be respected. Forcing someone to discuss their health or why they have been off the job could negatively impact the individual and the entire crew.

Convey a supportive welcome back. While directly inquiring about a member's health or treatment experience can be intrusive, no one is asking you to ignore the elephant in the room. Offering neutral supportive statements to a member transitioning back to work can help minimize mutual feelings of awkwardness, while conveying a sense of trust and support. Simple statements such as "We're glad to have you back," "It hasn't been the same around here without you," or "I'm here if you need anything" can go a long way.

Avoid comparisons or claiming that you understand. Occasionally, well intentioned attempts to empathize with someone's experience can have the opposite effect of minimizing their pain. You cannot truly understand what someone is going through, unless you personally have walked in their shoes. Refrain from statements such as, "I had a friend that went through the same thing". It's okay to acknowledge you actually don't understand, but you do still care.

Small talk is good talk. Don't be afraid to engage the returning member in discussion about recent events in your station or community. Conversations such as these can help normalize the individual's experience back at work by shifting focus from the individual to the daily operations of the job. Such conversations help convey the message, "You are still one of us". Cultivating a sense of comradery is essential to support the member's reintegration back to the job and your crew.

Respect a modified workload. If a member is returning from a long absence due to mental or physical injury, bereavement or any other personal issue, he or she may be placed on light duty or receive temporary accommodations to support their transition. You may or may not agree with such accommodations, particularly if you feel the member's past impairment or absence from the job has negatively impacted you in some way. While decisions made by your department to support a member's transition are not up to you, they are to be respected.

Educate yourself. It is estimated that 1 in 5 fire fighters will suffer from PTSD at some point in their career, while addiction and substance abuse impact first responders at the same or higher rate when compared to civilians. You can take a proactive role by learning about the risks, signs, and symptoms of behavioral health problems that commonly impact fire fighters and paramedics. Consider taking the IAFF Behavioral Health Awareness Course, a self-paced online course tailored to fire service.

Look out for one another. The hardest part of recovery begins after the individual is discharged from treatment. For some, relapse or resurgence of symptoms is a part of the recovery process. If you see changes in mood or behavior that could suggest a member is struggling to readjust at home or on the job, it's a good idea to gently approach the member first and simply ask, "How are you doing with everything?" If you don't feel comfortable or able to approach the member, talk to your next in command for guidance.



For a referral in the Madison area,
contact the City of Madison EAP Office
at 266-6561.

If you or someone you know needs help,
call the IAFF Center of Excellence at
(855) 999-9845

The Realities of Workplace Bullying

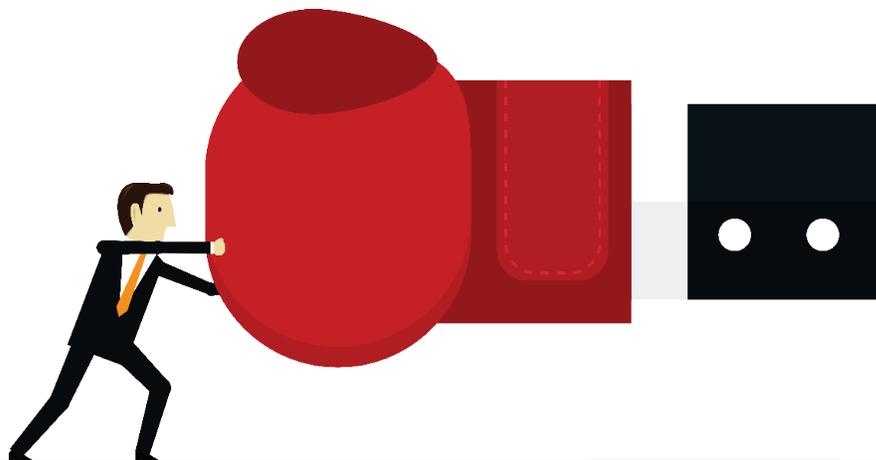
One in five American workers is bullied.

Used to exert power over others, bullying – the persistent application of offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behavior directed at another individual or group of people – negatively affects your physical, emotional and behavioral well-being.

Entire work groups can be impacted by bullying behavior as it creates distractions and morale problems. The prevalence of workplace bullying is larger than you might think, too: 35% of adults report being bullied at work and an additional 15% witness it.

Bullying often goes underreported due to fear – of retaliation, of not being taken seriously, of embarrassment or hurting the alleged harasser, or of being alienated by colleagues. Your workplace should prioritize an environment that is respectful and safe, enforcing anti-bullying policies as appropriate.

Need help? Your EAP can provide additional guidance and resources.



WEBINAR

10.16.19

11:00am CT

REGISTER

Workplace Bullying: *What, Who and How*

From the playground to the workplace, it seems that every bad behavior is considered bullying. By answering the “What, Who and How” questions that often go along with bullying, we will challenge common misconceptions about bullying behaviors and break related myths.

Terri Howard

Senior Director, FEI Behavioral Health

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resilience

1.800.236.7905



City of Madison EAP
266-6561

feieap.com
username: madison

Shedding ADHD-Fueled Fears & Creating Change

By Frances Strassman, *Gina Pera's ADHD Roller Coaster Blog* (Used with Gina Pera's permission)

Imagine that your workday goes this way:

You get up at 7:00 am, hop in the shower, and have a nice walk in the sunshine —while listening to an audiobook or some music. Back home, you eat breakfast, dress, and head to work—arriving on time.

Whew!

You guessed it! There are trade-offs for being this organized.

In order to do all that, it means we can't sleep late, pulling all of the extra softness out of our pillow. And we can't play the snooze-alarm game.

Because we are not sleeping late, **we plan on getting some exercise, which is—let's face it—kind of a nuisance.** And since we are going to arrive to work on time, it means we are going to have a simple breakfast and dress quickly. No getting sidetracked by e-mail and whatnot.

Whoa! There really are some pretty *serious* trade-offs for being organized!

What Are We Giving Up?

- We *love* sleeping late.
- We *love* indulging.
- We *fear* that if we commit to getting up early and exercising, we're not really going to want to stick with it.
- We *fear* that, if we stop, we will feel so bad about ourselves that **it feels safer to not even start.**
- We *love* feeling free as a bird, tied to nothing. We hate the idea of following a schedule, being precise, being controlled, being committed.
- **Worst of all: If we start any of these patterns, people will expect us to continue!** They will now assume we can start work on time and so on.

Egads! Freedom gone.

But What Is the Cost of Not Changing?

And yet, there are also trade-offs for *staying disorganized.*

- **We are seen as a bit flaky.**
- Our friends and family feel that they can't count on us.
- We tend not to get exercise and therefore don't feel so good.
- Having over-slept, we are always in a big rush, maybe put on the wrong mismatched clothes, eat over the sink, slam our finger in the microwave, and get the day off to a bad start.
- **At work, we are seen as rather undependable.** Maybe not too likely to get promoted? Not considered a valuable asset?

Which Way True Freedom?

So why is it that neither aspect seems very exciting? We have a hard time rationalizing what we are hanging onto, but getting organized seems like a bunch of restrictions, constrictions, and losses.

My experience is that the reason it looks that way to us is that **we have not experienced what true freedom means.**

I know that statement makes you want to gag. But hang in there with me for a minute.

When does true freedom begin to develop for those of us who are pretty seriously disorganized? It begins when we begin to orient our self—our whole being—toward *order.*

This is easy to talk about but not easy to do. We are afraid of those changes. Therefore, the process takes place gradually by our allowing little bits of it to seep in over a period of time.

At some point we make a decision that we actually want to be rested each night. So we begin going to bed early enough so that can happen. And we look at how to set things up so that we actually *will be able* to go to sleep shortly after going to bed.

Next, we might decide we want to wake up both early *and* rested. We get up early enough to get a good start to the day. Once we get used to the shock of that, we start entertaining the possibility of some exercise once or twice a week, which slowly spreads into daily.

At this point, we start feeling a lot better physically and mentally. We start feeling strong and able. We start feeling like someone who can stay on track, who can decide how his or her day will go. There is a sense of being in charge.

As we feel more and more in charge, we feel more able to expand into areas that will make us feel abler. For example, we consider the obstacles to getting to work on time and eliminate those obstacles one by one. When we get into work, we begin to recognize the distractions and we start eliminating those one by one.

The process is like putting training wheels on your bicycle. You set out to learn things gradually, you give yourself support, and you look for the balance point. Then one day you're riding without training wheels and it's no big deal.

Learning to put order into our life, as a consistent focus, is that same process. That is, the approach is gradual but consistent; you give yourself support and encouragement, and you commit to keep going.

One day, just like the bicycle rider, you notice a sense of freedom has begun to permeate your life. You have become a person who can say that you can do something, and know that you *will* do it.

What Have You Got To Lose?

This means you are free to do whatever you want, instead of having to unconsciously shape your life around all the things that you don't think that you can do. To the extent to which we hang onto our disorder, we are hanging onto negative beliefs about our self and our lack of ability to change. There are trade-offs to getting organized. There are trade-offs to anything we do. But in this case, it is not freedom you lose, but fear.



Connections as a Resource for ADD/ADHD

The following previous issues of the EAP newsletter include articles/information about ADD/ADHD, primarily as it is experienced by adults and in the workplace:

- » **October 2017** – “How to Manage Employees with ADD/ADHD”
- » **July 2018** – “7 Tips for Improved Productivity in Adult ADHD”
- » **October 2018** – “The ‘A’ Word” and link to Ted Talk by Salif Mahamane “ADHD sucks, but not really”

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

**You can reach any of us by calling the
EAP Office at (608) 266-6561**

**External Available 24/7:
FEI Workforce Resilience (800) 236-7905**

Tresa Martinez, tmartinez@cityofmadison.com

Hailey Krueger, hkrueger@cityofmadison.com

Sherri Amos, samos@cityofmadison.com

To learn more about your external EAP services, please contact FEI at 1-800-236-7905 or log on to feieap.com and type username: madison.