



# A Healthy Outlook!

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## Develop Your Personal Negotiation Skills

Negotiating skills can help you manage lots of different types of life situations, both at work and in your personal relationship. Here are a few examples of how these skills can help you build an even better life for yourself:

1. Many family situations require negotiating with others: Deciding which movie to see, planning how to spend money, choosing a vacation spot, and many other decisions work best when you have these skills.
2. Being a good negotiator enables you to get what you want more often without resorting to becoming aggressive or pushy. Negotiating with others is more effective than simply demanding what you want or just caving in.
3. You will be more successful in the workplace if you negotiate. These skills enable you to stand up for yourself and get what you want more often, without jeopardizing relationships with bosses and coworkers.
4. Negotiation skills increase your personal effectiveness in any group situation, including volunteer, PTA, and church or synagogue groups.
5. Negotiating lessens the chances of others taking advantage of you.
6. Negotiating a fair solution improves your self-esteem and increases others' respect for you.

### What Successful Negotiators Do

Negotiation is a set of skills that anyone can learn. Researchers have observed that the most successful negotiators do the following things:

1. They plan ahead. Successful negotiations are rarely spontaneous. Taking the time to analyze the situation and think through your strategy is perhaps the most important element of successful negotiation. This is true whether you are negotiating an important contract for your employer or vacation plans with your family.
2. They are willing to consider a wide range of outcomes and options, rather than rigidly insisting on a specific result. Successful negotiators are open-minded and avoid being locked in to one outcome. They are willing to consider several possibilities and options.
3. They look for common ground rather than areas of conflict. Pointing out areas where you and the other person are already in agreement conveys an attitude of cooperation and lessens any feeling of opposition.
4. They discuss the key issues in order of priority. Successful negotiators have a clear idea of what the two or three key issues are and which is the most important. Start with the most important issues and proceed to those that matter less. If you can reach agreement on the most important things, the lesser issues will most likely be easier to resolve.
5. They avoid behavior that the other person is likely to consider annoying. This includes having an aggressive or intimidating manner, using sarcasm, using negative body language, or talking loudly. Not only do skilled negotiators avoid such behavior, they work hard at

conveying an attitude of cooperation, reasonableness, openness, and friendliness.

6. They avoid participating in a defend/attack spiral. You know what this sounds like:  
A attacks B  
B defends herself and attacks A  
A defends herself and attacks B,  
and so on...

We've all experienced being caught in one of these spirals and know how nonproductive they are. Rather than perpetuating such a process, the successful negotiator puts a stop to it by choosing not to say anything that would be perceived as aggressive or defensive.

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### Example A – Defeating/Attacking

Jim: “I can’t believe you are being so rigid.”  
Anne: “Rigid! You should talk! You are completely bull-headed.”  
Jim: “Right! You should try listening to yourself. You are impossible.”

### Example B – Negotiating

Jim: “I can’t believe you are being so rigid.”  
Anne: “You’re not happy with what I’ve asked for.”  
Jim: “You’re damn right! You have to consider what I want.”  
Anne: “Tell me more about it, then. I’ll be willing to listen.”

In example A, Jim and Anne dig themselves in deeper with each statement. In example B, Anne blocks the defend/attack spiral and makes it possible for communication to resume.

With practice, you can learn to use these simple skills to get more of what you want in life, without coming across like a bully. In fact, these skills help you reach agreements that are more likely to satisfy both parties while maintaining a positive relationship. Try them in your work or home life—they work equally well in either setting. ■

Adapted from an article by Sam Walker, M.S., in the *Therapists Newsletter*, used with permission.

## How Much Exercise Is too Much?

According to *The Everything Stress Management Book*, by Eve Adamson, you may be addicted to exercise if you identify with the following:

- You absolutely have to exercise every day, even if you are sick or injured.
- You often exercise longer than two hours.
- You have given up other activities you enjoy for exercise.
- You work out twice as long the day after a missed workout.
- You feel intense guilt and anxiety if you miss a workout.
- You suffer a lot of exercise-related injuries.



If you go to a gym regularly, consider speaking to a trainer about what a reasonable routine would be.

You can also find guidance at the American College of Sports Medicine <http://www.acsm.org>—look for article in *Fit Society—Exercise for Health*, Winter 2003, Feature: *How much exercise is enough?* ACSM works with others to avoid misunderstanding. ■

## Quick Stress Relief Tips:

### Five quick and easy ways to improve your mood at work

**1.** Take a short walk on your lunch break. Research shows that walking has health benefits, including managing your weight, decreasing your risk of heart attack, controlling your blood pressure, and lowering your risk of stroke. In addition, walking during your lunch break may help improve your mood and sense of well-being, lower stress levels, and relieve back pain.

**2.** Engage in positive conversation with a co-worker; if you are not a conversationalist, just smile when greeting someone in the office. Research shows that positive moods and emotions lead people to think, feel, and act in ways that promote both resource building and involvement with expressed goals (Elliot & Thrush, 2002; Lyubomirsky, 2001). Further research cited by King and Lyubomirsky shows that happy individuals are more likely than their less-happy peers to have fulfilling relationships, high incomes, superior work performance, and several other benefits

**3.** Play your favorite upbeat music during your break or, if you have a private office space, while you are working. According to the American Music Therapy Association, healthy individuals can use music

for stress reduction via active music making, such as drumming and passive listening for relaxation. Elizabeth Scott, author of *Music Relaxation: A Healthy and Convenient Stress Management Tool*, concludes that music, especially upbeat tunes, can take your mind off what stresses you, and help you feel more optimistic and positive.

**4.** Drink a cup of water. Registered dietician Jill Fleming, MS, RD, author of *The Food-Mood Connection*, suggests that water intake should be a minimum of 10 cups per day, because dehydration is a major factor affecting mood swings.

**5.** Open the blinds in your office to let in some sunlight. Even though sunlight filtered through the windows and blinds cannot replace all the positive affects the body experiences when it receives full spectrum sunlight, it could help elevate your mood, as opposed to not having contact with any direct sunlight.

If you continue to feel stressed out despite efforts to feel better, we encourage you to call the EAP at 240-314-1040 for a consultation on what else you might try. ■

# Mental Health and Substance Abuse Benefits at MCPS

Frequently, EAP staff are asked about coverage for mental health or substance abuse services within the MCPS insurance plans. For good reason, people are very concerned about how much such services might cost. The answer is that it depends

on the type of service you need, which plan you have, and whether you go in or outside of your network. According to the MCPS Employee Benefit Plan Summary, coverage is as follows:

<b>MCPS HMOs</b>			
<b>Benefit Summary</b>	<b>Kaiser HMO</b>	<b>Optimum Choice HMO</b>	<b>Carefirst BlueChoice</b>
<b>Mental Health:</b>			
Outpatient	\$20 co-pay per indiv. visit \$10 co-pay per group visit	Unlimited #1-5 visits – 20% #6-30 visits – 35% #31+ visits – 50%	Unlimited #1-5 visits – 20% #6-30 visits – 35% #31+ visits – 50%
Inpatient Days	No charge	No charge	No charge
<b>Substance Abuse:</b>			
Detoxification	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Inpatient Alcohol	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health
Outpatient Alcohol	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health

<b>MCPS Point-of-Service Plan</b>				
<b>Benefit Summary</b>	<b>United Healthcare High Option</b>	<b>United Healthcare High Option Out-of-network</b>	<b>United Healthcare Standard Option</b>	<b>United Healthcare Standard Option Out-of-network</b>
<b>Mental Health:</b>				
Outpatient	100%–visits 1-5 80%–visits 6+	80%/(visits 1–30) after deductible 50% (visits 31+)	100%, 180-day max 80% (visits 6+)	80% (first 5 visits after deductible) 65% (visits 6–30 after deductible) 50% (visits 31+)
Inpatient Days	100%	100%, 180-day max	100%	80% (180-day maximum)
<b>Substance Abuse:</b>				
Detoxification	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health
Inpatient Alcohol	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health
Outpatient Alcohol	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health	Combined with inpatient mental health

If you would like clarification on how your coverage works for the mental health/substance abuse benefit or recommendations for a provider, contact the EAP at 240-314-1040. For questions regarding your plan, contact the Employee Retirement Service Center at 301-517-8100. You can also contact the individual plans as follows:

- Kaiser: 1-800-777-7902; [www.kp.org](http://www.kp.org)
- Optimum Choice: 1-800-331-2102; [www.mamsi.com](http://www.mamsi.com)
- Carefirst BlueChoice: 1-866-520-6099; [www.carefirst.com](http://www.carefirst.com)
- UnitedHealthcare: 1-888-607-5214; [www.uhc.com](http://www.uhc.com)

This information can be found on pages 28–29 in the January 1, 2007, Employee Benefit Plan Summary.

**Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.**

—Buddha

## Ask the EAP

**Q:** I understand the EAP is confidential, but how about if I come to the EAP to discuss a sexual harassment situation?

**A:** Being subject to sexual harassment is unsettling at the very least, and traumatic for many. For that reason, we hope that anyone with such a concern would consider the EAP as a resource for emotional support. However, any discussion with the EAP counselor regarding workplace harassment, workplace discrimination, or a violation of MCPS policy is not considered an official notification of the problem to MCPS. Since your information will be held confidential by the EAP, it is recommended that you follow MCPS policy on reporting such incidents. If you believe you are the subject of sexual harassment, you are encouraged to report this information verbally or in writing to your immediate supervisor or principal. You may also

report it directly to the MCPS Equal Employment Opportunity officer within the Office of Human Resources, at 301-279-3361. When reporting such an incident, it is helpful to provide as much information as possible. Such information includes the following:

1. A description of the event or events.
2. The number of occurrences with dates and places.
3. The names of any witnesses.
4. If appropriate, any documents, papers, and/or other exhibits. For detailed information, see Board of Education Policy ACF: Sexual Harassment.



## Upcoming Events

**Positive Communication: Diffusing Challenging Situations for Supporting Services staff**

April 12, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Location: Julius West Middle School, Room 6

Presented by EAP staff

Register on the MCPS Professional Development Online (PDO) system

**Stressing the Positive**

for Supporting Services staff

April 25, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Location: Julius West Middle School, Room 6

Presented by EAP staff

Register on the MCPS Professional Development Online (PDO) system

**Overcoming Relationship Problems**

March 13, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Spring Mill Field Office

Presented by Greg Brannan

## A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

SPECIALISTS: Debbie Tipton  
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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](mailto:Debra_Tipton@mcpsmd.org)

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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