



# A Healthy Outlook!

301-460-2100 • FAX 301-460-2113 • [www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/EAP](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/EAP) Vol. 2, No. 1

## Reducing Back-to-School Stress

Where did the summer time go? The beginning of the school year has arrived again, earlier than usual. This is an ideal time for parents and students to develop strategies to reduce the stress and anxiety that come with the start of the new school year. Here are some tips:

- ★ Know how long it takes to get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and head out the door in the morning. Allow for last-minute morning hassles.
- ★ Organize your family's daily schedule by creating consistent times for homework, play, and bedtime.
- ★ Designate a space in your home specifically for doing homework. It may be better if this area is not in the child's room because there are often too many distractions there.
- ★ Make time each day to talk with your children about their school day. Asking "How was your school day?" is likely to get a standard response of "fine." Asking a more specific question such as, "What was the most interesting thing you learned today?" may be a better way to start a conversation.
- ★ Ensure your child's name is written clearly on all items of clothing and belongings, including packed lunches. Ensure that your child has an independent lunch, that is he/she is able to open all items of food in his/her packed lunch.
- ★ Most important, be enthusiastic. Acknowledge your children's concerns about the challenges of a new school year, but help them get excited about learning and making new friends. Remember, the best way to remain enthusiastic is to relax and make time for yourself! ★



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With the approach of September, you may have found yourself reflecting on the traumatic events of September 11th, 2001. If you wish to talk about your reaction or just need some support, please know that the EAP is here for you.

To schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor, simply call 301-460-2100. ★

## Qualities of a Good Team Member

According to a document from the Laborer's Health and Safety Fund of North America, the following are qualities of a good team member:

- ★ A willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the group—for a group to be successful, many personalities must merge into one working unit.
- ★ A willingness to let the group leader lead.
- ★ The ability to contribute your best as a group member—if you've always been a loner, try to avoid group projects. If selected, try to contribute your best.
- ★ A spirit of compromise—group decisions involve everyone speaking their minds and supporting a decision once it is made.
- ★ A willingness to try something new—the best group members usually keep an open mind.
- ★ The ability to see things clearly and to solve problems—cultivate this skill if you like being part of team projects. ★

### Ask the EAP

**Q.** I am an employee at MCPS. Can I set up an appointment for my husband to be seen by the EAP, even though he does not work for the school system?

**A.** The EAP can be used by immediate family members of MCPS staff. However, it is best if adult members of the family call for their own appointments. You can certainly encourage him to call and make an appointment. On the other hand, it is fine for you to make an appointment for couples counseling, family counseling, or for a member of your family who is a minor.

## Adults With Learning Disabilities

Do you know the very competent CEO of a company who is known for getting lost in buildings and has a terrible time finding her car in the parking lot?

Or the young man who is basically kind but has a penchant for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time and hurts people's feelings?

Have you seen the adult who is a genius with his hands, putting together and fixing things, but cannot problem solve with words and doesn't understand jokes?

Perhaps you know the bright adult who just doesn't seem to be put together well, who looks scattered and whose belongings appear everywhere.

These adults might be learning disabled. It's the specific constellation of difficulties, the quantity, the quality, the intensity of problems, and the patterns of learning that point to a neurologically based problem called a learning disability. Learning disabilities can affect every area of a person's life—work, family, and social interactions. Many adults rise above their disabilities to pursue effectively their chosen fields of endeavors. Their learning disabilities become an inconvenience, a nuisance that must be dealt with every day, but still allow for astonishing creativity and resourcefulness. If you think you have a learning disability, there is support, specific strategies, and education available to help you. Call the EAP at 301-460-2100 to learn more. ★

This article is based on information from The Lab School of Washington, Adult Services Division, 202-944-2215.

## Depression Awareness at CESC

National Depression Screening Day is October 9. MCPS employees will be offered the opportunity to obtain information on depression, and to learn about resources for those who they suspect may need treatment. Free information will be available:

**When:** Thursday, October 9th  
11:30am–1:30pm

**Where:** Carver Educational Services Center (CESC), Cafeteria

Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses. At least 8 percent of adults in the United States experience serious depression at some point in their lives, and estimates range as high as 17 percent. The EAP can help you find effective treatment for yourself or someone you care about. Please feel free to call the EAP at 301-460-2100 with any questions or concerns. ★

## Heart-Check Mark

Look for the heart-check mark in the supermarket. The American Heart Association established its heart as an easy and quick way to identify heart healthy foods. In order for the heart to be on a product it must have the following attributes:

- ★ Be low fat (less than or equal to 3 grams).
- ★ Be low saturated fat (less than or equal to 1 gram).
- ★ Be low cholesterol (less than or equal to 20 milligrams).
- ★ Have a sodium value of less than or equal to 480 milligrams for individual foods.
- ★ Contain at least 10 percent of the daily value of one or more of these naturally occurring nutrients: protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron or dietary fiber.

For more information on the Food Certification Program, check their Web site—[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) ★

Article contributed by Susan E. Ghelman, R.D., L.D., food service supervisor, Division of Food and Nutrition Services.

# What's Your Conflict Style?

According to Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann, developers of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, there are five primary ways (which they refer to as "modes") of handling conflict.

**1. Competing** ■ an assertive and usually uncooperative approach. In this approach, the individual is pursuing his/her own concerns at the expense of others. This is a power-oriented mode.

**2. Accommodating** ■ an unassertive and cooperative approach—the opposite of competing. The individual here is neglecting his/her own needs in efforts to meet the needs of others.

**3. Avoiding** ■ is unassertive and uncooperative. The individual here is

neither pursuing his/her own nor the other person's concerns.

**4. Collaborating** ■ is both assertive and cooperative—the opposite of avoiding. This approach involves working with the other person in an effort to try to meet the needs of all parties involved.

**5. Compromising** ■ is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness.

Each of us is capable of using all five modes; however, we tend to use one or two of them primarily. The conflict behavior a person uses is typically a product of one's personal predisposition and the situation. Problems arise when we overuse any one style, applying it to all situations. For instance, if you chronically overuse "competing" when you're

in situations where "collaborating" or "accommodating" would be a wiser thing to do, you'll probably find yourself frequently frustrated, ineffective, and not particularly popular with others.

To improve your handling of conflict, be aware of the style you use, and think about if you're able to adjust to the situation at hand. Being flexible in your approach to handling conflict is the key to success. If you believe that the way you handle conflict is causing problems in your life, the EAP may be a good starting point to examine what you're currently doing and develop strategies to handle conflict more effectively. ★

## Depression and Manic-Depression Screening Questionnaires

These tests were developed by National Depression Screening Day Executive Director Douglas G. Jacobs, MD, incorporating the results of the 1992 through 1997 screening programs as well as the clinical criteria for the disorders, as listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders-IV*, by the American Psychiatric Association. They are not designed to provide an actual diagnosis of depression or manic-depression. For that, you will need a complete clinical evaluation by a psychiatrist or other health care professional.

### Depression:

1. I am unable to do the things I used to do.
2. I feel hopeless about the future.
3. I can't make decisions.
4. I feel sluggish or restless.
5. I am gaining or losing weight.
6. I get tired for no reason.
7. I am sleeping too much, or too little.
8. I feel unhappy.
9. I become irritable or anxious.
10. I think about dying or killing myself.

If you answered yes to 5 or more of these questions, and you have felt this way every day for several weeks, there is a good chance you

are suffering from depression and should see a psychiatrist or other health care professional. If you answered yes to question 10, you should seek help immediately, regardless of your answer to any other questions\*.

### Mania:

1. I have a decreased need for sleep.
2. I have much more energy than usual.
3. My thinking is speeded up.
4. I feel unusually euphoric and "high."
5. I can't seem to stop talking.
6. I can't keep my mind on one thing—I jump from task to task.
7. I have a heightened interest in sex.
8. I am irritable and short-tempered.
9. I have a close blood relative who has

had a serious emotional illness or alcohol abuse.

10. I think about dying or killing myself.

If you answered yes to five or more of these questions, and you have felt this way every day for several weeks, there is a good chance you are suffering from mania or manic-depression and should see a psychiatrist or other health care professional. If you answered yes to question 10, you should seek help immediately, regardless of your answer to any other questions\*.

\*If you are not sure where to turn to for help, consider starting with your own physician or contacting the EAP, 301-460-2100.

# Upcoming Events



## Employee Assistance and Wellness Programs to Offer Stress Management Presentations

The MCPS Employee Assistance and Wellness programs are sponsoring a series of stress management seminars that will be conducted by Greg Brannen, of Shady Grove and Washington Adventist hospitals. The workshops, each scheduled from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m., will be held at the MCEA conference center.



### September 24, 2003

#### Stress and Its Impact on Your Health

A practical look at the mental and physical effect stress has on individuals, along with helpful strategies for listening to internal alarm systems and proactively implementing stress management techniques that can improve health, productivity, and life satisfaction.



### October 21, 2003

#### Overcoming Burnout

A practical look at the causes of burnout, along with several strategies designed to help individuals regain motivation, increase life satisfaction, and improve productivity.



### November 20, 2003

#### Managing the Stress of Relationships

Designed to help employees better understand the causes and effects of relationship stress, as well as share practical strategies for improving interpersonal skills that can enhance relationships, reduce conflict, and increase teamwork.



### December 9, 2003

#### Managing the Stress of Time & Competing Priorities

Designed to help individuals recognize how their personal organization and use of time contribute to stress levels. The presentation will offer a practical approach to prioritizing our time and staying focused on the most important activities in our lives to reduce stress and increase our effectiveness.

To register for one or more of these sessions, please call the EAP at 301-460-2100. Space is limited, so register early!

The Employee Assistance Program offers workshops for the staff of interested schools and offices. The following is a list of some of the topics we can address.

- ★ Managing Change
- ★ Managing Conflict
- ★ Stress Management
- ★ Time Management
- ★ Anger Management
- ★ Effective Communication

Call the EAP if you are interested in scheduling a workshop for your staff.

**"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."**

— Albert Einstein



## *A Healthy Outlook!*

*To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.*



### EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

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Published by the Employee Assistance Program  
Produced by the Office of Global Access Technology