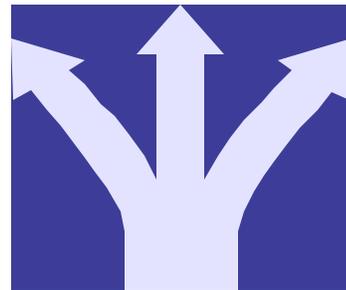


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Helping to Navigate the “New Normal”, and Cope with Ongoing Anxiety –Part 2

Coping Tools for Ongoing Anxiety

In the last issue of the newsletter, we discussed the long-term emotional impact of the events of September 11th and to assist in identifying symptoms of trauma. This issue provides suggestions to reduce long-term stress and anxiety for yourself, your employees and clients:

Assess current skills managing stress

First we can look back on our lives as to how we have responded to trauma or adversity in the past. What skills do we have now and what are our resources at hand? If there are those who have had severe trauma in the past they may be more vulnerable and may require additional support. Contacting a physician or mental health professional may be appropriate.

Develop a sense of perspective

We need to step back and think about whether these current stressors are really a threat to us at the moment. For example the anthrax threat, though tragic and alarming, has a limited threat to us in reality. We may be more vulnerable to the flu or an auto fatality (an estimated 20,000 people die of the flu exists each year; 40,000 people die annually in auto related accidents) than contracting anthrax.

Stay connected to family, work and immediate community

Having a social network allows us to try out any adjustments we are making to our lives and also offer us encouragement to keep moving forward in our efforts to change. Talk to trusted people in your life who will listen as you express your thoughts and feelings without giving advice unless you ask

for it. This helps you put your current fears and feelings into some perspective relative to your life experience. This also helps you to sift through your file cabinet of coping skills and decide if any apply now. Talking can also help with the symptom of experiencing flash back memories of the traumatic event. Humans tend to want to push aside images of what happened (...maybe if I ignore it, it will go away.....) but if not talked through in some manner these images will continue to intrude into our thoughts. Allow yourself to do things that make you feel happy and be with people whose company you enjoy. Make an effort to talk about something other than the current national events, especially make note of something humorous. Humor can be a positive stress reducer.

Be aware of what is in your control

Look to things you realistically have control in doing, and letting go of what you cannot control. One thing you have control over is how much media coverage you attend to regarding the crisis. You may want to know enough information so you can maintain your state of self-preparedness, but not become overwhelmed emotionally. You cannot prevent a terrorist attack, but you can be mindful of how your local and national government is managing security. We can be vigilant and be aware of events in our immediate environment and report concerning information to trained officials.

Develop healthy routines

Make an effort to follow a daily routine as best as you can. Routines give us a sense of getting something accomplished as well as some comfort in something that is familiar. Routines are helpful in keeping us grounded to what we need to do for ourselves day to day. Routines do not have to be rigid, rather help guide us through the day and reflect “we accomplished something today”.

(Continued)

Monitor our health

Get as much rest as possible, we may need a little more than usual during these difficult times. Also pay attention to what you eat, by eating healthy foods we strengthen our body's ability to manage stress. It also may be helpful to limit our junk food intake and alcohol use since they may be more of an irritant to our digestive system. If someone has any difficulty physically or emotionally they *can* consult with his/her physician or mental health professional.

Leaders of an organization need to be mindful they are just as susceptible to these ongoing stressors as their employees. Yet everyone looks to them for answers, though they may not have them. This ongoing stress is new for everyone and we need to find or develop our resources to find answers to our feelings and to keep moving forward with our lives.

Outlook Associates of New England would like to thank the following individuals for their input and comments to the article: Jack Golden LICSW, Golden Associates, Michael McCourt President, MGM Associates, Gerald Lewis PhD, President, Compass EAP.

OUTLOOK ASSOCIATES UPDATES AND NEWS

- ◆ Due to client interest, Outlook Associates has begun to offer a woman's anger management group. The first group has recently completed and referrals are now being accepted for a subsequent group that will be meet on Tuesdays from 6:15pm to 7:30pm. A women's anger management support group is also available for individuals who have completed our 12-week group or have a grounding in anger management techniques. For further information about these services please contact John Didio, LICSW at 781-643-5251, Ext 2 or jdidio@outlookassociates.com.
- ◆ An anger management group has started in Framingham in conjunction with Compass EAP. For information about when the next group will be starting please contact John Didio.
- ◆ In the next few months John Didio and Joe Pereira will be presenting Outlook Associates's anger management model in various locations. Please check our website for further details.

Peer Influence and School Failure are Best Predictors of High-Risk Behavior in Adolescents

Researchers at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis interviewed 10,800 teenagers in grades 7 to 12 and their parents using a combination of human researchers and computer-assisted surveys. The researchers wanted to see which teenagers had ever smoked cigarettes, drank Alcohol, had intercourse, thought about or attempted Suicide, or been involved in weapon-related violence carrying or using a weapon or witnessing those behaviors.

While national trends have shown improvement, researchers found that there were still large number of teenagers engaging in these high-risk behaviors. More than 9% of teenagers said that they had used a weapon against someone in the past year, 25% had smoked a cigarette within the past 30 days and more than one in 7th and 8th graders had had intercourse.

The study also found that the factors that most people assume are associated with these behaviors are not very predictive- such as being a member of a minority group, being poor or living in a single-parent household. **The predictive factors that did emerge were: school failure, lots of unstructured free time, and what activities the teens' friends engaged in.**

US Surgeon General David Satcher commenting on the survey results stated, "These findings tell us if we want to help our children avoid dangerous behaviors, we need to find out what's going on in their lives...We need to monitor our teens' behavior, and we need to be concerned if they spend a lot of time doing nothing."

The study results are published in the December 2000 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Reuters Medical News

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Also if you have any comments or suggestions about what you would like to see covered in an upcoming newsletter please let us know. We appreciate the feedback.