

# Employee Assistance Program

## Creating Healthy Relationships

Studies have shown that healthy relationships can help reduce stress and heart-related risks; however when relationships are full of conflict and hostility, negative health consequences have been observed. Those who have a variety of social ties – friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, and clubs, for example – tend to live longer. Social supports have a protective effect during difficult times. Knowing all of these benefits, what do you do if you feel like a particular relationship is not beneficial?

Ask yourself these questions relative to your personal relationship:

- Do you feel valued?
- Do you feel supported?
- Do you disagree respectfully (versus arguments turning ugly with personal attacks or the person putting you down)?
- Do you feel good about yourself around this person?
- Do you trust each other?
- Do you feel safe talking about how you feel?

If you answered no to one or more of these questions, it may be time to think about walking away from this relationship. If you are putting more into the relationship than you are getting back, it is likely that this is not a healthy relationship. If you aren't in a position to do this or want to try to improve the relationship, recognize that you can really only change your response and reaction to the person. You can respectfully raise concerns that you think are areas of conflict and see if they are amenable to working toward improvement.

At the end of the day, assess whether you are doing everything you can be to bring good energy, kindness, and respect to the relationship. Try to practice these concepts:

- **It's not about winning an argument.** Let your pride go; listen intently to what the person has to say when conflict comes up; pause before responding and empathize (e.g. I'm sorry to hear you're feeling that way; it sounds like you're not happy with how that went; let's see how we can resolve that together).
- **Be open to the other's opinion.** This doesn't mean you have to agree. Treat the person like you would want to be treated.
- **Address the subject of the disagreement, not the person.**
- **Think about your overall values and try to let other things go.** Don't get lost in the weeds. For example, if you answered positive to the points above (this person makes you feel good about yourself most of the time, etc.), then you may be getting too focused on the day-to-day interactions and need to regroup and think through how you can both work towards your common values. Let go of the little things that really don't matter at the end of the day.

Your Employee Assistance Program is available to help you foster healthy relationships. Contact us anytime at the phone number below.

References: NIH News in Health, February 2017, Do Social Ties Affect Our Health, <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/02/do-social-ties-affect-our-health>



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