

EAP CONNECTIONS

A newsletter for employees
served by Sutter EAP



Ways to Increase Happiness at Work

What's that old bumper sticker saying..., "The worst day of fishing is better than the best day at work." Well, turns out for most of us, after family and health, it's our work and not our leisure time that brings us the most satisfaction. The problem, though – research shows that unhappy employees often outnumber happy ones, two to one.

Whether you hang your hat in an office, classroom, healthcare venue or a construction site, here are some simple ideas that can help make even the dullest days bright for you and those around you.



What is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

Sutter EAP provides employees and family members referrals to licensed, professional therapists. Our network of experienced therapists can help with personal problems that may impact your job, relationships or overall well-being.

- ✓ **There is no charge to you!**
- ✓ **100% confidential!**

Call 800-477-2258 to learn more about your benefit.

1) SMILE. Something as simple as a smile can increase your joy at work, thanks to the release of neuropeptides, stress-relieving compounds that send a message to your brain to happy-up. Smiling has also been shown to be contagious and there's a good chance it will make your co-workers smile, as well.

2) DON'T BE AN ISLAND. Polls reveal it's the people we work with that are the number one reason for loving a job. So, whether it's talking with a co-worker about your kids or weekend plans, work buddies help to create a support system that makes work more enjoyable and improves engagement.

3) PRACTICE GOOD MANNERS. Say "Please" and "Thank you." Taking time on the job to practice good manners and express appreciation will improve your relationships, increase your popularity, and contribute to your success.

4) TAKE A BREATH. It's very easy to get burned out during the workday. Set a positive example by stepping away from your workspace and going for a quick walk. Walk around the building, take three deep breaths or touch your toes 10 times. These quick distractions may even bring another smile to your face.

5) MINDFULNESS. If you struggle to let go of negative thoughts at work, you may want to try a mindfulness (positive thinking) exercise. There are plenty of them on YouTube and you might enjoy Calm.com. Identifying your negative thinking can actually clear brain pathways for positivity. Keep up the mindfulness exercises until you can get through a day and then a week without lingering on any negative thoughts.

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6) WALK IT OFF. Sometimes all it takes to increase your joy and clear your head at work is a quick walk around the building. Grab a co-worker you've been meaning to talk to and make it a fun break in your day.

7) REWARD YOURSELF. When something goes well take a moment or two to acknowledge all you have accomplished. Be sure to celebrate with everyone involved. Avoid the tendency to focus only on the imperfections. Take a perspective that focuses on the wins, not the losses.

Interested in finding other ways to improve your happiness...?

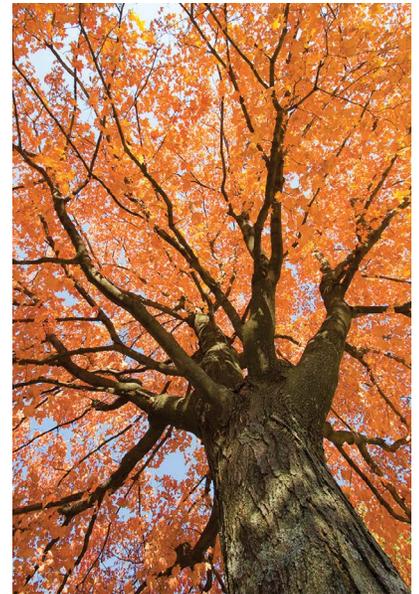
Consider calling the EAP to get connected with a licensed therapist who can help you explore other ways to improve your happiness. Sutter Health EAP **800-477-2258**.

SAD: When That Downturn in Mood May Be More than Just Winter Blues

It's not just little ghosts and goblins and pumpkin pie that are sure signs fall is here. For up to 1 in 20 of us, it means the arrival, too, of seasonal affective disorder, or, SAD, a type of depression that turns up in late fall and tends to stick around until early spring.

"Winter's increased darkness disrupts the delicate balance of biorhythms and brain chemicals, such as serotonin and melatonin, which regulate everything from hunger to mood to sleep," says Raheel Khan, D.O., a psychiatrist at Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento. "And, SAD is more than just winter blues. The symptoms vary in intensity, and daily functioning can be affected."

Symptoms include feeling sad, grumpy, or moody, "hibernating," carb cravings and weight gain; and sleeping more but still feeling tired, during the same seasonal timeframe at least two years in a row.



Dr. Kahn advises that SAD can be successfully treated. Here's how:



What You Can Do on Your Own to Feel Better: Eat a well-balanced diet; exercise for 30 minutes a day, five times a week (in the sun if possible); stay active and connected.



Light Therapy: If the above measures don't deliver relief within 7 to 10 days, consider a high-intensity light box, advises Dr. Khan. "It helps most people who have the disorder, and the light boxes are easy to use," he explains. "Stay with it each day until the season changes, or your symptoms could return."

- **Standard light box:** A 10,000 lux light box is considered by many experts to be the most effective. Place the box on a desk or table about 2 feet from your face for 20-30 minutes first thing in the morning while you read, eat breakfast, or work at your computer.
- **Dawn simulator.** For this treatment, a computerized lamp goes on in the morning while you sleep, and, mimicking a sunrise, starts off dimly and over time slowly gets brighter.



Meditation and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Meditation and mindfulness practices help to reduce stress and anxiety. Antidepressant medicines and CBT – a form of psychotherapy that helps develop coping strategies – either alone or in combination with light therapy, may help. If you are interested in speaking to a therapist who specializes in CBT, contact the EAP for a referral at **800-477-2258**.

For more information on SAD, visit psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/seasonal-affective-disorder