



PERSPECTIVES

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BEHAVIORAL FACTORS INC.

Stages of Change

By Eileen Long-Farias, LPC

How many of us have vowed that this is the year our New Year's resolutions will stick? We have all had the experience of making promises and commitments to ourselves only to find ourselves relapsing or slipping a week or two later. Researchers who've studied how people change and what enables people to maintain change have discovered that it's not as simple as "Just do it". They've given us a whole model for understanding motivation and the complex process of change. Being mindful of the 5 Stages of Change can enable us to understand the experience of progress and regression without us labeling ourselves as "failures". They explain this process in 5 steps:



1. Pre-contemplation - Others may see our "problem" but we don't.
2. Contemplation - We have a desire to change...and maybe some day we will.
3. Preparation - We're developing our plan of action.
4. Action - Our energy and commitment are focused on creating this change.
5. Maintenance - We're in the long, ongoing process of maintaining change.

As we begin the process of change, it is helpful to be aware of what obstacles lay ahead of us. Sometimes just being mindful of them and therefore more deliberate is enough. Other times, some type of action is required of us to eliminate or reduce the obstacle. Our inconsistency, laziness and lack of self discipline are some of the biggest challenges we all face. Many of us also struggle with fear of failure, lack of support or/and addiction.

To take on the challenge of change, we need to be both uncomfortable due to our current behavior and aware of our discomfort. Once we've made the commitment to change, it's helpful to let our friends and family support us and even sometimes hold us accountable. Having a realistic and achievable plan is essential. We all do better when we can see progress each step of the way. As Beverly Koenig says in her book, Rules for Normal Eating, "If you put one foot in front of the other, you can't help but get to where you want to go."

If you are interested in learning more, come to our Habit Change with Diet and Exercise Training on Thursday, January 14, 2010 from 9:30 am - 11:00 am. Eileen Long-Farias will be conducting this training with Kim Markee, a Registered Dietician from the Wellness Center. Call 703-692-8917 to sign up for the training.

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.

Visit the EAP website:
<http://www.narmc.amedd.army.mil/dilorenzo/pers.asp>
(Click on the EAP/PERS tab on the left)

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Beating the Winter Blues

By Danielle Hatchell, LCPC



For some, winter symbolizes a time to wrap up in a favorite blanket by the fireplace, catch up on reading, visit their favorite ski resort or anticipate the first chance to go sledding. For others, winter is it is a dreaded season, filled with sadness, lethargy, anxiety and despair. During the winter months, many people may experience a form of clinical depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD. Dr. Michael Terman, director of the Center for Light Treatment and Biological Rhythms in New York reported that 5% of the population experience severe SAD, 14% of the population experience a milder form or the 'winter blues' and 25% experience one or two symptoms but remain highly functional during the winter months.

Symptoms

- Lethargy
- Weight gain (craving carbohydrates)
- Withdrawal from social and professional connections
- Decreased libido
- Increased need for sleep
- Decreased concentration
- Mood changes
- Tiredness
- Depression
- Anxiety

Causes

Although it is not known exactly why people experience SAD, it is speculated that genetic makeup, age and your body's chemical makeup play a factor. According to the Mayo clinic, the reduction of sunlight can cause a drop in melatonin and serotonin levels which in turn may lead to depression. People with SAD are more likely to have family members who experience the same symptoms. Some evidence even suggests that people who live in higher latitudes have a greater occurrence of this disorder.

Treatment

Light Therapy is frequently used to treat SAD. Light therapy mimics the light we receive from the sun and therefore improves our mood. Treatment involves sitting a few feet in front of a specialized light therapy box. The box is designed to reduce harmful UV rays. Light therapy is the most widely used form of treatment for SAD and has few side

effects.

Prescription drugs are also used to treat severe symptoms of SAD. Doctors prescribe antidepressants or other psychiatric medications as needed. Doctors usually recommend that the patient start medications prior to when the symptoms for SAD start and extend use beyond when symptoms usually dissipate. It is important to have medications closely monitored for side effects and to ensure that the type of medication prescribed is working properly.

Psychotherapy is also used to treat SAD. It is helpful for patients to be able to identify negative thoughts and behaviors that are contributing to the feelings of anxiety and depression. It also supports individuals in finding healthy ways to cope with the symptoms that are experienced.

Tips for Beating the Winter Blues

- Make sure that you are eating healthy foods, consisting of a least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Get the proper amount of rest, between seven to nine hours a sleep a night. Too much sleep or too little sleep can make you feel worse.
- Stick to an exercise program. Exercise releases endorphins that naturally improve our mood.
- Take a vacation in the winter months to a tropical or sunny location and take in the sun.
- Be sure not to isolate yourself. Try to stay connected to supportive people and express your feelings.
- Get outdoors as much as possible. During your work day consider taking a break outdoors to get some sun. This is especially important if you work in an office without windows.
- Implement a personal stress management program. Unmanaged stress has a way of turning into depression and anxiety.
- Set up your home environment in a way that allows more sunlight to enter. Open the blinds and curtains during the day. Consider adding skylights or trimming trees that may be blocking sun light.

If you are experiencing the symptoms listed above along with suicidal or homicidal thoughts, it is imperative that you seek help immediately. If you or someone you know is experiencing SAD, contact your doctor or a mental health professional to have an evaluation. Your EAP is available to support you in finding the treatment you need. Contact us at 703-692-8917.

References: Mayo Foundation for Medical and Educational Research and the National Sleep Foundation



Upcoming Workshops

December 2009

	<p>3</p> <p>Supervisory Training (for Managers and Supervisors of Civilian Personnel)</p> <p>9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>	
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January 2010

<p>7</p> <p>Supervisory Training Series The Troubled Employee</p> <p>9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Habit Change with Diet and Exercise</p> <p>9:30 - 11:00 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Supervisory Training Series Conflict Resolution</p> <p>9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>
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February 2010

<p>11</p> <p>Supervisory Training Series Team Building for Supervisors</p> <p>9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Supervisory Training Series Motivating Difficult Employees</p> <p>9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Stress Management Training</p> <p>10:00 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon</p>
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For additional information or to register, call 703-692-8917 or email PERS@amedd.army.mil

Ask the EAP

Q: Who provides the EAP?

A: Behavioral/Factors inc (B/Fi) has provided the EAP at the Pentagon since 1982. B/Fi is a corporate association of counseling professionals specializing in EAP design and operation. B/Fi emphasizes a positive, results-oriented approach.



Start 2010 off Stress Free

By Holly Leyo, LPC



* Holiday time brings along ample opportunity to over indulge and over schedule. Remember the basic stress management tips for healthy eating, drinking plenty of water, and exercising.

* Monitor your alcohol consumption. Excessive drinking could lead to increased depression or could increase your stress if you do or say something you might regret later.

* Set boundaries and learn to say “no.” If you are going to feel frazzled by trying to make it to another holiday gathering, politely decline and suggest getting together after the holidays for some quality time. Realize that you cannot please everyone especially during the holidays when tensions and expectations can be running high.

* Give yourself a break. Find time to relax and unwind. Make yourself a cup of tea or hot chocolate. Go to a funny movie. Humor is one of the best stress relievers. Take a walk and enjoy the crisp, fresh air.

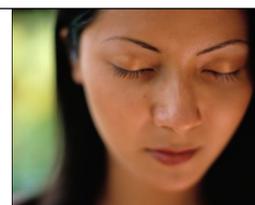
* Recognize your feelings. If you are feeling a little down or irritable during the holidays it is understandable. Sometimes people can feel worse because they think they are “supposed” to be so happy during this time and then beat themselves up for not being in the holiday spirit. Have compassion for yourself. For those who have lost a loved one, the holidays can be particularly difficult. It is normal to feel a range of emotions including sadness and grief. It’s OK to have these feelings and express them.

* Seek support if you think it’s more than just the “holiday blues.” Occasional moments of feeling down will often resolve themselves. However, if you notice a change in mood, have a lack of energy, decreased interest in enjoyable activities, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, or social withdrawal for an extended period of time, you could be experiencing symptoms of depression. Some people may experience Seasonal Affective Disorder, a form of depression that correlates with the change of seasons. Typically this is associated with the winter months when there is less exposure to the sunlight.

If you or someone you know might have more than just the “holiday blues” the EAP is here to help. Call us at 703-692-8917.

Breathe...Make a Resolution to Spend 5 Minutes a Day to Relax and Regroup

By Holly Leyo, LPC



Deep Breathing is one relaxation technique that can be done anywhere and anytime. Often times when we feel stressed or anxious our bodies respond with muscle tension, shortened breath, and an increased heart rate. Taking a few moments to slow down our breathing can help move us from this stressed “fight or flight” response to a more relaxed state. This will also give you a chance to regroup and reenergize for your day.

- Sit comfortably. Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose and notice your stomach rise as you inhale.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as possible, and contracting your stomach muscles.
- If you would like, close your eyes and continue this sequence counting slowly as you exhale.
- Relaxation techniques take practice but hopefully you will find that 5 minutes a day will be worth it.

*Be on the lookout for a Meditation Series in Spring 2010.

Make an EAP Appointment: Call 703-692-8917 to schedule an appointment that is convenient for you. The EAP is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00pm.

The EAP is located in the DiLorenzo TRICARE Health Clinic (DTHC), which is located in the Pentagon. The clinic is on the 1st floor of the eighth corridor, near the north parking entrance.