

# E A M E S S E N G E R P

A quarterly  
newsletter  
of INVEST EAP

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## Supporting a Healthy Organization

Volume 20

Issue 2

Spring 2018

### Counseling: A helpful resource for anyone!

#### Normal Problems in Living

After successfully landing her dream job in a start-up company, Sophia has felt uncharacteristically low. She's an accomplished woman in the prime of life, yet feels lonely, has trouble falling asleep, and has been drinking a bit more than usual. As much as she considers her situation, she knows something is off, and it doesn't make sense.



In another town, Juarez, a successful public attorney, is having a tough time. His oldest daughter Emily is starting college in a few weeks. Emily has been snappy and argumentative with everyone in the family. Added to this stress, his elderly father, who just moved to an assisted living program, calls daily with complaints about the staff and new space. The stress of his family situation is starting to affect Juarez's attention at work. So much so that a colleague recently noticed and asked him if everything's all right.

Tom, a dedicated firefighter who's recognized for his courage and commitment on the job, just experienced the death of his father from cancer. Tom's grief has felt intense- much stronger than he anticipated. He is troubled by guilt for not having been in regular contact with his dad as well as sorrow. Tom is the type of guy who doesn't usually like to share feelings. He doesn't want to appear weak or burden others. But in this case, his grief is eating at him and is interfering with his concentration at work.

Everyone has times when life is more challenging, be it from loss, change or common place or unusual problems. Problems and stress go hand in hand and are normal parts of living. Most of the time, we can handle a bit more stress without any difficulty. At other times, we have more on our plate than we can handle. Then life feels overwhelming and we can feel quite vulnerable. This in turn affects our personal relationships and ability to handle tasks and responsibilities. Naturally, it can also affect our

performance at work.

Each of these people is struggling with normal problems in living. Juarez, Sophia, and Tom are competent, high functioning adults. As far as we know, they don't have a mental illness. Their safety and wellbeing are not at immediate risk. Still, each of them could benefit from some help to get through a rough time.

#### Why counseling?

In situations such as these, help in the form of counseling is worth considering. The counseling relationship offers a protected space to speak about what's on our minds and in our hearts. Family and good friends are important supports and can often be good listeners, but there are times when we need an outside perspective, someone who can listen without judgement and not offer opinions about how we should handle things. Family and friends are often so involved with us that their perspectives can be slanted. And sometimes, we want and need privacy to explore a concern or make a considered decision.

There are other benefits of talking with a counselor. Counseling is confidential, which means any information shared is kept completely private, unless there is a safety concern. A good counselor will listen respectfully and never tell you what

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to do or advise on the best decision. Instead, he or she will ask questions and listen with empathy and respect to help you arrive at your own answers. A good counselor can also teach skills such as problem solving, stress management, and communication. Being able to speak openly in a confidential environment and be listened to in a deep way provides significant relief and support for most of us. This is what you can expect from EAP counseling.

A few words about the terms counseling and psychotherapy: these are often used interchangeably but there are some differences. The word psychotherapy generally refers to a form of treatment for mental health conditions that can be diagnosed. A practitioner of psychotherapy makes a diagnosis and utilizes specific techniques or theory such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or Psycho-dynamic therapy to address symptoms. It is also considered to be a more in-depth practice. Counseling is a more generic term and as a practice is offered in a variety of settings such as schools, religious organizations, vocational support agencies in addition to traditional mental health organizations. However, often a counselor is also a mental health counselor who is trained to make a mental health diagnosis and utilizes specific approaches in their work, so it can be confusing.

### **EAP Counseling**

Employee Assistance Programs provide employees with confidential, brief and focused counseling to address a wide range of problems in living. You don't need to have a mental health diagnosis to access EAP counseling. In fact, it's good prevention to access services before problems become overwhelming and potential threats to mental health. EAP counseling is unique in this way. Often, a few counseling sessions is all that someone needs to get back on the right track.

Some people don't know that EAP counseling through Invest EAP is free! Your employer provides this benefit at no charge.

Invest EAP counselors are specially trained to address any problem that impacts functioning at work. This includes tensions in family relationship, grief related to the death of a loved one, life changes such as getting married or having a child leave home, moving to a new

area, preparing for retirement, or worries about health problems.

In addition, EAP counselors have expertise with problems that originate in the workplace such as burnout, conflict with a supervisor, difficult interactions on a work team, demands of a new promotion, or difficulty managing tasks or time. Sometimes an employee will reach out because their supervisor has suggested it for coaching on a particular area of performance, and sometimes an employee will utilize EAP counseling when they have been let go from a job. All of these are valid reasons for service and an EAP counselor has the specialized skill and experience to help.

Another important way that an EAP counselor can help is through their knowledge of resources in the community. If someone is having a problem, for example, with how to find the right child care or how to access services for an elderly parent, EAP counseling can lead to information and referral to resources.

It's important to know that your EAP *does* help employees who have a mental health or substance abuse problem when they need help with accessing services or ongoing care. In this case, the role of the EAP counselor is a little different: they assess the need and locate appropriate resources for ongoing mental health care. Then they will help you make the appropriate connection for services, often after the first session or two.

No matter what the concern, it's important to find someone with whom we feel comfortable and to access services in a timely way. The EAP has trained EAP counselors located in every region where we have employee members. EAP counselors have been vetted by our clinical staff so the employee doesn't need to do a lot of research. There are no wait lists. A phone call leads to a referral to a skilled provider in your area and an appointment within a few business days.

So, remember: If you need help, we are here and happy to respond. All you need to do is call.



## **EAP SERVICES**

EAP is here to help. For more information about articles in this newsletter, or any other EAP-related topic, please call one of our trained counselors at our toll-free number:

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