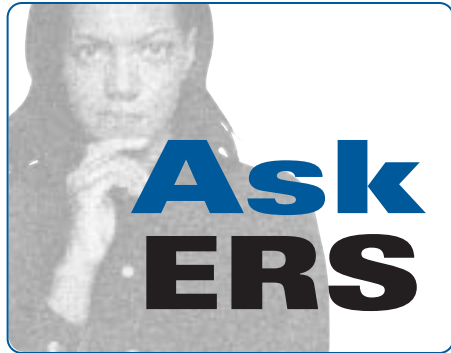


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A Publication of Employee Resource Systems, Inc.

An Employee Assistance Program



Dear ERS Advisor,

I'm a bit worried about my 65-year-old mother. Lately, I've noticed that she's been more forgetful although she still seems very mentally alert and active. My dad passed away three years ago and ever since then she's been on her own. She's fiercely independent and I don't want to hurt her feelings by bringing this up but I'm afraid she might make a mistake with her medications or even get lost at some point. What would you advise?

Concerned Daughter

Dear Concerned Daughter,

Getting older and losing our independence is a concern we all share for ourselves and for our parents. It is understandable that your mother would be reluctant to admit any difficulties, but it may be necessary to gently bring the subject up soon. If you can persuade your mother to agree, it may be particularly useful to consult with her primary physician about your concerns. Having a thorough examination will be necessary for the correct diagnosis and treatment. There are lots of physical and emotional problems that may mask themselves as dementia and determining the cause of your mother's symptoms should be your first step. For support and resources, call the Employee Assistance Program and talk to one of our counselors. This isn't something you need to tackle on your own. For more facts and information, check out the National Institute on Aging's article at www.nia.nih.gov/health/agepages/forget.htm.

ERS Advisor

THE TOP 6 REASONS TO RETHINK YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO DIET

Vanessa L. Kane, RD, LD

What would happen if America stopped dieting? What if we began to celebrate what our bodies allow us to do instead of hating them for what they can't do? What would happen if we made peace with food once and for all? Sound impossible? The non-diet, size acceptance movement continues to change people's minds about the sources of health, happiness and self-acceptance. The following is a "Top 6" list of facts that support this non-diet, size acceptance approach:

6. DIETS RARELY WORK.

95% of all dieters regain their lost weight and more within 1 to 5 years. Most diets are too restrictive and unrealistic for people to maintain. Diets are deprivation. To deny yourself of any type of food is to ensure a future binge.

5. DIETS COST A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY.

If diets worked, there wouldn't be a diet industry, 50-70 million Americans wouldn't be trying them each year and Americans wouldn't be spending \$40 billion dollars a year on dieting and diet-related products. Imagine what we, as a country, could do with the time, energy and money spent on dieting.

Continued on page 2

Diet continued from page 1

4. THIN DOES NOT EQUAL HEALTH.

Just because people appear thin does not automatically mean that they are strong, flexible or healthy. Research now shows that the opposite is also true. Just because a person appears “overweight” by society’s standard does not automatically mean that he or she has low fitness, high cholesterol or high blood pressure. People can improve their health without changing body shape!

3. YOU CAN TRUST YOUR BODY.

Dieting forces your body into starvation mode. Your body responds by slowing down many of its normal functions to conserve energy. This means your natural metabolism actually slows down. If you’re willing to learn to listen to your body, you can trust it to know when and how much to eat instead of external rules, regimens and diets. You can trust your body to recognize and respond to stomach hunger (your stomach is empty) and feelings of fullness (you feel satisfied, not overly stuffed).

2. FOOD IS NOT THE ENEMY.

The “good” food, “bad” food mentality isn’t helping you lose weight, and isn’t true. All foods are life giving and can fit into a healthy eating pattern. Eating carrots does not make a person good and eating chocolate chip cookies does not make a person bad. Food cannot fix a relationship or pay the bills. Keep eating in perspective; it’s only one of the many important parts of your life.

1. CHILDREN ARE FOLLOWING OUR EXAMPLE.

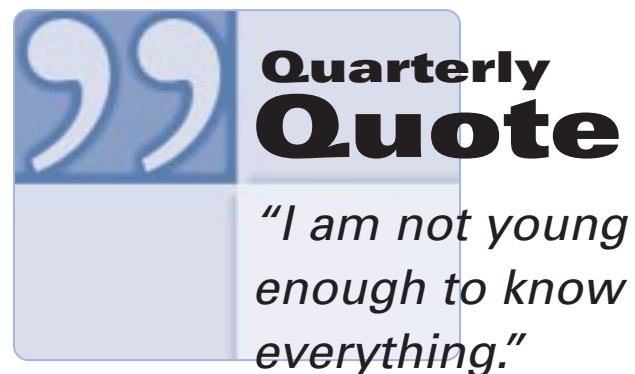
Researchers estimate that 40-60% of high school girls are on diets, 46% of 9-11 year olds are sometimes or very often on diets and, most shockingly, 42% of 1st-3rd grade girls surveyed reported wanting to be thinner. The most important gift we can give children is self-esteem. Teach children, by example that human beauty and worth are irrespective of differences in physical shape and size.

“Our bodies, our fitness, and our food should not be our paramount concerns. They have nothing to do with ethics, relationships, or community involvement or with the human soul or spirit. They have nothing to say about the meaning or purpose of life...They give us no purpose beyond ourselves. It is a religion appropriate only for a people whose ideals do not extend beyond their own physical well-being and whose vision of the future—and of the past—is strangely empty. Surely Americans can produce a worthier creed” (Seid, 1989).

Vanessa Kane, RD, LD is the Assistant Coordinator of the Employee Wellness Program at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical Center in Chicago. For more information on this subject, please call the Employee Assistance Program.

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– Oscar Wilde

Stressed about How Not to be Stressed?

Susan Lloyd, B.S., MSW Intern

The New Year always brings about a colossal amount of pressure to “tune up” your physical and emotional well-being. You have probably seen advice in a variety of forms — newspaper and magazine articles, human interest-type television programs and newsletters like this one. It sometimes feels that reading about ways to best manage stress can create additional anxiety because it is yet another thing you need to do — or it reminds you of just how fatigued and frustrated you may be.

It is important to understand these pointers for what they truly are: tools. You can decide to use one, some or none of them — it is your choice. Here are some common tips, with ideas on how to integrate them into your life. And... (hold on to your hat)... you may actually benefit from some of them.

Relax

We have all heard this piece of advice before. It goes something like “avoid stress by staying relaxed,” then lists suggestions like taking a bath or meditating. Easier said than done, you say? How can you relax when you are busy and riddled with obligations? Or perhaps you haven’t cleaned your bathtub in a year so the thought of sitting in it - or having to clean it first - is not enticing.

While certain requirements — like the act of breathing — are necessary for our survival, relaxation is technically not a requirement for our day-to-day functioning. However, long-term effects from chronic tension and stress can lead to health problems such as hypertension and heart attacks. For many of us, it is normal to go through the day without being aware or “mindful” of the tension in our bodies (i.e. knotted muscles and clenched jaws.) The important tip here is that this norm doesn’t have to exist... you can create a new status quo. You can be more in tune with your body and stretch to release the tension in the knotted muscles.

Sometimes it helps to be your own parent and give yourself a “time out” to cool down and re-think your situation. As adults, we have to learn to protect ourselves because our parents no longer do that for us! It is truly important to take care of yourself by acting as “the parent” and giving yourself a break and some downtime. Try to find a relaxing moment each day, even if it is simply sitting quietly for five minutes.

Surround yourself with supportive family and friends

Around the New Year, it is also a time to count your blessings and consider whom you appreciate in your life — and who appreciates you. Consider what it means to be in a “healthy” relationship and review the relationships you now have. It is important for all of us to feel that we are in an empathic, non-judgmental environment. Empathizing is a concerted effort to understand another person’s perceptions and experiences. By being able to “walk in another person’s shoes” you’ve got a much better sense of that person’s motivations and feelings. Keep in mind that it’s important to treat people in a way that you would want to be treated, to be accepted not judged.

Abide by a budget

This tip is particularly timely given the tight economy. Just as it helps to give your dog a bone so he won’t eat the couch... it is also helpful to “treat” yourself to something nice so you don’t overspend. This is Basic Behavioral Therapy 101, and it can work. Some free or low-cost alternatives include:

- Go window-shopping. Just looking at beautiful things is fun, too.
- Spend more time relaxing, socializing, or even playing games with family and friends.
- Take advantage of the great outdoors by taking a long walk with a good friend, riding a bike, going hiking, playing Frisbee with your dog.

Remember, change is not revolutionary... it is evolutionary. As someone I know and respect said to me recently... “If all else fails, take a nap... it’ll be over in a day or two”.

Susan Lloyd is completing a Masters Degree in Social Work from The University of Chicago. She is currently an intern at Employee Resource Systems.

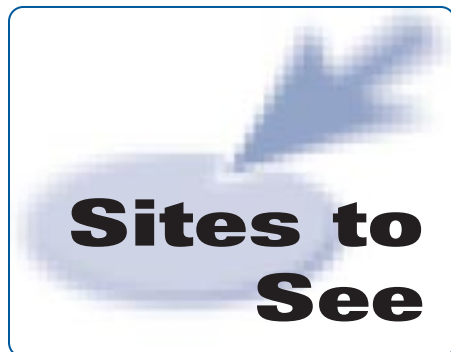
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Are you secretly convinced that high tech gadgets work by magic or perhaps you're one of those people who is consistently outwitted by his/her VCR or cell phone? Visiting the website www.howstuffworks.com can provide you with simple explanations that will make you a wild hit with kids (and your friends) and their never-ending questions. This site is so extensive, you'll find yourself amused for hours as you take the animation tour - a series of animated explanations demonstrating the inner secrets of engines, toilets, pole vaulting, video games, submarines and nuclear radiation to name a few. You can check out the Gadget of the Day or submit a question of your own. The variety of topics is extensive with responses to questions like, "How does a light saber in Star Wars work? Why is the sky blue? How much does the earth weigh?" You're never too old to learn more about the world around you and this site is wonderfully satisfying for anyone's curiosity.

www.kidshealth.org is a terrific site for young children, teens, and their parents. This thorough and engaging site has articles and information on every aspect of children's health and parenting.

There are great articles written specifically for kids and teens to address quite a few of the challenges of childhood and adolescence. Parents can read about emotions and behavior, growth and development, and positive parenting in addition to advice on navigating the health care system. The amount of information covered is impressive and this site is sure to please any family.

If you're not lucky enough to have a lawyer in your family or among your friends, you may have to go to www.nolo.com for some good, basic legal advice. This site is extremely helpful with "plain-spoken answers to questions sent in by folks like yourself". Topics range from wills, landlords and tenants; marriage, divorce, and couples living together; to debt and bankruptcy. This site can even explain your rights when it comes to neighborly disputes and there's a handy calculator feature which determines how long until you can retire, or how long before you can afford that shiny new car. Of course, this website is no replacement for hiring a lawyer, but it can help you understand the complexities of some of the most common legal dilemmas.

Editor Andrea Nakamura

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Dear ERS,

One of my friends told me that she thought I was an alcoholic because of the number of beers I drink on the weekends. This really ticked me off and made me wonder who sets up these rules about who is an alcoholic and who isn't?

Beer Drinker

Dear Beer Drinker,

Figuring out who is or isn't an alcoholic is not a simple process. Over the years, counselors and doctors have studied the physical and emotional impact that alcohol can play upon people's lives and they've concluded that it's not only the number of beers (or glasses of wine, scotch, etc.) that you drink that determines whether or not you're an alcoholic.

It's much more important to look at the following factors: **1.** Do you have a strong need to drink? **2.** Do you have trouble stopping once you start drinking? **3.** Do you have physical problems (sweating, insomnia, shaking, headaches, etc.) once you quit drinking for a while? **4.** Do you have to drink more and more to get that same "buzz"?

Counselors also look at the impact drinking has had upon your life and whether or not you have persisted in drinking in spite of the mounting problems (legal, financial, family conflict) resulting from alcohol. They examine your family

history of substance abuse and your support network. In the end, the decision to seek treatment rests with you. If you would like to talk with a counselor about your own drinking or drug use, call the Employee Assistance Program to schedule an appointment.

Sincerely,

ERS Advisor

WANT TO SUCCEED IN YOUR CAREER? STEP 1: GET OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY

Mark Goulston, M.D.

People who have an addiction to drugs or alcohol have a much greater chance of success in beating the habit when they recognize, admit, accept, and correct their self-defeating behavior. You can't move forward or achieve your goals, if you become sidetracked by self-defeating behavior. You also lose your competitive edge if you're always meeting your challenges in a self-defeating fashion, while your competition confronts and masters stressful situations head-on.

By definition, any repetitive behaviors that block your efforts to accomplish your long-term objectives are self-defeating. Here are other common behaviors that may not be as self-destructive as an addiction, but are every bit as self-defeating if you don't overcome them:

1. PROCRASTINATING.

A perfectionist graphic designer kept turning his work in late, not appreciating that his timeliness was every bit as important as the quality of his work product. One person's

Continued on page 2

The Employee/ Member Assistance Program

Maris H. Weinewuth, LCPC, CEAP

Employee Resource Systems, Inc. provides nationwide Employee/Member Assistance Program (EAP/MAP) and managed mental health care services to the employees and family members of their client companies. These confidential services were developed to help employees/members and their families cope with personal difficulties that can affect their lives both at home and at work.

This program helps people with all kinds of personal problems including alcohol and drug abuse; stress, anxiety, and depression; relationship conflict; child and adolescent behavioral problems; domestic violence; child care; elder care; financial and legal concerns; and educational and career-related problems at no cost to the employee/member. The EAP/MAP does not address difficulties related to salaries, job assignments or other work-related issues.

All contact with the EAP/MAP is confidential. The EAP/MAP counselor will not speak with a supervisor, co-worker or family member without permission from the person using the program. Confidentiality is compromised only when a threat to life exists (i.e., suicidal or homicidal risk, stalking, or child abuse).

Services may include a comprehensive evaluation, brief counseling and a referral, if necessary. When referrals are provided, every effort is made to use providers covered by the employee's/member's benefit plan or an agency that offers services on a negotiable scale. The employee/member is responsible for the cost of service provided by a referral agency.

The first step to accessing the EAP/MAP is to call (800) 292-2780 CST. Calls are always answered directly by clinical professionals who provide immediate service, even after standard business hours. The 800 hotline number can be used anywhere in the United States. Calling the EAP/MAP can be a first step toward resolution of personal difficulties.

Succeed *continued from page 1*

work sometimes cannot begin until someone else gets his or her job done first. If you're always late on completing things, people stop relying on you, start resenting you and begin to bypass you.

2. NOT PREPARING WELL ENOUGH.

The belief that what you want to sell is what people want to buy is a sure road to disaster unless you've thoroughly researched the market. A well-made buggy whip is a thing of beauty, and it sure is nice to hang in your den. Just don't hang your hat on it, if your customers don't share your love for a horse and carriage.

3. NOT FOLLOWING THROUGH.

A manager of a moderately successful fitness club told me he no longer goes to seminars on managing. He said that the information is always great, but implementing the suggestions and trying to convert his employees to the new approach seldom works. If something new is important enough to learn, it's important enough to schedule company time devoted to the purpose of planning how to implement it.

4. NOT LEARNING FROM YOUR MISTAKES.

Successful people don't make fewer mistakes than the unsuccessful people — they repeat fewer mistakes. Truth be told, we learn more from mistakes than our successes, and it's a shame to miss out on this valuable education by not owning up to your errors. Unfortunately, you need to admit you have made a mistake before you can learn from it.

5. BEING COMPETENT, BUT UNCHARMING.

As people get older, they prefer to deal with capable but affable people, rather than brilliant but obnoxious people. One of the brightest management consultants I know was resentful that his poor interpersonal skills had cost him so much success. He kept ranting and raving, "Judge me by my results, not by my bedside manner. I'm not one of those brown-nosing game-players." He missed the point that charm is more

about putting people at ease than it is about being phony and obsequious. He also missed the boat when it came to the success his competence and talent truly did deserve.

6. SAYING “YES” WHEN YOU WANT TO SAY “NO.”

If you sacrifice respect in order to be liked by saying “yes” all the time, you won’t be respected or liked. It’s difficult to continue to like someone when you lose respect for him or her. At times, commanding respect starts with saying “no” to something that you disagree with, and then being flexible enough to work through the issue with the other person. I know a headhunter who says “no” to prospective job applicants, because finding out how they respond to “no” reveals so much about their ability to cooperate and be a team player.

7. HAVING UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

When you confuse what is reasonable with what is realistic, you set yourself up to fail. It’s reasonable to re-engineer your business; it’s unrealistic to do it all at once. A stationery supply store in Los Angeles decided to revamp its sales, operations, and compensation policies (all of which were in need of modification) all at the same time. In six months, it filed for Chapter 11.

8. GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE WRONG PEOPLE.

A “nice guy” chief executive of a hardware chain hired a chief operating officer he thought was strong and tough. His grave error was to confuse stubbornness and rigidity for strength. By the time the timid CEO galvanized enough courage to remove the difficult COO, it had cost him several valued employees. Yes, there are bad people in the world. If you keep giving them the benefit of the doubt, you’ll be the one who has to clean up the mess.

Dr. Goulston is a UCLA psychiatrist, management consultant specializing in psychological ergonomics, author of Get Out of Your Own Way: Overcoming Self-Defeating Behavior (c) 1996, available in the Amazing Bookstore Catalog. Contact Dr. Goulston at 1150 Yale Street, #3, Santa Monica, CA 90403. Find this article and many others on the Self Help Magazine’s website at www.selfhelpmagazine.com.



➤ The older you get, the less sleep you need - true or false? If you take the National Sleep Foundation’s Sleep IQ test, you’ll discover that this is just one of several common myths. The NSF states, “Sleep need remains unchanged throughout adulthood. Older people may wake more frequently through the night and may sleep less, but their sleep need is no less than during young adulthood.” April 1st through the 7th is National Sleep Awareness week- visit this site anytime to find out whether or not you could have a sleeping disorder that is creating a sleep “debt” for you.

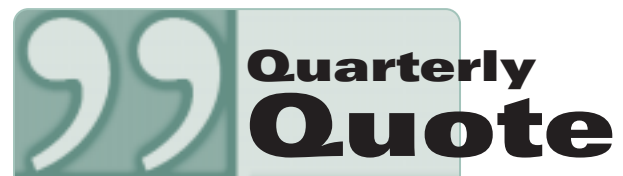
www.sleepfoundation.org,

➤ Springtime is the time for focusing upon mental health issues. In fact, April is Alcohol Awareness month. Since May is Mental Health month, you can visit the National Mental Health Association’s website to learn more about depression, anxiety, eating disorders, as well as alcohol and substance abuse problems. You can take a depression screening or read about someone else’s personal experience in coping with mental illness.

www.mentalhealthscreening.org

www.nmha.org

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“Everyone is a genius at least once a year; a real genius has his original ideas closer together.”

– Georg Lichtenberg (1742-1799)

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- ◇ In March 2002, Join Together Online noted that, “A new study shows that more than 100,000 lives would be saved if all health insurance plans covered smoking-cessation programs.” www.jointogether.org
- ◇ Approximately 12 million women in the United States experience depression every year — roughly twice the rate of men (NIMH, 1999) from the website www.nmha.org.
- ◇ Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, affects more than 2 million Americans (NIMH, 2000) from the website www.nmha.org.
- ◇ The National Study of the Changing Workforce noted in their latest study that while employed married mothers still spend more time on chores than employed married fathers, this gap has narrowed over the past 20 years. “...Mothers’ workday time on chores has decreased by 36 minutes per day, while men’s time has increased by one hour.”

Sights to See *continued from page 3*



“Imagine going to work and not being able to do your job. Now imagine that you can’t leave your job. Imagine having to do that every day. This is what life is like for children with learning disabilities.” — Dr. David Urion. If you did not catch the PBS documentary entitled, *Misunderstood Minds* then check out its companion website for a glimpse into what it means to struggle with a learning problem. Originally airing on March 27, 2002, the documentary shows how often kids with learning disabilities are labeled as “lazy” or “stupid” by parents, teachers and classmates. There are even first-hand demonstrations on what it feels like to have problems with decoding and remembering written information. It is an eye-opening experience that gives you a small taste of the frustration and helplessness that many people experience on a daily basis. This site provides examples and descriptions of what it means to have a learning problem with attention, reading, writing, and math. There is an extensive list of resources of articles, books and other internet links included.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/about.html

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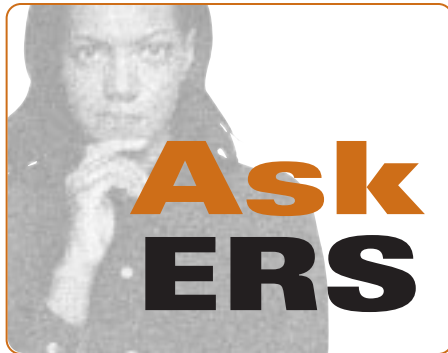
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Dear ERS Advisor,

My oldest child will be coming home for the winter break from her first semester at college. I'm a bit worried about how to handle the curfew situation. I know that she's had a lot of freedom while being away at school and I'm worried that she'll expect to continue that behavior when she comes home for the holidays. It may be old-fashioned of me, but I still feel that a curfew is important even at the age of 18! Any advice for a parent?

Worried Dad

Dear Worried Dad,

Kudos to you for doing some advance planning for your daughter's homecoming! It can be a jarring experience for many parents when they realize that their son or daughter isn't planning on following the same old house rules. Remember that whether the setting is a family or a dorm room, one person's behavior can significantly impact everyone else. It's a good idea to sit down with your college-aged kids and talk this situation through. It's important to recognize and acknowledge that your daughter's status *has* changed, but that you do have some basic rules/expectations that she must still meet. Of course, every family is different when it comes to rules and the amount of freedom that their teens are given. Talk and negotiation will allow your whole family to create a comfortable plan for everyone.

Good luck!

ERS Advisor

Would you like to submit your own question about life and relationships? Call us or submit your questions through our website.

Before You Decide; Considering Divorce

Phil Rich, Ed.D., MSW

Divorces are usually difficult for everyone involved. In many cases, the choice to divorce is deeply felt by both parties as a failure, and even more so when there are children.

Accordingly, it's important to realize that choosing to divorce is no simple decision.

Marriage as a Choice

Divorce is an option for most people, even if one to be avoided. Knowing that marriage and divorce are choices can be a liberating and empowering thought, and knowing you have this option can help you get through a difficult time. Having the choice to get out of a marriage can give you the peace of mind you might need to work through marital issues and stay in the marriage.

Considering Leaving

If you're thinking about a divorce, something's wrong. The first step is to make sense of what's bothering you — maybe it can be changed. The second step is figuring out if it can be changed, and the third step is deciding if you want it to change. The first two steps involve an appraisal of your marriage. The third involves an appraisal of yourself — do you want to continue in this marriage?

Before you set a divorce into motion, it's important that you ask yourself if your dissatisfaction reflects a passing "phase" in your relationship. Can you move towards a renewed intimacy? Are you going through a patch of rough times that can be worked through? Above all else, do you want to remain in this relationship?

Pluses and Minuses

Leaving a significant relationship is difficult for most people. But for every reason to leave a marriage that's not working, there's also a reason to stay. Sometimes the reasons to stay are obvious: children, the sanctity of marriage, concern for your spouse, or financial constraints. But people also stay in relationships for less than rational reasons. In other words, there's always a reason to stay, even if the reasons sometimes involve denial, rationalization, or plain fear of being alone. As you

Continued on page 2

Divorce *continued from page 1*

think about your marriage, it's important to tune into both sets of reasons.

The Erosion of Your Marriage

Sometimes marriages erode over time, in ways that are so subtle that neither partner even notices the change. In other cases, there's a clear turning point in the marriage, after which the course of the relationship changes for the worse. In still other relationships, the behaviors of one spouse are corrosive to the marriage and sometimes to the other spouse. What factors have most influenced the downturn in your relationship?

Corrosive Marriages

"Corrosive" is an excellent word to describe behaviors that eat right through a marriage. In fact, it's unfortunate that more people don't leave marriages where there's gross abuse and neglect that is neither good for them nor their children. People choose to remain in such marriages for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes they think/hope the problems will



- ❖ "The median age at first marriage is rising for both men and women" according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 report. In 2000, the average age for men was 26.8 years old and for women, it was 25.1. There has also been a significant increase in the number of young, never-married adults in the American population. The proportion of single, never married women (20-24 years old) jumped from 36% in 1970 to 73% in 2000. The percentage of single, young men in the same age range went from 55% in 1970 to 84% in the year 2000.
- ❖ In 1998, the United States drivers with Blood Alcohol Content (BACs) between .08-.09 were involved in an estimated 17,200 crashes that killed 993 and injured 32,000. *Source: Jenson, A., et al. (1999) Impaired Driving in the United States, State Facts Sheets. Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation: Landover, MD.*
- ❖ Traffic crashes are the greatest single cause of death for every age from six through 33. About 45% these fatalities are in alcohol-related crashes. *Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, & National Center for Statistics & Analysis. (1999) (Based on 1997 data)*

eventually clear up, or they believe they really are loved beneath it all. In other cases, people feel they have nowhere else to go, or no one else will love them. Sometimes people stay because they simply don't realize they can leave. And it's not at all uncommon for people to stay in an abusive relationship because they fear leaving. Here, the best recourse is to seek professional, and possibly legal, advice and protection.

The Slow Drift

Perhaps your marriage, as it is, no longer meets your needs. Perhaps slowly evolving changes have led to a marriage in which you feel emotionally neglected and unrecognized, or where your spouse spends less time with you and more time with personal interests or friends. Here, you may start to tackle the issues of what to do and how to go about it. If you haven't decided, then one of your first questions must be, do you want to save your marriage? If so, it is critical to first discuss these issues with your spouse if there's to be any chance of your marriage improving.

Other Stakeholders in Your Marriage

Your spouse is a "stakeholder" in your marriage, of course, because it is his or her marriage also. But there are probably other stakeholders in your marriage as well; people who have serious investments of their own in your marriage.

Children under the age of 18 depend on their parents in every significant way, but besides the minor children, there are other stakeholders: adult children, parents and siblings, in-laws, and shared friends are the most typical. For the most part, as you consider what's best for you in this situation, recognize and consider the importance of your marriage to the other stakeholders as well.

Conclusion

Divorces are powerful events. But before they can re-shape your life, they first shake and disrupt it and the lives of many others. Take the time to think carefully before your decision.

Phil Rich, Ed.D., MSW, holds a doctorate in applied behavioral studies, and is a clinical social worker. He is also the primary author of the 8 books in the Healing Journey series published by John Wiley & Sons, and the author of 2 books in the "Homework Planner" series, also published by Wiley, as well as numerous articles in print and on the Internet. He can be reached directly through philrich@mediaone.net. Find this article on-line at <http://selfhelpmagazine.com>.

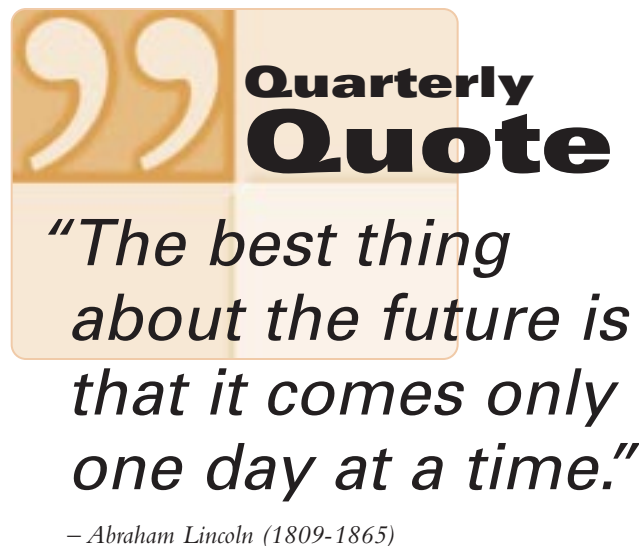
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Children & Divorce: Telling the Children: Telling the Children You Are Getting Divorced

Telling your children that you are going to get divorced can be a very difficult obstacle to overcome, but it is something that must be done in order for the children to begin to accept this dramatic change in their lives. Research shows that children reared in an environment where there is tension will be more traumatized than a child reared in a divorced home, tension-free environment. If children see parents constantly abusing each other, whether it is verbally or physically, the child will ultimately suffer.

It is possible for children to thrive in a divorced home, provided they are under the right parental conditions. One of the first ways that a parent can help a child is by telling him or her about the divorce. Remember, children of all ages will be affected by their parent's divorce. Following are some tips on telling the children.



Quarterly Quote

“The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.”

– Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

HOW TO TELL THE CHILDREN

- No matter what the age, it is important that parents tell their children what is going on.
- If one parent has played the main parenting role, then it is more logical for that parent to break the news to the child, lessening the trauma.
- It is very important that no blame be assigned to either parent for the separation, because this may indirectly give the child a reason to choose sides. It is unhealthy for the child to feel that there is a good and bad parent.
- As a parent, you must explain to your children that they are not to blame for the divorce. Initially almost all children feel that they are responsible. The parent must explain that the divorce is between the parents and not the children and parents. If this is explained correctly, children will also realize that if they are not responsible for the divorce, then they cannot be responsible for their parents reconciling.
- Don't tell the children that you are divorcing unless you and your spouse are absolutely certain that the decision is final.
- It is important that you tell the children about the divorce when you can be together for a long period of time. A non-school day would probably be the most preferred time, because they are going to feel very alone and they will need someone there to feel a sense of safety and security.
- After you have told them the news, you may, without going into great detail, want to give them some idea what they should expect in the future. A child may want to know about school and future living arrangements.
- If they ask “why?” this usually means why is this happening to me. It does not mean why are you getting a divorce. The children initially really don't need to know why, so eliminate details.
- Be sure to ask them if they have any questions. They may have questions, but will be reluctant to respond at that time. Remember, it is important to field questions again and again.

If this might be an issue in your family, contact the Employee Assistance Program for support and guidance. This article was reprinted with permission from the Divorce Source website at www.divorcesource.com.



Maybe you're uncertain if divorce is the solution to your marital problems, or perhaps you're wondering about how your children will be affected by your upcoming divorce. Or you've been thinking of getting a divorce but not sure what steps to take? This site can help you to clarify the most important issues in making such a big decision.

www.divorcesource.com

Having trouble keeping up with the lingo these days? This on-line resource has over 12,000 words with some amazingly funny and creative entries. See if your favorite phrase is "wacktastic" enough to pass the test. Be assured, none of these words are dull enough to make it into Webster's Dictionary.

<http://www.pseudodictionary.com>

Does it work? A good question for anyone who's ever stayed up late and seen the ads on television for that amazing hair removal system or the fabulous gadget that braids your hair in seconds! This site is posted by an NBC Texas affiliate and has an archived list of many products (i.e. Nads, Twistabraid, Powerpaste, Quick Chop, etc.) with some very funny and down-to-earth commentary supplied by the staff on their own experiences.

http://www.krbctv.com/diw_archive/

"At least 22 million adults provide the care that is so critical in helping older people remain in their homes and other community settings. It is estimated that 80 percent of all care received by older Americans is provided by family members — spouses, children, grandchildren and other relatives — people just like you." Visit this site for a wealth of resources and tips designed to help anyone who is providing care for a loved one.

<http://www.caregiving.org>

The Family Violence Prevention Fund is a site dedicated to educating the public on Domestic Violence issues. It provides links to recent events in the news and even has a Celebrity Watch section. There are statistical resources, as well as information on programs relating to the workplace, children, and international issues. Each visitor is encouraged to become politically active and make a difference for such an important cause.

<http://endabuse.org>

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