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HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS *How to Respectfully Disagree*

All relationships experience conflict. Disagreements cause stress for everyone, even those with a healthy emotional intelligence. Whether it's romantic, professional, or familial, navigating a disagreement with respect is a sure sign of personal growth and maturity.

BEST WAYS...TO DO IT POORLY

Conflict is often uncomfortable at best, and it is easy to fall into poor habits. However, we can learn to converse respectfully and constructively disagree. If you identify with any of these disagreement no-no's, it would be wise to reconsider your approach. The best ways to disagree poorly include making a disagreement any of the following:

- **Personal** - Do you find it challenging to separate the issue from the person? Remember, it's an idea or concept being suggested that you are actually upset or disappointed by, not the individual.
- **A put-down** - Have you found yourself saying things like, "That's a dumb idea?" Avoid putting down the other person's ideas, culture, or beliefs. Use respectful language, such as, "I don't see it the same way you do."
- **Emotionally charged** - It's easy to grow passionate and heated about topics that matter

to us. Instead of lashing out or saying regretful statements, take a deep breath. Think before you speak or ask to continue the conversation at a later time if need be.

- **About you** - Do you stop listening and begin mentally formulating your argument? Maybe you avoid it altogether and simply comply. Instead of shutting down or over-talking, try listening for understanding. Ask questions to gain insight into the person's thoughts and feelings. Listening is a universal sign of respect.

PHYSICAL CUES

Learn to listen to your body's clues and cues during a disagreement. Be mindful of overreacting, or "the amygdala hijack." Our brain's pre-frontal cortex is the center for rational thinking. Yet during an emotionally-charged disagreement, the brain's amygdala takes control and activates the fight, flight, or freeze response. Watch for physical cues such as a racing heart, increased breathing rate, or feeling tense to recognize the amygdala is kicking into high gear. Take some deep breaths to calm down and lower your heart-rate.

Navigating disagreements takes courage and maturity. Creating a culture and relationship built on mutual-respect amidst conflicting points of view is a worthy and rewarding pursuit.



SOUND FINANCES

Cashing In On a Financial Strategy

Unless you've recently discovered a money tree in your back yard, having a financial strategy is a worthwhile investment. You have probably heard the benefit of monitoring our cash flow with a budget, but a financial strategy is uniquely different. While a budget is structured and set, a money strategy is more fluid, morphing as your life changes.

Following some sound money principles can maximize your financial strategy. Several methods are effective, such as: creating an investment portfolio, building credit, paying down debt, or direct depositing your paycheck. However, before running any numbers, first ask yourself some questions. These answers will help steer your plan and identify where more or less money needs to be allocated.

- What do I value?
- Who do I take care of financially? What financial level do I want to care for these individuals?

- What makes me feel secure? (Examples: investments, savings, good credit, property value, etc.)

Next, consider the following points to fine-tune your financial strategy, then prioritize and plan.

- **Basic numbers** - Be aware of your income versus outflow. How much do you make? What are your fixed expenses (housing, insurance, tuition)? What expenses fluctuate (utilities, groceries, entertainment)?
- **Budget items** - It's easy to overlook emergency savings, retirement, and future goals (buying a home, tuition, vacations). These are important line-items to include in your financial plan.
- **Build credit** - Even if you pay off your credit cards each month, it's wise to not spend over 30% of your available monthly credit line. Practice delayed gratification and save up for big ticket

items.

- **Net worth** - Determine the total value of all your assets, including your investments, savings, and real-estate equity.
- **Execute** - Continue to review your strategy and begin to work your plan. Talk with a financial advisor for expert-level advice on how to make your money work for you.
- **Health** - There is proven financial value in an overall healthy lifestyle. Save cash and calories by cooking at home. Proper sleep and regular exercise habits may reduce healthcare costs down the road. Consider a healthy lifestyle, and you'll keep your heart and wallet happy.

Remember, a strategy is only effective if it fits the situation. Make sure you review your strategy often, and change it up as needed.



PEAK PERFORMANCE

Getting Enough Sleep?

Do you find yourself reaching for a coffee or an afternoon pick-me-up? If you are feeling sleepy, you are not alone. Many of us push to complete "just one more thing" before bed. While we may check items off a never-ending to do list, sacrificing sleep actually lowers our overall work performance. Insufficient sleep affects our mental, emotional, and physical health as well. Many chronic diseases, such as diabetes, obesity, and depression, are all associated with inadequate levels of sleep.

SLEEP BENEFITS

Optimal health is directly linked with sufficient sleep. In fact, our body literally repairs itself during sleep patterns. Heart and blood vessels restore, hormone and blood sugar levels regulate, muscles develop properly, and our immune system receives a needed boost to counteract daily stressors. Brain function and emotional balance is also at its best with proper sleep.

Still sacrificing those zzz's? Expect some challenges in decision-making and coping skills.

LIGHTS OUT

So how much sleep is truly necessary? Some adults function well on six hours, while others need a good ten. While everyone's sleep needs are a bit different, there are some general age guidelines.

- Newborns - 16-18 hours
- Pre-school Children - 11-12 hours
- School-aged Children- Minimally 10 hours
- Teens - 9-10 hours
- Adults (including older adults) - 7-8 hours

SLEEP HYGIENE

Promoting regular sleep is known as sleep hygiene, and there are plenty more tips

than simply counting sheep.

- Hit the hay at the same time each night. Wake at a consistent time each morning.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, dark, and relaxing. Maintain a temperature that's neither too hot nor cold.
- Avoid using your bed as a couch or desk.
- Limit technology, TVs, and other gadgets from the bedroom. If needed, there are some apps to help promote sound sleep, such as white noise or breathing monitors.
- Try not to eat or drink in large quantities before bedtime.

Proper sleep is a benefit to both you and those around you. If you are experiencing trouble sleeping, make an appointment to see your health care professional. Give your body the gift of a good night's rest. Sweet dreams!





COUNTY FOCUS

Marijuana: Just the Facts, Please!

Does this sound familiar?

A mother came to counseling because she was concerned that her 17 year old son was smoking too much pot.

“He used to smoke it on the weekends, but now he smokes it almost every day. He denies it but I know that he is smoking it in the morning too. He comes home from school and plays video games all day and on the weekends. He doesn’t seem that interested in college any more either. I don’t think he can stop...”

The Santa Clara County EAP has seen a significant increase in family problems associated with marijuana use. A recent EAP class on the subject of addiction focused on marijuana, especially for parents of teens who are using pot. With the recent legalization of marijuana in California, it’s important to know the facts about this misunderstood drug.

Marijuana refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems and seed of the hemp plant. The plant contains a number of chemicals called cannabinoids, some of which are mind-altering like delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (commonly referred to as THC). Marijuana is usually smoked, but also eaten in foods (edibles) or inhaled as a vapor. Although marijuana has been illegal under federal law since the 1970’s, it is now legal for recreational and medicinal use in some states. Medicinal marijuana is currently prescribed to reduce seizures, pain, inflammation, nausea and other pain problems.

MARIJUANA IS NATURAL BUT NOT HARMLESS

- It is four times stronger than in the 1980’s when the THC potency was in the 20’s. Now, newer THC potencies are running at 50-70%.



- Heavy use in young adults can cause lasting damage to the brain and decrease IQ.
- Marijuana contributes to health problems such as cancer of the head and neck, respiratory problems, asthma, increased blood pressure and weight gain.
- Marijuana can worsen anxiety, depression and schizophrenia.

The Santa Clara County EAP has seen a significant increase in employee problems associated with marijuana use.

MARIJUANA CAN BE ADDICTIVE

- The majority of people who use marijuana recreationally do not get addicted; however, a certain percentage will develop an addiction, just like with other drugs.
- The chances of addiction are increased in adolescents (17%) and people who use every day (25-50%).
- Withdrawal symptoms include cravings, trouble sleeping, anxiety and appetite loss.
- Marijuana use impairs driving.
- Marijuana use decreases motivation.
- Butane Hash Oil (BHO) also called honey oil or wax is one of the most potent forms of marijuana with THC percentages running from 60-80%. BHO is highly

dangerous due to the high potency, the butane content and addict-ability.

MARIJUANA USE IMPAIRS DRIVING.

- Using marijuana doubles a driver’s risk of an accident. Users may have the perception that their driving is not affected, but it is.

LEGAL DOES NOT MEAN SAFER.

- Marijuana is not FDA approved.
- There may be chemicals in marijuana that help a range of illnesses or symptoms, but there is not enough research that shows marijuana’s benefits.
- Huge varieties of products are now available, not regulated or controlled and may contain contaminants such as pesticides, fungicides and rodenticides.
- There is no limit on potency – THC levels are pushed to 100%.
- Marijuana use during pregnancy can cause health risks for the child including low birth weight, premature birth, problems with attention, memory, problem solving and lowered IQ.

Many people are seeking treatment for marijuana addiction every year. As a result of this, EAP is offering Addiction: A Family Matter. This class will give you the information and support you need. Look for our next class in the Learning and Employee Development program. It is important to know the facts to help you make positive choices about your health. If you or anyone you know needs help with marijuana use, contact your Santa Clara County EAP professional. Remember, don’t go through it alone!

The County of Santa Clara’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a labor-management sponsored, confidential, professional resource that provides counseling, assessment and referral services to County employees and their families who want help in solving personal and/or work-related problems.

When people are suffering from problems, it is easy to lose perspective. Life may seem confused and difficult for a time. Work performance may be negatively affected. If you have any questions or to schedule a counseling appointment, please call EAP at (408) 241-7772.



COACH APPROACH

Positive Attitudes: The Secret Weapon for Success

Have you ever been near someone whose attitude shifts the entire atmosphere of a room? Maybe their cheery disposition brightens a stressful event. Or perhaps, their poor perspective sabotages a promotion, a relationship, or a major decision. Now the tough question: Which sounds more like you?

ATTITUDE COSTS AND BENEFITS

Attitude can be described as the general perspective we have on any and all aspects of life. It influences how we think, feel, and interact with our surroundings and others. Positive and negative attitudes seemingly attract compatible outcomes. The more positive your attitude, the more likely a positive result and vice versa. Your attitude is one of the most powerful tools you have to influence lifelong success...or not.

A positive perspective can benefit your work, relationships, and general enjoyment

in life. Decreased stress, greater peace, confidence, financial independence, and overall better health are just some of the benefits of a great attitude.

Negative perspectives create much less desirable outcomes. Increases in fear and worry, developing a "victim mindset" to your circumstances, and lacking deep and meaningful relationships are some of the costs of a poor attitude.

POSITIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Since attitudes play such a major role, it is an invaluable gift to recognize what attitude you have and how it is influencing your life. Not everything in life is pleasant, desired, or fixable, but if you see room for an attitude adjustment, you can control it. That's good news! Try these helpful suggestions to build and maintain a more positive perspective.

- **Model** - Look for a mentor or role model and implement their strategies.

- **Grow** - Learn from mistakes by keeping the lesson, and not the failure, in mind.
- **Repetition** - Write some of your favorite positive quotes, affirmations, or verses in a highly visible place. Think bathroom mirror or screensaver.
- **Gratitude** - When in doubt, choose to be thankful. Take a deep breath and focus on five things for which you're grateful.
- **Replenish** - Identify the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual activities that strengthen you.
- **Watch triggers** - Challenging situations are inevitable. Be mindful of people, habits, and places that make it difficult to stay positive. Minimize these encounters as much as possible.

Your personal best is an attitude choice away.



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NETWORK

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