



EAP EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

November 2023



DEER OAKS PRESENTS

November On-Demand Seminar

Caring for the Caregiver

*Available OnDemand starting November 21st
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Table of Contents

Support for Caregivers:
Your New Role • P. 2

November 1st is
International Stress
Awareness Day • P. 3

Seasonal Affective
Disorder • P. 5

Planning Ahead for the Winter
Holiday Season • P. 7

SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS: YOUR NEW ROLE



If you're helping your family member or friend through an illness or disability, you are a caregiver. This may mean helping with daily activities such as going to the doctor or making meals. It could also mean coordinating services and care, or it may be giving emotional and spiritual support. The tips below are for most caregivers.

Coping with Being a Caregiver

Giving care and support during this time can be a challenge. Many caregivers put their own needs and feelings aside to focus on the person they care for. This can be hard to maintain for a long time, and it's not good for your health. The stress can have both physical and psychological effects. If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of others. It's important for everyone that you give care to you.

Changing Roles

Whether you're younger or older, you may find yourself in a new role as a caregiver. You may have been an active part of someone's life before, but perhaps now the way you support them is different. It may be in a way in which you haven't had much experience, or in a way that feels more intense than before.

Even though caregiving may feel new to you now, many caregivers say that they learn more as they go through their loved one's experience. Here are some common situations that they describe:

- Patients may only feel comfortable with a spouse or partner taking care of them.
- Caregivers with children struggle to take care of a parent too.
- Parents may have a hard time accepting help from their adult children.
- Caregivers find it hard to balance taking care of a loved one with job responsibilities.
- Adult children with an illness or disability may not want to rely on their parents for care.

- Caregivers may have health problems themselves, making it physically and emotionally hard to take care of someone else.

Whatever your roles are now, it's very common to feel confused and stressed at this time. If you can, try to share your feelings with others or join a support group, or you may choose to seek help from a counselor.

Ask for Help

Many caregivers say that, looking back, they took too much on themselves, or they wish they had asked for help from friends or family sooner. Take an honest look at what you can and can't do. What things do you need or want to do yourself? What tasks can you turn over or share with people? Be willing to let go of things that others can help you do. Some examples may be:

- Helping with chores, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, or yard work
- Taking care of the kids or picking them up from school or activities
- Driving your loved one to appointments or picking up medicines
- Being the contact person to keep others updated

Accepting help from others isn't always easy. Remember that getting help for yourself can also help your loved one—you may stay healthier, your loved one may feel less guilty about all the things that you're doing, some of your helpers may offer useful skills and have extra time to give you. Websites such as SignUpGenius or Lotsa Helping Hands can help you organize requests and tasks.

Be prepared for some people not to help.

When someone has a serious illness such as cancer, friends and family often reach out to help. Sometimes people you don't know very well also want to give you a hand. But it's important to realize that there are others who may not be able to help you. You might wonder why someone wouldn't offer to help you or your family when you're dealing with so much. Here are some common reasons:

- Some people may be coping with their own problems.
- Some may not have the time.
- They are afraid of cancer or may have already had a bad experience with cancer. They don't want to get involved and feel pain all over again.
- Some people believe it's best to keep a distance when people are struggling.
- Sometimes people don't realize how hard things really are for you, or they don't understand that you need help unless you ask them for it directly.
- Some people feel awkward because they don't know how to show they care.

If someone isn't giving you the help you need, you may want to talk to them and explain your needs. Or you can just let it go. However, if the relationship is important, you may want to tell the person how you feel. This can help prevent resentment or stress from building up. These feelings could hurt your relationship in the long run.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Cancer Institute (NCI). (Updated 2020, August 6). Support for caregivers of cancer patients. Retrieved September 15, 2021, from <https://www.cancer.gov>



NOVEMBER 1ST IS INTERNATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS DAY

I'm So Stressed Out!

Feeling overwhelmed? Read this article to learn whether it's stress or anxiety and what you can do to cope.

Is it stress or anxiety?

Life can be stressful—you may feel stressed about performance at school, traumatic events (such as a pandemic, a natural disaster, or an act of violence), or a life change. Everyone feels stress from time to time.

What is stress? Stress is the physical or mental response to an external cause, such as having a lot of homework or having an illness. A stressor may be a one-time or short-term occurrence, or it can happen repeatedly over a long time.

What is anxiety? Anxiety is your body's reaction to stress and can occur even if there is no current threat.

If that anxiety doesn't go away and begins to interfere with your life, it could affect your health. You could experience problems sleeping, or with your immune, digestive, cardiovascular, and reproductive systems. You also may be at higher risk for developing a mental illness such as an anxiety disorder or depression.

So, how do you know when to seek help?

Stress vs. Anxiety

Stress

- Generally, this is a response to an external cause, such as taking a big test or arguing with a friend.
- It goes away once the situation is resolved.
- Stress can be positive or negative. For example, it may inspire you to meet a deadline, or it may cause you to lose sleep.

Both Stress and Anxiety

Both stress and anxiety can affect your mind and body. You may experience symptoms such as:

- Excessive worry
- Uneasiness
- Tension
- Headaches or body pain
- High blood pressure
- Loss of sleep

Anxiety

- Generally, anxiety is internal, meaning it's your reaction to stress.
- It usually involves a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread that doesn't go away and that interferes with how you live your life.
- Anxiety is constant, even if there is no immediate threat.

It's important to manage your stress.

Everyone experiences stress, and sometimes that stress can feel overwhelming. You may be at risk for an anxiety disorder if it feels like you can't manage the stress and if the symptoms of your stress:

- Interfere with your everyday life
- Cause you to avoid doing things
- Seem to be always present

Coping with Stress and Anxiety

Learning what causes or triggers your stress and what coping techniques work for you can help reduce your anxiety and improve your daily life. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. Here are some activities you can try when you start to feel overwhelmed:



- Keep a journal.
- Download an app that provides relaxation exercises (such as deep breathing or visualization) or tips for practicing mindfulness, which is a psychological process of actively paying attention to the present moment.
- Exercise, and make sure you are eating healthy, regular meals.
- Stick to a sleep routine, and make sure you are getting enough sleep.
- Avoid drinking excess caffeine such as soft drinks or coffee.
- Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- Reach out to your friends or family members who help you cope in a positive way.

Recognize when you need more help.

If you are struggling to cope, or the symptoms of your stress or anxiety won't go away, it may be time to talk to a professional. Psychotherapy (also called "talk therapy") and medication are the two main treatments for anxiety, and many people benefit from a combination of the two.

If you are in immediate distress or are thinking about hurting yourself, call 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline), or use the chat at <https://988lifeline.org> (the former number at 800-273-TALK [800-273-8255] will still work and reroutes you to 988). You also can text the Crisis Text Line (HELLO to 741741) or visit <https://crisistextline.org>.

If you or someone you know has a mental illness, is struggling emotionally, or has concerns about their mental health, there are ways to get help. Your employee wellbeing service is a good place to start.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (n.d.). I'm so stressed out! [Fact Sheet] (NIH Pub. No. 20-MH-81255). Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov>

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD)

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs at a certain time of the year, usually in winter.

Causes

SAD may begin during the teen years or in adulthood. Like other forms of depression, it occurs more often in women than in men. People who live in places with long winter nights are at high risk of developing SAD. A less common form of the disorder involves depression during the summer months.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually build up slowly in the late autumn and winter months. Symptoms are often the same as with other forms of depression:

- Hopelessness
- Increased appetite with weight gain (weight loss is more common with other forms of depression)
- Increased sleep (too little sleep is more common with other forms of depression)
- Less energy and ability to concentrate
- Loss of interest in work or other activities
- Sluggish movements
- Social withdrawal
- Unhappiness and irritability



SAD can sometimes become long-term depression. Bipolar disorder or thoughts of suicide are also possible.

Exams and Tests

There is no test for SAD. Your health care provider can make a diagnosis by asking about your history of symptoms. Your provider may also perform a physical exam and blood tests to rule out other disorders that are similar to SAD.

Treatment

As with other types of depression, antidepressant medicines and talk therapy can be effective.

Managing Your Depression at Home

Here are some tips to manage your symptoms at home:

- Get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Take medicines the right way. Ask your provider how to manage side effects.
- Learn to watch for early signs that your depression is getting worse. Have a plan if it does get worse.
- Try to exercise more often. Do activities that make you happy.

Do not use alcohol or illegal drugs. These can make depression worse. They can also cause you to think about suicide.

When you are struggling with depression, talk about how you are feeling with someone you trust. Try to be around people who are caring and positive. Volunteer or get involved in group activities.

Light Therapy

Your provider may prescribe light therapy. Light therapy uses a special lamp with a very bright light that mimics light from the sun:

- Treatment is started in the fall or early winter, before the symptoms of SAD begin.
- Follow your provider's instructions about how to use light therapy. One way that may be recommended is to sit a couple of feet (60 centimeters) away from the light box for about 30 minutes each day. This is often done in the early morning, to mimic sunrise.
- Keep your eyes open, but do not look straight into the light source.

If light therapy is going to help, symptoms of depression should improve within three to four weeks. Side effects of light therapy include

- Eyestrain or headache
- Mania (rarely)

People who take medicines that make them more sensitive to light, such as certain psoriasis drugs, antibiotics, or antipsychotics, should not use light therapy. A checkup with your eye doctor is recommended before starting treatment.

With no treatment, symptoms usually get better on their own with the change of seasons. Symptoms can improve more quickly with treatment.

Outlook (Prognosis)

The outcome is usually good with treatment, but some people have SAD throughout their lives.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988 or chat <https://988lifeline.org/chat>. You can also call 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255). The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential support 24/7, anytime day or night.

You can also call 911 or the local emergency number or go to the hospital emergency room. DO NOT delay. If someone you know has attempted suicide, call 911 or the local emergency number right away. DO NOT leave the person alone, even after you have called for help.



Alternative Names

It is also called seasonal depression, winter depression, wintertime blues or simply SAD.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Library of Medicine (NLM). (Reviewed 2022, April 30). Seasonal affective disorder. Retrieved January 11, 2023, from <https://medlineplus.gov>

PLANNING AHEAD FOR THE WINTER HOLIDAY SEASON

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Planning ahead can help alleviate some of the stress that accompanies this very exciting, but busy, time of the year. When you have enough money saved in the bank, giving gifts is a much more enjoyable experience all around. You can concentrate on getting the right gift for that special family member or friend, as opposed to feeling overwhelmed by having to spend money you don't have. Many people buy more than they can afford and the "Ghost of Holiday Past" ends up haunting them every month in the New Year—in the form of a credit card payment.

- **Develop a budget and stick to it.** Write a list of everyone on your gift list and determine how much you want to spend on each person. You should also include costs for cards, postage, gift wrapping, holiday meals out, parties, travel, and any other miscellaneous items. Bring your list when you hit the stores, as it is easy to shop impulsively during this time of year.
- **Shorten your gift list.** Is it really necessary to buy everyone on your list a present? Consider sending a thoughtful holiday card or e-mail, or even writing a family newsletter to update everyone about the past year.
- **Get creative with your gift giving.** Handmade gifts and personalized coupons can be the most thoughtful gifts. Think about your own talents as well as what the person may need. For example, knit a blanket or sweater; bake some cookies; create a photo album of your favorite pictures (decorate the cover of the album with a colorful title); or give them a coupon for a special dinner at your house, babysitting time, or even a house cleaning! The list is endless.



- **Draw names.** If you belong to a big family or have many friends, suggest this idea so that each person has to buy only one gift.
- **Shop early and compare prices.** There are great bargains and sales to be found—even during this time of year. In the future, when you see a great gift for a family or friend during the year—buy it! Not only do stores offer special promotions and discount prices throughout the year, but this will also save you time during the holidays and help you spread your spending throughout the year. Just don't forget to put your gifts in a safe place so you know where to find them when it's time to give them away!
- **Shop online or by catalog.** It's fast, it's easy, and you can comparison shop! In addition, since you'll probably be ordering gifts from the comforts of your home, the temptation to eat out or to make unplanned purchases will be greatly reduced.

- **Save money.** Continue adding to your holiday fund each week. If your budget is tight, find ways to cut back on your daily spending (e.g., no morning latte, bring a lunch to work, give up your weekly movie, etc.), and put that extra cash toward gifts.
- **Pay off your credit card.** If you are planning to shop with a credit card, make sure you have enough in your bank account to pay off the amount at the end of the month. Also, consider using cards that offer extra incentives such as frequent flyer miles.
- **Donate more than cash.** Contact your favorite local charity and see if they take donations in other forms than just cash (e.g., canned goods, clothing, furniture, books, etc.).

Holiday Savings Accounts

Some banks and credit unions offer special holiday savings accounts that don't allow withdrawals before the holiday season. These holiday club accounts are designed to help you save for the holidays all year long. You can open some with as little as \$10 and make deposits through payroll deductions or by transferring funds from a savings or checking account. The interest rates are usually low, but this is a good way to discipline yourself into saving money throughout the year and having cash when you need it.

If your financial institution does not have a specific holiday savings account, you can use your own savings account or create a new account specifically for holiday savings (or other special events throughout the year). The key is tracking your deposits and making sure you don't withdraw money until it is time.

The earlier in the year that you put money into some kind of holiday savings account, the more time you will have to accumulate a nice lump of cash to put towards gift buying.

Source: Choose to Save & The American Savings Education Council. (n.d.). Planning ahead for the winter holiday season. Retrieved November 30, 2016, from <http://www.choosetosave.org>

