

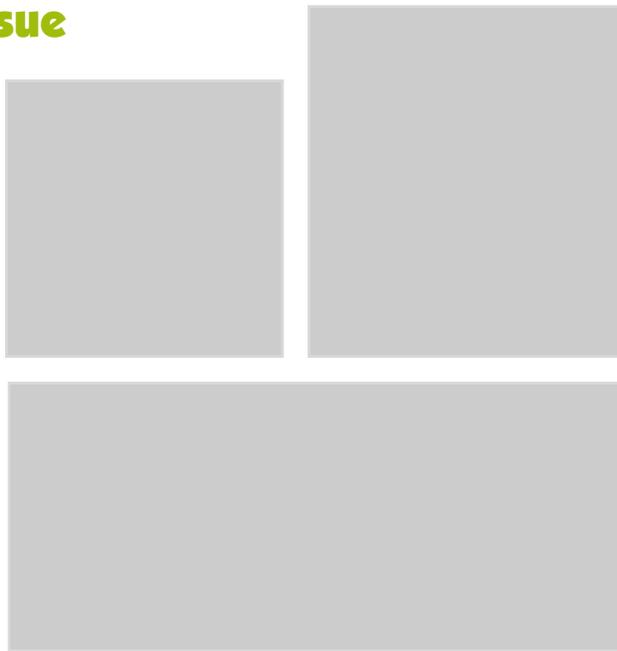


A Healthy Outlook!

301-279-3197 • FAX 301-279-3756 • www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/EAP Vol.1, No.1

Welcome to the First Issue

We are excited to present the premiere issue of *A Healthy Outlook!* to better provide you with information to help you lead a more healthy and productive life. We will present you with a wide range of articles, ideas, resources, and assorted tools that will cover the gamut of what, we hope, will help you both in your work and in your personal life. We look forward to your feedback on this and future issues. To contact us and learn more about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), go to www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/eap/ or call us at 301-279-3197. ☀



Inside:

- 2** *Can't Sleep? See Your Doctor*
- High Moral Increases Job Satisfaction*
- 3** *Addicted to the Internet?*
- Premarital Counseling: Before you plunge*
- Damaged Before the Divorce?*
- 4** *Effective Communication*
- Upcoming Events*
- EAP Services at a Glance*

Smokeless Isn't Always Harmless:

The dangers of smokeless tobacco

About 4 percent of middle school and 11 percent of high school boys use smokeless tobacco, according to a study recently released by the American Legacy Foundation. Most are white, and the numbers are climbing.

Most users started the habit as an experimental alternative to smoking cigarettes. However, research shows that chewing tobacco is actually a worse alternative! Because tobacco is held in the mouth for minutes at a time, more of

the cancer-causing chemicals enter the body than when tobacco is inhaled.

Up to 75 percent of current smokeless tobacco users have noncancerous and precancerous oral lesions. Smokeless tobacco can cause—

- Tooth abrasion
- Gum recession
- Increased tooth discoloration, bad breath, and decay
- Nicotine dependence
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Oral cancer.

The danger signs are—

- A sore that doesn't heal
- A lump or white patch
- Prolonged soreness in throat
- Difficulty chewing
- Restricted movement of the jaws.

Education and fear of getting cancer are still the most powerful ways to get young people to quit.

For more information on the dangers of smokeless tobacco, visit [www.kickbutt.org/learn smokeless.html](http://www.kickbutt.org/learn%20smokeless.html) or www.toothinfo.com. ☀

Can't Sleep? See Your Doctor

Because of the grief and stress resulting from the series of events that began on September 11 last year, the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) says this could be a perfect time to include important lifestyle changes, including making time for sleep.

As many as 40 million Americans have some kind of sleeping disorder, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF). As a result, millions of Americans struggle to stay awake at home, work, school, and on the road.

If you are having trouble sleeping, the NSF suggests the following:

- Do exercise regularly, at least three hours before bedtime.
- Do keep a regular, calming bedtime routine.
- Don't use nicotine, caffeine, or alcohol in the late afternoon and evening.
- Don't use the bed for anything except sleep and sex.
- Don't nap during the day if you have trouble sleeping at night.

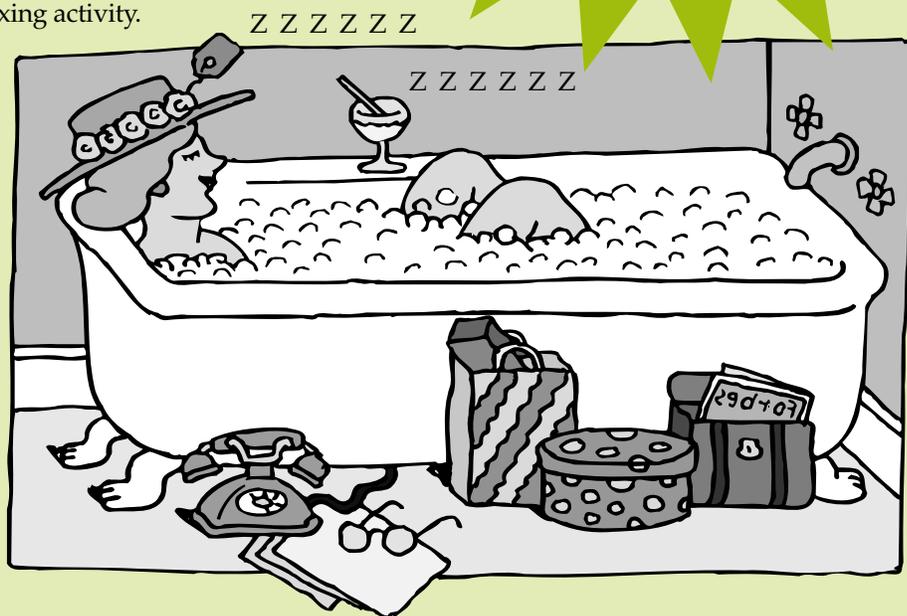
Sleep experts also recommend getting into bed only when you're tired.

If you can't fall asleep within 15 minutes, don't lie in bed and toss and turn; go to another room and engage in a relaxing activity.

Return to bed when you're sleepy. It is also important to pay attention to your mattress and make sure it provides comfort and support.

These sleep tips can be helpful for people experiencing symptoms of insomnia such as difficulty falling asleep, frequent awakenings during the night, waking too early and unable to go back to sleep, or waking unrefreshed. If these insomnia symptoms persist, it is important to seek help from a physician or other health care provider. Many sleep problems can be treated successfully. ☀

National Sleep Awareness Week is April 1-7, 2002.
This year's theme is "Sleep for Success." Look for more information about sleep at www.sleepfoundation.org/.



High Morale Increases Job Satisfaction:

The tale of The Container Store

The Container Store maintained top honors again this year-for the third consecutive year-in Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies To Work For. In 2000 and 2001, the company ranked first. In 2002 it was eased slightly from first to second place.

Employees are nuts about working for this company! They cite respect as the top reason for their loyalty-94 percent of those surveyed feel they make a difference at their place of work. A total of 225 anonymous employee responses (from 250 solicited) were sent to the magazine's



Great Place to Work Institute. Here are some employee responses to the survey:

"We grew up with 'family values,' and it's rare to find a company with the same values, philosophy, and foundation principles. Going to work is like going to a family reunion every day."

"At TCS we do 'everything' with pride, from sharing our line of products and matching knowledge to the tidy bathroom we clean ourselves!"

*"I miss everyone when I go on vacation."
"I will never leave."*

So, money isn't everything! The Container Store's wages are about average for the retail industry, but its employee turnover rate is around seven times less. Having a positive attitude and peace of mind on the job can be more beneficial than a big paycheck. ☀

Addicted to the Internet?

How do you know if you're addicted to the Internet? According to the American Psychological Association, answering yes to at least four of the following questions means you just may be.

Yes No

- Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet?
- Do you feel a need to use the Internet for longer amounts of time to achieve satisfaction?
- Do you feel unable to control your Internet use?
- Do you feel irritable or restless when trying to cut down on your Internet use?
- Do you use the Internet as a way to escape problems or relieve a poor mood?
- Do you lie to your family or friends to conceal the extent of your Internet use?
- Do you jeopardize or risk relationships or your career because of your Internet use?
- Do you go through withdrawal (feelings of depression or anxiety) when offline?
- Do you stay online longer than originally intended?

Score

If you think you might need help with a problem related to your use of the Internet, please contact the EAP at 301-279-3197. ☀



Premarital Counseling:

Before you plunge . . .

With half of all marriages ending in divorce (remember when it was a third?), premarital counseling is not such a bad idea.

It takes a brave couple to explore the key issues. Statistically, 40 percent of couples that participate in premarital counseling don't tie the knot. The most effective premarital counseling includes an honest evaluation of compatibility around six issues that can throw a marriage overboard.

- 1) Communication
- 2) Religious orientation and beliefs
- 3) In-law relationships
- 4) Affection and sexuality needs
- 5) Money management
- 6) Children and child-rearing philosophies.

Interested?

The EAP can help you find a specialist in couples work premarital counseling. ☀



Damaged Before the Divorce?

It's not divorce in and of itself that hams adolescents emotionally and academically, it's what occurs years before the divorce, according to a recent article in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. After the divorce, the level of damage appears to remain the same.

Based on data from 10,000 students in Grades 8 through 12, students whose parents would eventually divorce scored significantly lower on math and reading tests, compared with students in intact families. Other problems of children of divorce included lower educational aspirations and more behavioral problems. The study seems to reinforce a growing view that divorce is part of a harmful continuum rather than a discrete event. ☀

Need a referral? Or, just need to talk to someone?
Your EAP is here to help.

Contact us Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. at **301-279-3197**
The Employee Assistance Program @ Maryvale
1000 First Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Effective Communication

We listen to each other with our ears, our eyes, and our life experience. In fact, it's estimated that our words are only 20 percent or less of what we communicate. Many factors, including the locale, the time of day, and simple intuition affect how well we are understood. The message that is received isn't always the one that is sent. Here's how to ensure that your words are in synch with the way you actually say them.

Clear Communication

- Use "I feel" statements (e.g., "I feel _____ when _____ happens.").
- Express your thoughts, feelings, and ideas openly and honestly.
- Use a calm, firm voice.
- Establish appropriate distance from the other person.
- Ask for what you want; if you just need someone to listen, just say so.
- Match body language and facial expression with spoken words.
- Listen to yourself; record yourself on audiotape and listen to how you come across. Pay attention to volume, tone, pitch, pace, and patterns in your speech

Active Listening

Active listening also is essential for communication to be effective. If you want to be heard, listen!

- Give the speaker you undivided attention.
- Make eye contact with the speaker.
- Show interest by leaning forward, nodding, and saying things like, "Go on," or "I see."
- Keep an open mind; don't prepare your own reply while the other person is speaking.
- Listen to the speaker's entire message.
- Ask the speaker for clarification.
- Reflect on what you heard the speaker say by paraphrasing. ☀



Upcoming Events

EAP Services at a Glance

The EAP is a free service offered to MCPS employees, their immediate family members, and retirees. The goal is to help employees address any troubling issues they face in the work place and at home, before they become too difficult to manage without outside help. Here are some of the issues we can help you with.

- Assessment
 - Referrals to outside agencies and counselors—based on the most appropriate service at the least possible cost.
 - Short-term counseling
 - Crisis intervention
 - Consultation and information
 - Relapse prevention groups
 - Follow-up services
 - Workshops for employees
- Information concerning an employee's or family member's use of the EAP will not be given to anyone outside of the EAP without the written

consent of the individual, except as required by law. Also, this information will not be made a part of the employee's personnel record. ☀



A Healthy Outlook

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



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