



A Healthy Outlook!

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Managing Perfection

Are You a Perfectionist?

Perfectionists aspire to be top achievers who do not allow themselves to make even a single mistake. They are always on the alert for imperfections and weaknesses in themselves and others. They tend to be rigid thinkers who are on the lookout for deviations from the rules or the norm. Perfectionism is not the same as striving for excellence. People who pursue excellence in a healthy way take genuine pleasure in working to meet high standards. Perfectionists are motivated by self-doubt and fears of disapproval, ridicule, and rejection. The high producer *has drive*, while the perfectionist *is driven*.

The Costs of Being a Perfectionist

Perfectionism always costs more than the benefits it may provide. It can make a person paralyzed with fear and so rigid that it is difficult to relate to him/her. It can produce contradictory styles of performance, from being highly productive to being completely nonproductive. Here are some examples of the costs of perfectionism:

Low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is both a cause and a result of perfectionist behavior. Because a perfectionist never feels good enough about himself or his personal performance, he often feels like a loser or a failure.

Gloominess. Because perfectionists are convinced that it will be next to impos-

sible to achieve most goals, they can easily develop a negative attitude.

Depression. Perfectionists often feel discouraged and depressed because they are driven to be perfect but know that it is impossible to reach the ideal.

Guilt. Perfectionists never think they handle things well. As a result, they often feel a sense of shame and guilt.

Rigidity. Perfectionists tend to become inflexible and lack spontaneity, because they need to have everything meet an ideal.

Lack of motivation. People who expect perfection may never try new behaviors or learn new skills because they think they will never be able to do anything well enough. At other times, they may begin the new behavior but give up early for fear of never reaching the goal.

Paralysis. Most perfectionists have an intense fear of failure, they sometimes become immobilized and stagnant. Writers who suffer from writer's block are examples of the perfectionist's paralysis.

Obsessive behavior. When a person needs a certain order or structure in his/her life, he/she may become overly focused on details and rules.

Compulsive behavior. A perfectionist who feels like a failure or loser may medi-

October 7th, MCPS Observes National Depression Screening Day

The MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will be conducting screenings for depression, generalized anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The screenings take less than 30 minutes and are available for you and your family members. Call to schedule an appointment: 240-314-1040. ■

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cate him or herself with alcohol, drugs, food, shopping, sex, gambling, or other high-risk behaviors.

Eating disorders. Many studies have determined that perfectionism is a central issue for people who develop eating disorders.

The Perfectionist Versus the High Achiever

People produce many of their best achievements when they are striving to do their best. High achievers, like perfectionists, want to be better people and achieve great things. Unlike perfectionists, high achievers accept that making mistakes and risking failure are part of the achievement process—and part of being human.

Emotionally Healthy High Producers

You can be a high achiever without being a perfectionist. People who accomplish plenty and stay emotionally healthy tend to exhibit the following behaviors:

- Set standards that are high but achievable.
- Enjoy the process, not just the outcome.
- Recover from disappointment quickly.
- Are not disabled by anxiety and fear of failure.
- View mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning.
- React positively to constructive feedback.

Once you are aware of the ways in which you expect yourself to be perfect, you can start to change your behavior. You can begin the change process by thinking about examples of your perfectionist behaviors as you observe them. ■

Adapted from an article by Krystal DeVries, M.A., in the Therapists Newsletter. Used with permission.

Keys to Being a Collaborative Team

At MCPS, we have a variety of jobs, all ultimately tied to the goal of educating children. To accomplish this, we work on teams of varying sizes. The following are keys to the most effective way to work as a team:

Have a Common Purpose and Goal

A team is defined as a group of people working together toward a common goal. Without a goal, there is no team. Here are some ideas for creating a common goal:

- Allow each team member to express his/her thoughts and ideas about the goal.
- Use the common purpose to prioritize team actions.

Trust Each Other

Team members must trust each other if they are to work together successfully. Here are some ideas for creating trust among team members:



- Be honest.
- Avoid talking behind each other's back.
- Trust teammates (you must trust them before they will trust you).
- Give team members the benefit of the doubt.

Clarify Roles

Knowing everyone's role and being familiar with the responsibility of those roles create efficiency and flexibility. Here are some ideas for clarifying roles on the team:

- Relate team-member expectations to the team's overall purpose.
- Clarify responsibilities when planning for action.
- Learn what others do on the team.
- Figure out ways to help each other.

Communicate Openly and Effectively

Miscommunication can create hard feelings and undermine the success of the team. Here are some ideas for improving communication:

- Seek to understand all angles.

- Take responsibility for being heard and understood.
- Work to clear up misunderstandings quickly and accurately.
- Reinforce and recognize team-member efforts.

Appreciate Diversity

Team members come from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and perspectives. Here are some ideas for taking advantage of team diversity:

- Remember that reasonable people can and do differ with each other.
- Try to learn as much as you can from others.
- Evaluate a new idea based on its merits.
- Avoid remarks that draw negative attention to a person's unique characteristics.
- Don't ignore the differences among team members.

Balance the Team's Focus

Finally, team members need to recognize that they should measure and monitor the products and services the team provides as well as the team's internal group dynamics and relationships. (Sometimes team members get so involved in the process of becoming a team they forget the reason they were made a team in the first place, and vice versa.) Here are some ideas for creating that balance:

- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of team meetings.
- Hold team celebrations for achieving results.
- Praise individual effort.
- Design individual performance goals that emphasize both results and teamwork.
- Assign certain team members to monitor task needs and others to monitor relationship needs. ■

Adapted from an article from the State of Minnesota Department of Finance and Employee Relations website.

Civility is the “How” When it Comes to Building Relationships

Individuals who have high relational skills are more successful personally and professionally. The meaningful presence of others in our lives helps us remain both physically and mentally healthy. Thus, civility is preventive medicine.

👉 Research shows that strong personal relationships are the biggest contributor to a more satisfying life. As social beings, our happiness or unhappiness depends, to a large extent, on the quality of our relationships. Civility is the sum of the many sacrifices we are called upon to make for the sake of living together. It allows us to connect with others and encompasses courtesy, politeness, and good manners.

👉 Civility is gracious goodness, according to P. M. Forni, cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project and author of *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct*. Being civil means being constantly aware of others and weaving restraint, respect, and consideration into the very fabric of this awareness.

👉 Developing and nurturing personal relationships can help lower your stress level. Social support lowers blood pressure and signals the adrenal glands to stop pumping out corticosteroids. Also, those with a supportive network enjoy better cognitive functioning. Social isolation is comparable to cigarette smoking and other major biomedical and psychosocial risk factors.

“I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.”

— Bill Cosby

Rules of considerate conduct

- Pay attention
- Acknowledge others
- Think the best
- Listen
- Be inclusive
- Speak kindly
- Apologize earnestly
- Refrain from idle complaints
- Assert yourself
- Care for your guests
- Accept and give praise
- Respect others’ opinions, time, and space
- Accept and give constructive criticism
- Respect the environment and be gentle to animals
- Mind your body
- Respect even a subtle “no”

Ways to Build a Kinder Workplace

- 👉 Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Promise only what you can deliver.
- 👉 Be less inclined to give advice and more inclined to seek it.
- 👉 Resist the urge to jump to conclusions about people and their motives.
- 👉 Identify the biggest redeeming quality of a person you have problems interacting with.
- 👉 Give sincere appreciation with feedback, recognition, and respect.
- 👉 When things go wrong, resist the urge to assign blame.

- 👉 Don’t wait for kindness to come your way. Give a gift for no reason.
- 👉 Show interest in someone else’s interests and widen your social circle.
- 👉 Involve more people in weighing options and making decisions.
- 👉 Don’t make judgments about people and don’t spread rumors.

Keys to Civility in a Community

👉 *Trust* — The foundation of any community is the quality of its relationships and levels of trust between people and across institutions.

👉 *Process* — A natural progression of activities, which is marked by gradual change that leads to growth or the attainment of a goal.

👉 *People* — Dedicated to the celebration of communities of people making great strides toward comprehensive community improvement.

👉 *Dialogue* — Members of the community can share their individual hopes and dreams, allowing the commonality of these hopes and dreams to create a common sense of purpose. ■

Sources: National Civility Center, Johns Hopkins University; NewsHour with Jim Lehrer; Psychosomatic Medicine, Secrets of a Satisfying Life by David. D. Ireland, Better Workplace Now, Choosing Civility by P.M. Forni, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Fact Sheet of the Month is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.

MCPS Cancer Support Group

The MCPS cancer support group meets on the second Wednesday of each month, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at 2096 Gaither Road, conference room 3, in Rockville. The members of the group are MCPS employees who have been diagnosed with cancer or care about someone who has cancer. Members meet in a confidential

atmosphere to discuss and get support for the emotional aspects of cancer, as well as to share practical information about living with cancer. In addition, speakers are scheduled to discuss topics of interest. For more information, contact Debra Tipton on Outlook or call her at 240-314-1040.

Ask the EAP

Q: I know that to see an EAP counselor I need to call and make an appointment. What can I expect when I call the EAP?

A: When you call the EAP you will be treated courteously and with respect. The EAP staff member who answers the phone will ask you about the problem that prompted your call and will also ask for your name and contact information. If you are calling to get a resource or ask a question that does not require an appointment, and a counselor is available, he or she will speak to you at that time. If no one is available at that moment, you will receive a return call shortly thereafter. If you are interested in scheduling a face-to-face meeting, the staff member will make an appointment for the next available time that fits your schedule.

Do you have a question for the EAP?
Send your questions to Jeff Becker via Outlook or the PONY.



Upcoming Events

Second Wednesday of each Month: MCPS Cancer Support Group
— meets from 4:30–6:00 p.m., at 2096 Gaither Road, Conference Room 3, in Rockville. For more information, contact Debra Tipton on Outlook or at 240-314-1040.

September: National Infant Mortality Awareness Month—National Healthy Start Association, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202 -296-2195
www.healthystartassoc.org/

September 15 – October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month —A period to recognize the contributions of Hispanic Americans to the United States and to celebrate Hispanic heritage and culture.

October 7: MCPS Observes National Depression Screening Day
For more information call the EAP at 240-314-1040 or visit
www.nmha.org/go/depression-screening-day

November 16–22: American Education Week 2008 — A time to focus on strengthening the bonds between schools and the community with activities suggested by the National Education Association.
www.nea.org

**Old is always 15
years from now.**

— Bill Cosby



A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



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Important Notice: Information in *A Healthy Outlook!* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to
Debra_Tipton@mcpsmd.org

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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