



A Healthy Outlook!

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SUMMER VACATION: History and Fun Facts

SCHOOLS ARE OUT and summer vacation has begun! Most children look forward to spending time at pools, beaches, grandparents' homes, and summer camp. But summer vacation was not always the escape that today's American schoolchildren have come to expect.

In the early 1800s, schools were open year-round and summer vacation was unheard of. However, education was not mandatory then, so only about 30 percent of students attended all year.

Then, along came Horace Mann, the great education reformer. He worried that overstimulating the minds of children could lead to mental breakdowns and insanity. So in the 1840s, the summer break was created. The solution made teachers happy because they got a break, and it made doctors happy because they were concerned about children spreading disease while packed into sweltering classrooms.

Tips:

- ♦ Decide what you want your vacation to look like—beaches, theme parks, or hiking in the mountains. Picture yourself in that setting and then look for places that will help make your vision a reality.
- ♦ Plan ahead.
- ♦ Make a budget.
- ♦ Remember that some places offer last-minute deals; check out websites such as Craigslist for some of them!
- ♦ Make the arrangements for pets, mail, and emergencies.
- ♦ Have a great time and come back refreshed.

Now there are amazing places available for summer vacation! So many travel experiences await—anywhere from California to the tip of Maine, from Alaska to Colorado, from Florida to Europe.

Whatever you choose to do, live in the moment! When we think about how there are so few days left on our vacation or having to pack to leave the next day, we sometimes take away from where we are and mentally cut

our vacation short. Be present and enjoy every moment you have.

Written by Sasha Scaun, Graduate Intern, and adapted from Tidbit Fun, 2013.

Ask the EAP:

Q. *Is it appropriate for me to contact the EAP if I need assistance finding elder care services for a parent who lives far away?*

A. Yes. The EAP can assist you in finding resources and help wherever your parent may live. Adult children are faced with critical elder care issues, and these are increasing dramatically. The EAP is here to help you.

In This Issue

- 1 *Summer Vacation: History and Fun Facts*
- 1 *Ask the EAP*
- 2 *Keep the Stress Out of Your Vacation*
- 2 *Social Media: Stats and Facts*
- 3 *The Emotional Impact of Infertility*
- 4 *How to Tell if Someone Has a Problem With Alcohol or Other Drugs and How to Help*
- 5 *Supervisor Tip: Remember to Recognize!*
- 5 *Upcoming Events*

Keep the Stress Out of Your VACATION

WITH SUMMER FINALLY approaching, many of us are looking forward to a week away on the annual family vacation. It may be months ago that we decided to head for the beach or the mountains; to tour one of our great national parks; or to finally indulge in the cruise of a lifetime. Our expectations for relaxation and enjoyment usually will increase as the date approaches. We look forward to leaving the everyday grind behind as we imagine ourselves sleeping late, lounging on the warm sand, and creating lasting memories with our families.

It all sounds wonderful, and it can be wonderful as long as we do not allow stress to invade this special time. Here are a few tips to ensure that your vacation leaves you refreshed and renewed, as opposed to wanting a “vacation from your vacation.”

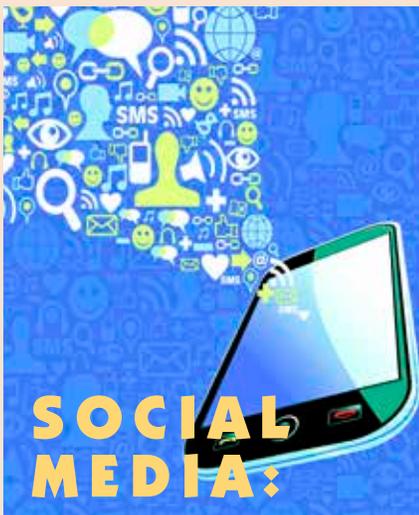
- ♦ **Keep your expectations realistic** and be prepared to be flexible if what you envisioned is not exactly what happens. For example, plan for some alternate activity in case your beach vacation has rainy moments.

- ♦ **Remember that kids do best with some semblance of their normal routine** and structure, including mealtimes and bed times.
- ♦ **Try to disconnect from your “always on 24/7” world.** If you must check e-mails, try to schedule a fixed time during the day and stick to that limit.
- ♦ **Pay attention to your feelings and reactions.** Are you getting frustrated because the tour you wanted to take is not available or because the kids are arguing in the car? Practice some deep breathing exercises or put on headphones and listen to calming music.
- ♦ **If you are spending a lot of time outdoors in the sun, use sunscreen and stay hydrated.** Listlessness and irritability can be associated with dehydration.
- ♦ **By all means enjoy new foods,** but do not take a vacation from healthy nutrition. Avoid excessive sugar, fats, caffeine, and alcohol.



Remember, a vacation should be a time that you can relax and enjoy. Try not to make it into a long checklist of activities to complete or sights to see. Pace yourself, remember your healthy habits, and enjoy each moment and memory.

Written by Chris Jahrling, EAP Intern.



Stats and Facts

Have you ever wondered just how big social media is and what it means for you? Consider that the way we interact with people, obtain information, and do our work already has been changed by social media.

Here are some facts about social media trends:

- ♦ **Twitter** has 200 million users, including 8 percent of the U.S. population.
- ♦ **Google's** search engine is used daily by 85 percent of Internet users globally.
- ♦ The image-based social network **Pinterest** has grown 4,000 percent in the past 6 months and now has more than 4 million users.
- ♦ Around 4.8 billion people own **mobile phones**, while 4.2 billion own a toothbrush.
- ♦ Social media sites and **blogs** reach 80 percent of all U.S. Internet users.
- ♦ While **Facebook** continues to add users, U.S. members are increasingly less active. Since 2009, “messaging friends” has dropped 12 percent and

searching for new contacts has fallen 17 percent.

- ♦ **LinkedIn**, a professional network, remains a very effective tool for organizations; 65 percent of companies that use it have acquired a customer through this network.

Questions to think about: What social media do you use? Do you use it in a way that adds quality to your life? Do you need to learn more about what tools are out there and how to use them? Do you use them too much?

For more information about what is out there, go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites for descriptions of the various sites currently being used.

Based on information from “72 Fascinating Social Media Marketing Facts and Statistics for 2012,” JeffBullas.com

The Emotional Impact of INFERTILITY

INFERTILITY IS A MEDICAL PROBLEM that results in the inability to conceive a child or carry a pregnancy to full term. Usually, a couple is diagnosed as infertile after one year of frequent, unprotected sexual intercourse.

It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of couples are infertile. About 35 percent of infertility cases can be traced to physical problems of the woman and 35 percent to the man. In the remaining 30 percent of cases, infertility is either unexplained or caused by problems in both partners.

Why Infertility Can Be Devastating

The inability to have children can be one of the greatest challenges that a person or couple will ever face. It affects people emotionally, physically, and financially. It can place tremendous stress on a couple's relationship and on their relationships with family and friends.

On a physical level, the experience of being examined and tested monthly, weekly, or even daily can be embarrassing, exhausting, and very expensive. Medications often have side effects, and daily injections may be required. Surgery often is necessary, and sometimes several procedures are needed.

As the process continues over months and years, the couple's privacy will be invaded time and again, physically and emotionally. One or both of the partners may learn to put aside their feelings as they lie on the examining

table, have fluids taken, or give sperm for the 10th, 20th, or 50th time.

At the same time, family, friends, and coworkers may be waiting to see if this month will bring good news. The couple will get used to hearing, "Anything new?" with an expectant smile. Also, they may hear comments like, "Maybe you should take a month off and just relax," or "A vacation would do you good," or "This sounds like a good problem; at least you can have fun trying." To make it even worse, throughout this experience, the couple may hear regularly of others who have become pregnant. In fact, it may sometimes seem as if the whole world is pregnant.

These experiences often make an infertile person feel like a failure. Usually, the feelings will surface each time there is a treatment failure or when yet another friend or acquaintance announces a pregnancy.

When no pregnancy results after each expensive procedure or round of treatment, the disappointment may turn to devastation. Many infertile people will become depressed and anxious. The strain in the marriage and among family members sometimes will become unbearable. The self-esteem of one or both partners may plummet. They often will feel lonely, sad, and angry. The long series of disappointments can have a numbing effect, and depression can result. If one partner has the medical problem that is causing the infertility, he or she often may feel

guilty and even may offer the other a divorce. Also, the infertile person may fear that the other partner will leave the relationship. All of these changes can cause people to feel emotionally distant and avoid intimacy.

Some people cut themselves off from family and friends. They may look for ways to avoid attending social gatherings and family events, fearing that they will be subjected to discussions about pregnancy, children, or infertility. Socializing with friends and family who have children or who are pregnant is a special challenge. Sometimes these feelings intensify, especially for women, when they have to take large doses of drugs that can affect their emotions.

Emotional Self-care During Infertility

Almost no one expects to be infertile. So when a couple learns that they are infertile, they often are surprised at how devastated they feel. After all, they reason, it is not as if they have cancer or a deadly disease; it is just infertility. So why do they feel so badly? Most couples gradually come to realize that it is a distressing experience. Eventually, many seek the help of a team of professionals when they realize that it is a good idea to create a support network and take advantage of help that is available.

When one or both partners start to feel the toll of infertility, it can be a good idea to seek the services of a mental health professional, particularly one who has experience working with the issues of infertility.

Since these issues are so complex, it is important to find a counselor who has experience and training in dealing with the impact on individuals, couples, and families. Many couples also find relief in support groups where they can meet regularly with other infertile couples, share experiences, and support each other. Such groups are offered through organizations like RESOLVE, a national infertility support organization. RESOLVE also provides referrals to medical practitioners who specialize in infertility. Visit www.resolve.org for information.

"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass on a summer day listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is hardly a waste of time."

~ JOHN LUBBOCK

continued on page 4

Infertility

continued from page 3

Primarily, infertility is a medical problem, but during treatment it is important to address the emotional effects of infertility.

It is especially important to join a support group or see a qualified counselor at any of the following points:

- ◆ When you begin a new phase of your treatment.
- ◆ After a course of treatment has failed.
- ◆ When you are faced with difficult decisions about treatment.
- ◆ When you are thinking about options such as surrogacy or egg or sperm donation.
- ◆ When you are considering stopping medical treatment.
- ◆ When you are thinking about adopting.
- ◆ When one or both of you have troubling feelings that will not go away.
- ◆ When you experience strained relationships with your partner, friends, or family.
- ◆ When you avoid being with others because of the infertility.

Although a mental health professional cannot influence the outcome of the medical treatment, he or she can help the couple get through the process by helping them to communicate better with each other and gain support from family and friends. For more information on therapists that might be able to help, contact the MCPS EAP at 240-314-1040.

Adapted from an article by Paula Alexander, LCSW, from the Therapists Newsletter. Used with permission.

How to Tell if Someone Has a Problem With Alcohol or Other Drugs

HOW TO HELP

THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE of unusual behavior may be a sign of an alcohol or other drug problem. If there is a problem, probably you will notice that the behavior gets worse. Alcoholism and drug addiction are diseases that will get worse until they are treated or the person dies. These diseases affect the user's health, behavior, and life. Typically, addiction follows these stages:

- ◆ **Stage 1: Casual or experimental use.** The person gets high but no one thinks it is a problem. There may not be any signs of use at this stage.
- ◆ **Stage 2: More frequent alcohol or other drug use.** The person starts using more often, even during the week. Clues to look for include changes in friends, poor school or work performance, mood changes, and unexplained loss of memory—called “blackouts.”
- ◆ **Stage 3: Preoccupied with getting high.** Daily use is common for some users; others may “binge” (use heavily once a week or so). The user gets ill more often. Family and job problems get worse. The user



may start to have trouble with the law. Family and friends may be concerned.

- ◆ **Stage 4: Compulsive use.** Without the drug, the user may go into withdrawal, which can be life threatening. Illness, blackouts (memory loss due to brain damage from alcohol or other drugs), and overdosing are more common at this stage. The family may be torn apart. Getting money to buy drugs may become an obsession. The user may be on the verge of losing his or her job and may be isolated from friends. Without treatment, very serious consequences may follow.

How to Help

If someone you know shows signs of alcohol or drug abuse, you may

continued on page 5

“If you are what you do, then when you don’t, you aren’t.”

~ WAYNE DYER

How to Tell if Someone Has a Problem With Alcohol or Other Drugs

continued from page 4

want to help; however, you need to know how. The best way to help a user face an alcohol or other drug problem is to make sure you do not ignore or cover up the user's behaviors or mistakes that result from the abuse or addiction. When you cover up for someone, it is called "enabling." When you enable, you allow a person to avoid the negative results of using alcohol or other drugs. After a

while, you may feel angry when the user takes advantage of your patience and kindness.

Confronting someone can be scary.

It might help if you learn about abuse and addiction first. Every bookstore and library has information on this topic. Remember that you have the right to tell someone how his or her behavior is affecting you. Do not allow your fear of offending the person to get in the way. You might offend the user when you say his or her drug use seems extreme but your concern might save the user's job, marriage, or life. Remember that if you ignore an addiction, it will only get worse.

Finally, know that you are not alone.

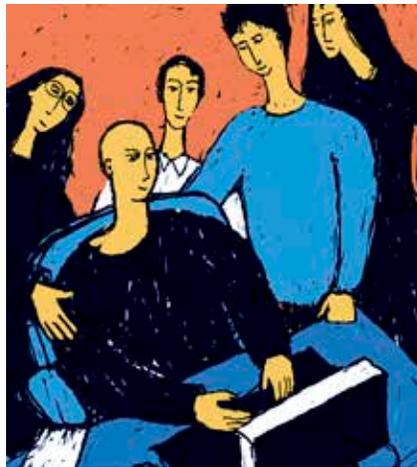
Millions of people have been hurt by someone else's alcohol or other drug use. You can get help, even if the user will not. There are many self-help groups for friends and family of alcohol and other drug users. These groups can show you new ways to respond to the user so you will not feel hurt or scared.

Feel free to contact the EAP at 240-314-1040 for a consultation on resources, how to help the person you are concerned about, or to receive support.

SUPERVISOR TIP: Remember to Recognize!

HOW OFTEN and in what ways do you recognize your staff? Remember that recognition should be—

- ♦ spontaneous,
- ♦ frequent,
- ♦ consistent,
- ♦ personal,
- ♦ trackable, and
- ♦ public (but do not forget private!).



There are no limits to the number of people that can be celebrated for going above and beyond.

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

July 8, August 12, and September 9

The MCPS Cancer Support Group meets the second Monday of the month. Anyone who has or has had cancer or is caring for someone with cancer is welcome to attend. All meetings are from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Carver Educational Services Center, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 43. For more information, please contact Debra Tipton on Outlook or call her at 240-314-1040.

STILL SASSY AFTER CANCER

FREE GALA June 16, 3:00–5:30 p.m. All are Welcome!

Jane O. Smith, a lead facilitator for the Study Circles program—and cancer survivor—hosts this event. A stellar line up, including Ellouise Schoettler, D.C.'s award-winning storyteller, a Talbots trunk show ("Energy-based Dressing"), Jas Boothe, Founder of Final Salute, Inc., and others will share goodies, fun, and inspiration! At Healthtrax in Germantown. Details at <http://www.StillSassy.Eventbrite.com>

Upcoming Events:

A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

SPECIALISTS: Debra Tipton
Robyn Rosenbauer
Jeff Becker

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

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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