Pentagon Employee Referral Service(PERS)

Perspectives

Employee Assistance Program

January 2015

New Year...New You!

Teresa Ross, PsyD

Happy New Year! Every year millions of people make New Year's resolutions yet almost 80% fail to achieve them. Goals central to many resolutions that can have a positive impact on your mental and physical health include: healthy eating, exercising regularly, and quitting smoking. However, many people often strive for unrealistic goals and ultimately set themselves up for failure.

This Perspectives issue provides tips for successfully planning and achieving your goals this year, as well as improving supportive relationships.

The Employee Assistance Program also offers a range of free wellbeing and financial training workshops to help you maintain your 2015 resolutions.

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The Importance of Being S.M.A.R.T.

Stacie Chapman, LCPC

The beginning of a New Year often results in the desire for change. People make goals to exercise more, eat less, or take better care of your health. You start off strong in January and by March, all plans have been pushed to the back burner and you may feel discouraged. Why not set yourself up for success by looking at the goals you are setting and making them SMART?

What is a SMART goal? When you are making a plan to achieve a goal, break it down into five areas: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely or SMART.

SPECIFIC: As you look at your desired goal, ask yourself who's involved? What is it that I want to accomplish? When will I start? Why am I engaging in this goal? What resources do I need in order to complete my goal? By asking yourself some specific questions, you can really focus on what you want to do. Being specific can take your goal from "I want to get in shape" to "I will work out 3 days a week."

MEASURABLE: How will you know when your goal is complete? Ask yourself how much/how many? Establish target dates. Expand "I want to lose weight" to "I want to lose 30 pounds in 6 months." By including a specific amount of weight and a timeframe, you can track your progress, which often provides more motivation to complete your goals.

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***EAP Services Highlights:**

* Assist Federal civilian employees in resolving issues adversely impacting work or home.
* Provide one-on-one assessment, short-term counseling, referrals to community resources and crisis intervention.
* Conduct a variety of educational workshops and classes (e.g., employee orientation, supervisor training).
* Website: http://www.dthc.capmed.mil/EAP/SitePages/Home.aspx

The Importance of Being S.M.A.R.T.

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ACHIEVABLE: Your set yourself up for success by working towards goals that you believe can be accomplished. As you work on the goals, you develop skills and attitudes that allow you to adapt your life to pave the way for success. By setting an achievable goal, your self-esteem gets boosted by completing steps and making progress.

REALISTIC: When you set your goal, ask do I want to work towards this goal? Am I able to work towards this goal? Do I believe I can accomplish this goal? Consider what is upcoming for you professionally and personally to determine if you have potential roadblocks that may hinder your goal completion. Being realistic can help you adjust your planned steps when you determine that there are particular challenges and obstacles ahead. This helps you to stay on track and not get discouraged if you experience a setback. Remember, goals are adaptable too and timelines can be adjusted.

TIMELY: Setting a target date gives you motivation and can help you plan how to meet your goal by your established date. For example, if you decide to set a goal of running a half marathon, timeliness can help you figure out what you will need to do each month in order to prepare for the event. You can use any time frame that will be helpful to reach success.

Other tips: If a goal seems too overwhelming, break it down into smaller steps that each have different end dates.

Before you know it, you will have done everything you wanted to do and completed all of your goals. SMART goals are meant to be a framework to help you be successful. If you would like to sit down with an EAP counselor to learn more about SMART goals, please call us at 703-692-8917.

"Your success and happiness lies in you. Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties."
—Helen Keller

Habit Change in the New Year

Andre Peri, PhD

While it is easy to recognize that having good habits are the key to success in many areas of life, it may seem difficult to build healthy habits while shedding the unhealthy ones. The New Year is the time when many people make resolutions to change their ways, only to find that you abandon those resolutions by the end of February or March.

To make long-lasting habit changes, it is first important to understand how habits work,

and the elements that make up the habit. A **habit** includes the cue or trigger; a routine, which is the behavior itself; and the reward that comes from completing the behavior.

A **cue** can be a specific time, place or situation; a visual reminder; a memory; a person/persons; and can include physical, mental or emotional states such as hunger, frustration, fatigue, sadness, loneliness, and anxiousness.

The **routine** is the behavior that you want to change, by either **starting** or **giving up.**

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Habit Change in the New Year

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Finally, the **reward** can be biological (i.e., satiation of hunger, rebalance in blood sugar level, or rest and recuperation), social (i.e., attention, recognition or socialization), or emotional (happiness, excitement, rush, or relief).

Here's an example, let's say you want to break the habit of having a second serving of food at dinner. In order to change this habit, follow these four steps:

1) **Identify the routine:** This tends to be the most obvious part of the habit, because it is the behavior that you want to change. However, when writing down the routine, make sure you are detailed, careful not to miss any aspect of it. It may be helpful to take the first week, to observe the routine that you want to change, without making any changes.

2) **Experiment with rewards:** In the second phase, continue with the approach of a scientist in order to figure out the craving by substituting various behaviors instead of having a second serving. For example, you may drink a glass of water instead of eating the second serving, eat only vegetables, or engage in an activity right after the first serving such as going for a walk. The goal is to figure out why you have the second serving. After engaging in the replacement behavior, set an alarm for 15 minutes to see if you still feel the urge for the second serving in order to determine the reward you are craving. Experimenting with different rewards is crucial to understanding cravings, which is essential in redesigning the habit.

3) **Identify the cue for the routine:** Identify all triggers associated with the behavior such as internal physical, mental, and emotional states, as well as social context, setting and time. Pay attention to the cues that bring on the behaviors, as well as any cues that prevent the behavior.

4) **Have a plan:** It is important to remember the Golden Rule of Habit Change—keep the cue and the reward the same, but change the routine. Habits cannot be wiped out, but must, instead, be replaced. To break a bad habit, increase the number of steps to complete the task. Thus, in the above example, it can include putting away the food after making the first plate and washing the serving utensils before sitting down to eat. To create a new habit, decrease the number of steps to complete the task. Thus, if you would like to eat fruits after the first serving, prepare them in advance and lay them out as a visual reminder.

Additionally, it is important to realize that a process of experimentation and failure is critical to long-term habit change. Recognize that willpower is a finite resource and it does fade. Thus, be patient with yourself and somewhat flexible, maybe allowing yourself the use of "cheat days." Avoid all or nothing thinking and understand the difference between lapse versus relapse. A lapse is a slip after which we quickly return to our behavior change effort. When we relapse, our change effort is abandoned.

Finally, having a detailed habit change plan is not enough—it is fundamental that you must believe that change is possible! The most effective way to nurture this belief is by tapping into the encouragement and support offered by a group. Consider joining a group or forming one on your own for mutual support.

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Managing Conflict in Relationships

Eileen Long-Farias, LPC

"Much unhappiness has come into the world because of bewilderment and things left unsaid."

– Fyodor Dostoyevsky

How true this statement rings in so many of our experiences! Often times people have the best of intentions at the start of conversations only to find that by the end you have either resorted to old habits or "fallen" into old communication patterns especially with those to whom you are closest. Relationships are created and maintained through your day to day communication. With this new year upon us, maybe you could resolve to integrate some of John Gottman's tried and true tips for reducing stress and managing conflict in conversations. John Gottman, author of "Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work", is a researcher with over 40 years of experience studying couples and understanding and predicting what works in marriage. Below are his research supported suggestions for daily strategies that help to build strong, close, intimate relationships that can stand the test of time.

1) **Take turns:** Take turns being the complainer and the listener.

2) **Don't give unsolicited advice:** Understanding must always precede advice. If you feel understood, you are more likely to be receptive to the advice someone is giving you.

3) **Show genuine interest:** Don't let your mind or eyes wander. Stay focused on the speaker. Ask questions. Make eye contact.

4) **Communicate your understanding:** Offer sympathy rather than a solution at least initially. Let your partner know that you empathize. For example, "I'd be stressed too! I can see why you might feel that way."

5) **Take your spouse's or child's side:** Let them know that they have an ally in you.

6) **Express a "we against others" attitude:** If a loved one is feeling alone in a difficulty, express solidarity. Let him or her know that the two of you are in this together.

7) **Express affection:** Identify their love language. Is it touch, words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service or gifts?

8) **Validate emotions:** Let your partner know that his or her feelings make sense to you. Phrases such as: "Yes, that is really sad. That would have me worried, too. I can understand why you are annoyed about that."

These strategies are not assuming that your partner is always right. These tips recognize that you are more able to be a person of influence in the lives of your loved ones when they feel like you understand them and are emotionally connected to them.

Several of these strategies also work well with children, peers, and coworkers. You will be surprised at how the tone, outcome, and amount of conflict can change when you employ some of these tips.

For more information about improving communication, please attend the Mark Center EAP's training: "Relationship Building Communication" on Tuesday, February 10, 2015. For more information and to register, please call 703-692-8917 or email whs.pentagon.hrd.mbx.pers-eap@mail.mil.

The EAP counselors are also available to meet with you one on one to discuss your relationship concerns. Please give us a call to set up a confidential appointment.

"Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each New Year find you a better man."

—Benjamin Franklin

Overcoming Holiday Blues

Nicole Daniels, LCMFT

Sometimes sadness has a way of creeping up on you, especially during the holiday season. This may be a time of dread for some people. As life would have it, there are many reasons that sadness is present regardless of our efforts to be happy. Often, sadness during the holidays comes from old wounds that never healed, the loss of a loved one, or harsh realities of the past and present. The following are a few tips that you can use to help during tough holiday moments.

* **TIP 1. Feel the feeling –** Be true to yourself. Remind yourself that sadness, even when others expect you to be happy, is natural, normal, and alright to feel. Do not try to pretend you are something that you are not. Because feelings come and go, allow yourself to feel the emotion and, if necessary, cry. Crying is a natural way of cleansing. When you stop crying, some of the sadness may stop too!

* **TIP 2. Self-Indulge –** Do, do, do for yourself! Often when you are struggling, it can be helpful to treat yourself to things you normally miss out on during the year. If you have wanted a massage and did not have the time before, get that massage right now. Take some time off, just for yourself and your mental health. Go to a comedy club, a play, or put on your favorite song and dance! Do the things that you love to help lift your spirits.

* **TIP 3. Get Busy –** Our brains sometimes need help to make the emotional shift. If you want to change your focus from sadness to more positive emotions, move your body, clean out the closet, rearrange the living room furniture or go wash your car by hand. Physical and mental movement can help increase emotional movement.

* **TIP 4. Create New Holiday Traditions –** Make new memories. Make a plan that involves helping others. If you like to bake, make your specialty item and give it to people who have no close family members or who are alone with no family. You could also make a vision board for the New Year that shapes your lifestyle for the upcoming year. You may even do this as a scrapbook party with a few close friends. Keep an ongoing list of new traditions you would like to incorporate and put them into action.

Taking good care of your mental health during the holidays is important. Good self care is sometimes needed more during the holidays due to the high levels of stress from spending, family, traveling and work deadlines.

If you are concerned about your experience of sadness, please consider speaking with one of our trained EAP counselors. Please call us at 703-692-8917 to schedule a confidential appointment.

"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow."
—Albert Einstein

January 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16*	17
18	19	20*	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

EAP January 2015 Training Schedule

PENTAGON

Jan 7: Sleep Hygiene, 10 – 11 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B8

Jan 13: Dealing with Difficult People, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B5

Jan 16: Federal Benefits 101, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. M2

Jan 20: Procrastination, 9:00 – 10:00 am Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B9

Jan 27: EAP Supervisory Training, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Conference Center, Rm. B8

Jan 30: IRA & 401K Rollovers, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B2

MARK CENTER

Jan 14: EAP Supervisory Training, 9:30 – 11:30 am, Rm.13

Jan 16: Planned Giving, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm. 4

Jan 20: Habit Change, 9 – 11 am, Rm. 14

Jan 21: Communication Skills, 9:30 – 11:30 am, Rm.10

Jan 29: Positive Aging, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Rm. 9

Jan 29: Federal Benefits 101, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm.4

* Training also at the Mark Center

February 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18*	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

EAP February 2015 Training

PENTAGON

Feb 5: Retirement in Mind, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B8

Feb 12: Sleep Hygiene, 10 – 11 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B9

Feb 18: Managing Parent-Child Conflicts, 9 – 11 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B9

Feb 19: Enhancing Communication, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B3

Feb 20: Retirement Planning, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B1

Feb 26: EAP Supervisory Training, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B8

Feb 27: Estate Planning, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B1

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Feb 3: Sleep Hygiene, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm.16

Feb 10: Relationship Building, Communication, 9 – 11 am Rm. 2

Feb 13: Retirement Planning, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm. 18

Feb 18: Federal Benefits 101, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm. 18

Feb 24: Nurturing Your Self-Esteem, 9 – 11 am, Rm. 13

* Training also at the Mark Center

MARCH 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10*	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

EAP March 2015 Training Schedule

PENTAGON

Mar 3: Sleep Hygiene,
10 – 11 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B9

Mar 10: Time Management,
9:30 – 11:30 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B8

Mar 13: Advanced Social Security Planning,
12:00 – 1:30 pm, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B1

Mar 17: Mindfulness in Everyday Life,
9:30 – 11:00 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B8

Mar 24: Anger Management,
9:30 – 11:00 am, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B8

Mar 27: Improving Your Credit
12:00 – 1:30 pm, Pentagon Library Conference Center, Rm. B1

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Mar 6: Improving Your Credit
12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm. 18

Mar 10: Stress Management,
9:30 – 11:00 am, Rm. 9

Mar 18: EAP Supervisory Training
9:30 – 11:00 am, Rm. 15

Mar 20: Federal Benefits Best Kept Secrets, 12:00 – 1:30 pm, Rm. 19

Mar 26: Enhancing Communication,
9:30 – 11:00 am, Rm. 3

Mar 31: Time Management,
9:30 – 11:00 am, Rm. 3

* Training also at the Mark Center

PENTAGON EMPLOYEE
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Motto: ***"Provide short-term services for...long-term benefits."***

WE'RE ON THE WEB!!
http://www.dthc.capmed.mil/EAP/SitePages/Home.aspx

What is the EAP?

The Employee Assistance Program's (EAP) mission is to ensure the well-being of employees by assisting them in resolving issues that may be adversely impacting work or home. The EAP provides one-on-one problem assessment, short-term counseling, referrals to community resources and crisis intervention. In addition to working with you on an individual basis, we conduct a variety of educational workshops and classes. We are frequently asked to speak at employee orientation sessions and offer monthly supervisor training classes.

Habit Change in the New Year

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Quick Tips for Habit Change

* One goal at a time!
* Start small.
* Commit publicly, use social media or other means to share your goal and post regular updates.
* Chart progress.
* Do a 30-day challenge.
* Get support; join a group.
* Have a start date and an end date.
* Write down all obstacles and a plan to overcome them.
* Use visualization.
* Never skip 2-days in a row.

If you would like more assistance with changing habits, please contact the EAP at 703-692-8917. Help is available.