



“Can We Talk?” Communication Tips for Couples

Nearly one third of the people who contact Employee Assistance of the Pacific do so because of a family or relationship problem. Maintaining a healthy relationship can be hard work and when issues arise many seek the help of one of our neutral EAP professional.

Resolving a problem with a loved one is difficult because it often involves hurtful feelings. Our natural first response is to rush in head long and solve the “problem; however, this rush to solve the problem may lead to finger pointing and a vicious cycle of blame.



This “blame game” typically serves to deepen the divide, pits one partner against the other, and leaves both feeling hurt, misunderstood and unsupported.

How willing are you to listen or work with someone who is blaming you without trying to at least understand their side? Acceptance of a partner’s feelings is NOT giving up

or giving in. It is accepting your partner’s needs and hurts as REAL TO THEM (empathy) and acknowledging the part you play. It all starts with communication BEFORE moving to problem solving.

Starting off with positive communication helps lower defensiveness, lessens the chances of feeling personally attacked and opens the door to more productive problem solving in the end.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Discuss one issue at a time: Don’t bring up old hurts or unresolved issues. There is a time and place for each one to be addressed.

Don’t be a mind reader: Express only your own view and don’t speculate about your partner’s motives, thoughts or views. Use “I” statements whenever possible and avoid words that trigger defensiveness like “You never, always, should, ought.” If you are thinking about your rebuttal statement before your significant other can finish their sentence, then you are not listening!

Look for each other’s strengths, rather than focus on the negatives. “You play with the kids really well, I like that and want it to continue. I also need your help in setting boundaries and rules.”

Denying Stress Can Be Harmful

If you fall for the myth that stress is something “between your ears” or imagined, you may be tempted to ignore its effects, dismiss its harmful symptoms or try to “will” it away. Stress is your body’s natural response to threats or challenges. Your conscious decisions about the significance of these events may play no part in how your body responds to them.

Everyone experiences stressful situations from time to time, but chronic stress can wreak havoc on your body and mind. If you experience poor sleep, impaired memory, problems concentrating, sensations of panic, depression, unexplained heart palpitations, headaches, muscle aches, unexplained weight gain or loss, or excessive tiredness, get these conditions evaluated by a doctor. Follow up with a mental health professional; ideally, seek out a professional who has stress management expertise such as your EAP counselor.



..is a short term confidential counseling service, provided to you by your employer, that can assist in identifying and resolving issues that may be interfering with your job or personal life.

Our experienced counselors are available across the Islands and can be contacted by phoning or emailing our Honolulu office.

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Express feelings about the problem: "I feel supported and loved when I get your help setting boundaries with the kids."

PROBLEM SOLVING TIPS

State the REAL problem: Mutually identify and label the problem as being something that negatively impacts the relationship.

Brainstorm solutions: Be willing to identify and explore every possible solution, no matter how unrealistic it may sound initially.

Evaluate the solutions: Run through the solutions and pick out ones that are most workable.

Mutually decide on a solution: Without coercion or compromising, agree to the solution that best meets your essential need(s). Don't agree to something that you can't live up to.

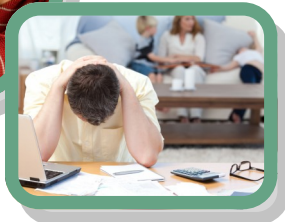
Be mindful and manage your own emotions: Despite what your partner does or doesn't do, you can decide not to react in a way that fuels the problem.

If you think your relationship would benefit from some help in putting these tips into practice, phone EAP for a confidential appointment with a professional counselor who is experienced in working with couples. There is no cost to you and your partner is eligible to participate as well.



The staff and counselors of Employee Assistance of the Pacific send their best wishes to each of you for a Thanksgiving holiday filled with peace and joy. All of us are very grateful for the opportunity to be of service to thousands of Hawaii's residents and their employers. That is indeed a blessing.....

Hau'oli La Ho'omaika'i



On-line Video Highlights Your EAP Benefit

Have you seen the informative video that was recently added to our website? In three short minutes you can learn about the kinds of help that are available at EAP and how to make an appointment. Take a look at our website (www.EAPacific.com) and learn more about how valuable your EAP benefit can be!

