



# A Healthy Outlook!

240-314-1040 • FAX 240-314-1049 • [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP) • Vol. 16 No. 4

## The Weather and YOUR MOOD

AS THE WINTER months go on and days get shorter and colder, you may wonder about the effect this environment might have on your mood. Looking out the window on an overcast day can feel almost underwhelming,



where you just want to crawl back into bed and stay there. If you are already susceptible to feeling sad and lonely, the dreary weather certainly does not help.

Formerly referred to as “Seasonal Affective Disorder” (appropriately, SAD), the actual clinical terminology

in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* is now “Recurrent Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern” that occurs at a specific time of the year that otherwise is not present. The *DSM-5* criteria for

diagnosing depression with a seasonal pattern includes having these experiences for at least the past two years:

- ♦ Depression that begins during a specific season every year
- ♦ Depression that ends during a specific season every year

*continued on page 2*

## CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

TO SUPPORT OUR CAREGIVERS, MCPS EAP offers a Caregiver Support Group designed to provide helpful resources and establish connections among the caregivers within our MCPS community. The meetings are held from 4:15-5:30 p.m. at 45 West Gude Drive. Guest speakers present on important topics related to caring for a loved one. All are welcome to attend. *For more information or to register, please contact the EAP by phone at 240-314-1040 or via e-mail at [eap@mcpsmd.org](mailto:eap@mcpsmd.org)*

### Upcoming Events:

**Improve Your Sleep and Stop Feeling So Tired**  
**January 26, 2017 • 45 W. Gude • Aspen Room • 4:30-5:30 p.m.**

DO YOU WAKE UP TIRED? Do you wish you had a better night’s sleep? Do you worry about sleep and wish you had more of it? The benefits of a good night’s sleep are well documented: more energy, faster metabolism, improved concentration, and better memory are just a few of the positives. Whether this is a new problem or something you have been suffering with for some time, this workshop will cover myths about sleep and proven ways you can improve your sleep and sleep efficiency. **Seating is limited.** *For more information, registration, and to RSVP, please contact the EAP by phone at 240-314-1040 or via e-mail at [eap@mcpsmd.org](mailto:eap@mcpsmd.org)*

**Confidence Advantage: Building Your Assertiveness**  
**March 1, 2017 • 45 W. Gude • Redwood Room • 4:15-5:15 p.m.**

SAYING WHAT YOU FEEL OR THINK can be challenging. Lack of assertiveness interferes with both our relationships at work and home. It can also increase our stress levels and negatively impact our self-esteem. With the Confidence Advantage, you will learn techniques that will help you better assert yourself and boost your self-image. All are welcome to attend. *For more information or to register, please contact the EAP by phone at 240-314-1040 or via e-mail at [eap@mcpsmd.org](mailto:eap@mcpsmd.org)*

## In This Issue

- 1 The Weather and Your Mood
- 1 Upcoming Events
- 2 Habits of Happy People
- 3 New Legislation Helps Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Assault Victims/Survivors
- 4 Families in Transition: 10 Tips on Handling the Holidays
- 4 Ask the EAP

## The Weather and Your Mood

continued from page 1

- ♦ **No episodes of depression during the season in which you experience a normal mood**
- ♦ **Many more seasons of depression than seasons without depression over the lifetime of your illness**

While it may not feel good to experience a seasonal pattern of depression, the positive to having a seasonal mood shift is that you are likely able to plan ahead for it. For example, before winter begins may be an opportunity to look ahead to what you may need to feel well later. This may include getting more supportive therapy during this time, stepping up an exercise routine to get that extra boost of serotonin (the chemical that stabilizes and boosts your mood), using a light box ([www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/light-therapy/home](http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/light-therapy/home)), signing up for a new activity, exploring with a psychiatrist if a mood-stabilizing medication would be appropriate and helpful to bridge you to the next season so you can feel better.

On a day-to-day basis, if you notice a drop in your mood and energy perhaps related to the weather, consider some of the following tips to keep your mood up:

- ♦ **Listen to fun, feel-good music**
- ♦ **Get out of the house and do something different such as visiting a museum or getting together with a friend**
- ♦ **Watch a funny movie**
- ♦ **Meditate or do yoga**
- ♦ **Play with puppies, kittens, or babies (whatever makes you smile)**

Next time you see the clouds gathering outside your window, stop and think how you may be able to buffer your mood from dropping as well. If you are concerned about your mood, regardless of the weather, and want to see if meeting with a therapist could benefit you, contact the EAP at 240-314-1040.

Article provided by Amy L. Cooper, LCSW-C, CEAP, director of Another Look at Healing. For more information about their services and how they might assist you, contact the Gaithersburg Counseling Center at [admin@healingllc.com](mailto:admin@healingllc.com) or 240-274-5680, or visit their website at [www.healingllc.com](http://www.healingllc.com).



## Habits of HAPPY PEOPLE

WHAT IS THE SECRET TO BEING HAPPY? You can learn this, just as you can learn any other skill. Those who are happy tend to follow a certain set of habits that create peace in their lives; if you learn to apply these habits in your own life, there is a good chance you will be happy too.

- ♦ **Let Go of Grudges**—To forgive and forget is necessary for your own happiness. Holding a grudge means you also are holding on to resentment, anger, hurt, and other negative emotions that stand in the way of your own happiness. Letting go of a grudge frees you from negativity and allows more space for positive emotions to fill in.
- ♦ **Treat Everyone with Kindness**—Kindness is not only contagious, it also is proven to make you happier. When you are kind to others, your brain produces feel-good hormones and neurotransmitters like serotonin and you are able to build strong relationships with others, fostering positive feelings all around.
- ♦ **Regard Your Problems as Challenges**—Change your internal dialogue so that whenever you have a “problem” you view it as a challenge or a new opportunity to change your life for the better. Eliminate the word “problem” from your mind entirely.
- ♦ **Express Gratitude for What You Have**—People who are thankful for what they have are better able to cope with stress, have more positive emotions, and are better able to reach their goals. The best way to harness the positive power of gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal or list, in which you actively write down exactly what you are grateful for each day. Doing so has been linked to happier moods, greater optimism, and even better physical health.
- ♦ **Do not Sweat the Small Stuff**—If the issue you are mad about will be irrelevant a year, a month, a week or even a day from now, why sweat it? Happy people know how to let life’s daily irritations roll off their back.
- ♦ **Speak Well of Others**—It may be tempting to gather around the office water cooler to get and give the daily gossip, but talking negatively about others is like taking a bath in negative emotions; your body soaks them up. Instead, make it a point to say only positive, nice words about other people, and you will help to foster more positive thinking in your own life as well.
- ♦ **Avoid Making Excuses**—It is easy to blame others for your life’s failures, but doing so means you are less likely to rise past them. Happy people take responsibility for their mistakes and missteps, then use the failure as an opportunity to change for the better.
- ♦ **Live in the Present**—Allow yourself to be immersed in whatever it is you are doing right now, and take time to really be in the present moment. Avoid replaying past negative events in your head or worrying about the future; just savor what is going on in your life now.

Many people spend their lives waiting to be happy. You may think, “if only I had more money,” or “could lose weight,” or you fill in the blank, “then I would be happy.” Well here is a secret: you can be happy right now.

*Are you looking for more ways to increase your happiness? Look for More Habits of Healthy People in the spring 2017 edition.*

Source: [www.hungryforchange.tv](http://www.hungryforchange.tv). Article reproduced and adapted with permission.

# NEW LEGISLATION Helps Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Assault Victims/Survivors



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY has passed important legislation (effective October 1, 2016) to help domestic violence and sexual assault victims/survivors. The legislation redefines the crime of stalking and expands the list of harassing and stalking behaviors covered by Peace Orders.

The new law, *Criminal Law—Stalking* (HB 155/SB 278) redefines the crime of stalking, which now will enable stalking behaviors to be more successfully prosecuted. Previously, stalking was defined as a “malicious course of conduct that includes approaching or pursuing another where the person intends to place or knows or reasonably should have known the conduct would place

another in reasonable fear of serious bodily injury; an assault in any degree; rape or sexual offense or attempted rape or sexual offense; false imprisonment; or death.” It adds new language that the person charged with stalking “intends to cause or knows or reasonably should have known that the conduct would cause serious emotional distress to another.” Delegate Kathleen Dumais (D) and Senator Susan Lee (D) were primary sponsors of the legislation.

A Special Report, issued by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, identifies seven stalking behaviors that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear (original report, January 2009; revised, September 2012). These behaviors include—1) making unwanted phone calls; 2) sending unsolicited or unwanted letters, e-mails, messages, or texts; 3) following or spying on the victim; 4) showing up at places without a legitimate reason; 5) waiting at places for the victim; 6) leaving unwanted items, presents, or flowers; and 7) posting information or spreading rumors about the victim on the Internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.

*Peace Orders—Grounds for Relief* (HB 314/SB 346) expands the list of harassing and stalking behaviors for which a petitioner is available for relief under the Peace Order law. The following new offenses were added:

- ♦ **Misuse of telephone facilities and equipment**
- ♦ **Misuse of electronic communication or interactive computer service**
- ♦ **Revenge porn**
- ♦ **Visual surveillance**

The primary sponsors of the legislation were Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary (D) and Senator Victor Ramirez (D).

*“Stalking and harassment are extremely traumatic for domestic violence and sexual assault victims/survivors and cause serious and ongoing emotional distress to them. These behaviors can include not only following them but using the telephone, Internet, social media, and other electronic means to harass and frighten them,”* stated *Michaele Cohen, executive director of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV).*

Victims/survivors who are the targets of these behaviors are encouraged to contact a local domestic violence or sexual assault program in their jurisdiction to obtain help with safety planning and to learn about civil and criminal legal options. Victims/survivors can obtain information and referrals to local domestic violence programs and other service providers by calling—

- ♦ **The MNADV statewide Helpline**  
**1-800-MD-HELPS**  
**(1-800-634-3577)**  
**Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

or accessing—

- ♦ **The MNADV website at [www.mnadv.org](http://www.mnadv.org) under “Get Help.”**

Information about domestic violence legal protections and safety planning also is available in a new brochure from the MNADV, *Strategies for a Safer Future: A Guide to Obtaining Protective and Peace Orders in Maryland*. The brochure is available on the MNADV website at [www.mnadv.org](http://www.mnadv.org) or by contacting the MNADV at 301-429-3601 or [info@mnadv.org](mailto:info@mnadv.org).

## Domestic Violence Resources:

- ♦ **Abused Persons Program**  
**1301 Piccard Drive,**  
**1st Floor, Ste. 1400**  
**Rockville, MD 20850**  
**240-777-4673**
- ♦ **Family Justice Center**  
**600 Jefferson Plaza**  
**Rockville, MD 20852**  
**240-773-0444**
- ♦ **Maryland Network**  
**Against Domestic**  
**Violence**  
**Statewide Helpline**  
**1-800-MD-HELPS**  
**(1-800-634-3577)**

# FAMILIES IN TRANSITION: 10 Tips on Handling the Holidays

HOLIDAYS EVOKE LOSSES that go beyond a separation and divorce. We all have picture-perfect images of the ideal holidays that we imagine everyone else is having. Holidays trigger not only the loss of family as one may have known it, but other losses—jobs, moves, extended family, and friends.

Here are 10 key factors to consider that may help you to survive the holidays and feel like you did your best:

1. **What can you as a parent handle?** Be honest with yourself and how you feel.
2. **Be honest with your children about your limitations and what you can handle.** Approach them in a way that does not burden them with your feelings. Ask them what would help them during the holidays.
3. **Recognize that rituals are symbolic and often treasured by children and adults.** If possible, try to have some of your family's traditional rituals and include your children in creating new ones.
4. **Be realistic about your time, energy, and finances.** What your children really want is a healthy parent who can share some holiday "cheer" with them. The thrill of gifts dissipates quickly; the memory of a special time together lasts forever.
5. **Work with your child's other parent.** Instead of competing with who will spend the most money on gifts, if possible, make a priority list together and either divide the list or combine financial resources and get one big gift together for your child.
6. **Consider your child's age, personality, and adjustment to the separation or divorce when planning the holiday.** Many children totally dread going back and forth or may be spending their first holiday with both parents separately. Think about what is best for your child and not you and your extended family. Ask relatives to understand and plan dinners and brunches around what works for your child.
7. **Whether or not you share time with your child's other parent and your child is up to you and your child's other parent.** Can you be civil to each other, can your children be relaxed and enjoy their time with the two of you? Will your child become confused seeing his parents together?
8. **Holidays do not have to be celebrated on the actual date! Celebrate at a later time if that works better.** Make sure you communicate with your child's other parent and work out how the holidays will be celebrated months before the actual date.
9. **Throw out all expectations.** Expectations and assumptions ("My former partner's family will surely invite me.") will only hurt you. Develop realistic expectations such as celebrating a holiday with your children on a different day, which makes it less stressful for them if they are going to be with their other parent on the traditional day.

**Q. I know that I need to call and make an appointment to see an EAP counselor. 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 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, please contact us at 240-314-1040.

**Ask the EAP**

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

## 10. **Create some alone time for yourself.**

A family transition also can be positive in creating new time for you. Take a walk; get in touch with yourself and whatever means something to you. Cherish yourself in the moment and think about how you are feeling. It is alright to have sad or lonely feelings. It is alright to cry and reach out for a tissue. It also is important that you take charge and keep working on what you can do to create the life you want. We sometimes dichotomize our emotions and think we can be only happy or sad. It is alright to simultaneously feel very sad about losses you are experiencing; it is also alright to feel good about the time you created that you actually enjoyed.

Article written by Risa Garon, printed with permission. Find out more information about the National Family Resiliency Center, Inc., by calling 410-740-9553 or online at [www.nfrchelp.org](http://www.nfrchelp.org).

## A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

SPECIALISTS: Jennifer Alfonso  
Jeff Becker  
Robyn Rosenbauer

### EAP

45 West Gude Drive, Suite 1300  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
phone: 240-314-1040  
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap)

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 [Jeffrey\\_Becker@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Jeffrey_Becker@mcpsmd.org)

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

Published by the Department of Materials Management for the Employee Assistance Program

0524.17 • EDITORIAL, GRAPHICS & PUBLISHING SERVICES • 12.16

