

CONNECTIONS

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Make Time for Joy!

A Celebration of Caregivers

for People with Alzheimer's & Dementia and Older Adults

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Rd in Madison

9:00 AM—3:00 PM, Respite Care Provided on site



Enjoy!

Activities indoors and out
Time for centering, relaxing, and pampering

Spread Joy!

Connect with other caregivers, resources, and professionals
Respite care and activities for care partners on site



Pre-registration required

So we can plan a spacious and relaxing day for you!
Call Joy Schmidt: 608-240-7472 or email:

Schmidt.Joy@countvofdane.com

ADRC Make Time for Joy Event Itinerary



Greetings City Employees!

Stress can impact people in a variety of ways, one of which can be through an increase in indecisiveness. While indecisiveness can be a product of stress or a habit built over time, it can present real struggles when it presents itself in the workplace. This newsletter will include tips on how to break the habit of indecisiveness at work, as well as the benefits of using humor at work, a positive coping mechanism for reducing stress.

It is also that time of year when kids are getting ready to return to school. This can be a particularly challenging time for children with special needs, which includes mental health issues, and their parents, guardians, and support persons, however these tips can be useful for any child returning to school.

Please remember that the EAP is here to support you as well as your family, which includes your children. If you feel you have a child that is displaying any concerning behavior and you would like to consult on it, we are a free and confidential place for you to do that.

~ The EAP Team



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Back to School Tips for Parents

By Harold S. Koplewicz, MD, [Child Mind Institute](#) (used with permission of the author)

Every child faces challenges when heading back to school. But back-to-school time can be exceptionally difficult for the 20 percent of children who suffer from a mental health or learning disorder.

The school environment demands many things that summer activities don't—the ability to sit still; get organized; stay on task; and adapt to a new, highly structured daily schedule. School also requires kids to separate from their parents and interact with peers—enormously challenging tasks for any child with anxiety.

Here are six things parents need to know about starting school with vulnerable children:

1. Mental health problems emerge at back-to-school time.

Children with special needs require a lot of help learning how to manage a new schedule. As a parent, you can ease your child's anxiety by modeling confidence and calm behavior, and by imposing structure in family life (mealtime, homework, and bedtime routines).

But if your child shows signs of extreme anxiety and has unusual difficulties in school, you should immediately discuss your concerns with your child's teacher as well as a mental health professional, someone who can advise on whether a child's problems are normal and age appropriate or require further evaluation.

2. Kids' brains are changing dramatically.

Profound changes occur in the brains of children, particularly as they enter their teens. The teen brain starts "pruning"—strengthening some synapses and eliminating many others. A temporary imbalance of this pruning in certain areas of the brain has been linked to teens' erratic and risky behaviors, as well as the onset of anxiety disorders, depression, and substance abuse.

It's important to keep communication open at this vulnerable time, when teenagers are starting to look like adults, and think they are adults, but may not have the skills to manage stress. If you haven't already started setting time aside each day to talk to your child about challenges and new experiences at school, now is the perfect moment.

3. Anxious parents send anxious kids to school.

Anxiety disorders run in families. Plus, anxious people tend to marry other anxious people; children with two anxious parents are at especially high risk. But genetics are just one factor. Environment is another. Kids really are like sponges, absorbing the energy and adopting the behaviors around them.

One of the most helpful things you can do is model calm, confident behavior, particularly while helping a child get ready for school. A child usually starts school no calmer than her least-relaxed parent.

4. Teachers matter, maybe even more than you think.

Teachers get to know a child's family through the child's eyes, and they get to know how a child behaves without his parent present. This means parents can get all kinds of information about a child from his teacher—information about learning difficulties and peer problems as well as academic achievements and close friendships. Teachers are allies, and you should talk to them regularly.

Good questions to ask include: How is my child doing? Do you have any concerns about his social or academic skills? Do you think he needs my help with anything?

5. Homework time is crucial.

Young children with learning difficulties, as well as those without any documented problems, can benefit from their parents' involvement during homework time. Parents should set aside time for a structured "homework session" each evening.

A good routine might start like this: Create space on a desk to work; help him clean out his backpack; review the day's assignments; and discuss the homework as well as any questions about it. You can observe your child's learning strengths and weaknesses this way while also reinforcing good study habits. Be positive and encouraging.

6. Don't jump to conclusions.

Kids grow and develop at different rates. Ideally, a child will acquire various skills within expected time periods, but she may develop more quickly in one area than another. Parents often worry when, for example, one 5-year-old can read fluently while another can barely sound out words on the page. But a lag in one area of development doesn't mean a child has a disorder. If you think there might be a problem with your child's development, talk to her teacher. A seasoned teacher, with about 10 years of experience, can frame your child's progress in relation to as many as 300 other kids. Good teachers are invaluable allies.



30 Benefits of Humor at Work

By Andrew Tarvin, *Humor That Works* (Used with permission of the author)

I'm incredibly passionate about humor in the workplace and not because it's fun. As an engineer, the reason why I care about using humor is that it works. It's effective with the one thing you can't be efficient with, human beings.

So with that in mind, here are 30 benefits of humor at work, backed by research, case studies, and real-world examples.

Humor and Execution

1. **Humor improves productivity.**
"In one study of more than 2,500 employees, 81 percent said they believe a fun working environment would make them more productive."¹
2. **Humor reduces stress.**
"People with a sense of humor report less stress and anxiety than those with a low sense of humor, despite experiencing the same number of problems at work."²
3. **Humor prevents burnout.**
"Humor has also been identified as a communication tool that, when used effectively, can prevent burnout and create a resilience to stress."³
4. **Humor provides motivation.**
"The use of humor in organizations has been associated with improving morale among workers, creating a more positive organizational culture, ... and increasing motivation."⁴
5. **Humor increases size of paycheck.**
"The size of their bonuses correlated positively with their use of humor – 'In other words, the funnier the executives were, the bigger the bonuses.'"⁵

Humor and Thinking

6. **Humor boosts overall brainpower.**
"A dose of humor releases the chemical serotonin in your brain, which improves focus, increases objectivity and improves overall brainpower."⁶
7. **Humor improves decision-making.**
"Positive moods prompt more flexible decision-making and wider search behavior and greater analytic precision."⁷
8. **Humor increases the acceptance of new ideas.**
"Unconventional interactions can lower the barrier for people to posit novel things."⁸
9. **Humor triggers new connections.**
"Humor in the design and problem solving classroom can promote divergent thinking."⁹
10. **Humor enhances one's ability to solve problems.**
"Studies have shown that simply watching comedy films can improve creative problem solving skills."¹⁰

Humor and Communication

11. **Humor gets people to listen.**
"Consistent use of appropriate humor makes people want to read and hear what you say."¹¹
12. **Humor improves memory retention.**
"Instructional messages that gain students' attention and help them make sense of course content (clarity behaviors) enhance students' ability to process the content resulting in greater retention and learning."¹²
13. **Humor boosts persuasion.**
"Humor can be highly persuasive when presenting a message that people disagree with because the humor distracts them from immediately creating counter arguments, in part because they don't feel like the message is being crammed down their throats."¹³
14. **Humor assists in learning.**
"The use of humor as a pedagogical tool has been shown to reduce classroom anxiety, create a more positive atmosphere, as well as facilitate the learning process."¹⁴
15. **Humor increases likeability.**
"Innocent humor increases likeability and interpersonal attraction."¹⁵



Humor and Connection

16. **Humor connects us with others.**
"Positive sounds such as laughter or a triumphant 'woo hoo!' can trigger a response in the listener's brain. The response is automatic and helps us interact socially by priming us to smile or laugh, and thereby connecting us with the other person."¹⁶
17. **Humor fosters rapport.**
"Humor is valued as a social asset and, exercised judiciously, confers upon its encoder the animated interest and welcoming approval of others. Sharing humor fosters rapport and intimacy and promotes friendship by showing common sentiment and reducing tensions."¹⁷
18. **Humor reduces status differentials.**
"Humor can help to reduce the social distance between managers and employees."¹⁸
19. **Humor builds trust.**
"Negotiators who start an online transaction with a humorous experience will have more interpersonal trust, greater joint gains, and more satisfaction with the process and their partner"¹⁹
20. **Humor encourages collaboration.**
"A growing body of research shows that when you share a laugh with someone, you're mirroring not only one another's body language, but also the hormonal and neuronal activity, prompting a mutual investment in each other's well-being."²⁰

Humor and Leadership

21. **Humor enhances perceived leadership skills.**
"People who use humor, particularly in stressful or seemingly one-down positions, are viewed as being on top of things, being in charge and in control, whether they are in fact or not."²¹
22. **Humor diffuses conflict.**
"Humor has long been seen as the great equalizer—a means to facilitate conversation and bridge differences. As a matter of fact humor has been identified as a key factor in peace-building and international mediation."²²
23. **Humor creates more opportunities.**
"Research has shown that managers displaying a good sense of humor are given more opportunities in organizations than those without a sense of humor."²³
24. **Humor builds credibility.**
"Humor users are seen as more credible and as more competent."²⁴
25. **Humor improves ratings.**
"Supervisor use of humor is associated with enhanced subordinate work performance, satisfaction, perception of supervisor performance, satisfaction with supervisor, and workgroup cohesion, as well as reduced work withdrawal."²⁵

Humor and Health

26. **Humor increases ability to cope.**
"By finding humor in stressful or potentially threatening situations, people can replace negative with positive affect, thereby giving them an increased ability to cope with negative states of affairs."²⁶
27. **Humor strengthens the immune system.**
"Laughter may improve immune function by blocking production of stress hormones, such as cortisol, and by increasing the release of immunoenhancers, such as beta-endorphin."²⁷
28. **Humor relaxes muscles.**
"Humor relaxes muscles, decreases blood pressure and improves our immune system."²⁸
29. **Humor burns calories.**
"Laughing 100 times can burn as many calories as 10-minutes on a stationary bicycle."²⁹
30. **Humor increases happiness.**
"Humor was one of the healthiest adaptations to being happy in life."³⁰

Want to see the latest research on humor? Check out the [humor benefits](#) page. Want to implement humor at work? Check out our [humor training](#).

See the [blog post](#) for research sources.

Andrew Tarvin is the author of [Humor That Works: The Missing Skill for Success and Happiness at Work](#)

August is National Make-a-Will Month

Getting a will isn't the most pleasant of tasks and, consequently, too few people do it. A Caring.com survey of 1,000 American adults found that 57% don't have wills. The biggest reason cited by folks: They just never got around to it.

If you have been thinking about putting an estate plan in place, stop procrastinating! For information on how to get started, review the March 2019 issue of [Connections](#), which was entirely devoted to end of life planning.

7 Tips on How to Kick the Habit of Indecisiveness

By Ilene Strauss Cohen, Ph.D., *Psychology Today* (Used with permission of the author)

Learn how to make better decisions.

“You’ll know you’ve made the right decision when there is peace in your heart. Stop listening to what the world says you should do. Start listening to your own heart. There are only a few people in this world who will stay completely true to you, and YOU should be one of them. Listen to your own voice, your own soul, too many people listen to the noise of the world, instead of themselves. Deep inside, you know what you want, let no one decide that for you.” –Unknown

Making Decisions

When I was growing up I always seemed to choose friends who were “bossy.” They usually knew what they wanted and made all the decisions, and I tended to go along with it. As I grew older, I started to make new friends who were a little more like me: easygoing and not insistent on having the final say. Making plans with these friends would sound something like this:

Me: “Where do you want to go out?”

Friend: “I don’t know. Where do you want to go?”

Me: “I don’t know. What are you in the mood for?”

Friend: “I don’t know. What are you in the mood for?”

That type of conversation would go on for a while. I came to realize that the reason I had always made friends with people who would quickly make decisions about what we would do, is so that I wouldn’t have to. I was so indecisive that even choosing what I wanted to eat was a challenge, so I found it easier to let someone else choose for me. When it comes to simple choices, like where to go eat or what movie to see, it isn’t such a big deal to push the decision on someone else. But when it comes to the big choices in life, it can become an issue.

Can you relate to me on this one? Do you believe you lack the ability to make decisions? Do you find yourself asking other people, “What should I do?” “Where should we go to dinner?” “What’s the best decision?” If you’re in a position of having to make a choice in a situation, do you go around asking things like, “What would you do?” Do you poll your smartest friends, family members, and colleagues to help you make the final decision?

Reasons You May Have a Hard Time Making Decisions

People usually struggle to make choices because they don’t believe in their ability to think for themselves; they believe other people are more capable of making the “right” choice for them. When this is the case, they pawn off small and major decisions to others so they can feel more confident in their decisions. The problem with this is that it gives other people control. If you hand over the responsibility of choosing to other people, you let them take over your choices and actions, which you should be taking on yourself. Instead, you should learn to trust in yourself and your ability to make the best choices for you. No one else can make the right choices for you; it’s something you must do for yourself.

One way to take ownership of your life is to take control of your decisions rather than handing them off to others. This will give you a sense of pride in the choices you make and their potential outcomes.

Some people have a hard time making major decisions because they don’t want to take responsibility for their lives and the results of their choices. You may think, “My husband, wife, partner, parent, or friend made the final decision, so it’s their fault, not mine if things don’t go well.” But the reality is, even if you try to blame the person who made the choices for you, as an adult, you’re still responsible for going along with them. Saying, “Well, he made me do it” no longer works once you’re over the age of 18. Therefore, it’s invaluable to take responsibility for yourself, and one way to do it is by being accountable for your choices, actions, and decisions. Even if you have someone else make your decisions for you, you’re still responsible for what happens, because you chose to go along with another person’s decision; no one forced you to do anything.



Indecisiveness

“Life is inherently risky. There is only one big risk you should avoid at all costs, and that is the risk of doing nothing.”

–Denis Waitley

If you don't start to take initiative in your own life, you'll end up becoming a prisoner of your indecisiveness. You'll limit your future opportunities, not allowing yourself to be open to changes that could enhance your life based on what you want. Here are some tips on how to kick the habit of indecisiveness:

1. Don't try to overthink the outcomes of your decisions. Contrary to what we tend to think, it is almost impossible to calculate future outcomes, because people and life are very unpredictable. Therefore, making decisions is usually a crapshoot. Don't get me wrong, it's still useful to have confidence in the decisions you make; but it's important to be aware that you have no control over the outcome of them. So don't overthink things.
2. Don't make decisions purely on impulse. Some people get so tired of thinking out all the possible outcomes of their choices that they immediately make decisions on impulse instead of dealing with the rough process of making a decision. It's okay to make a decision quickly; it can sometimes be better than making no decision at all. However, if you have a history of making the wrong choices based on impulse, it's better to think it out a little more.
3. Do what scares you. Those who follow the path that they believe will have the least conflict, struggle, or risk usually have zero faith in themselves. This leads them to make the wrong decision out of a fear of failure. When making decisions, you should go with the one that scares you. Author Caroline Myss said it best: “Always go with the choice that scares you the most, because that's the one that is going to help you grow.”
4. Follow a balance between listening to your mind and trusting your instincts. When it comes to making the right decisions for yourself, you need to follow both your mind and your instincts. The best outcomes come from striking a good balance between the two. Logic alone will convince you to make the safer choice, which may not allow you to follow your passions. You also may end up stuck making no decision because you'll convince yourself that more information will help make the choice easier. On the other hand, going completely with your gut feelings can lead you to make impulsive decisions. That's why it's important to listen to all aspects of your Self when making major decisions. As the saying goes, “Listen to your heart, but take your brain with you.”
5. Think about a time you said yes to something that turned out to be a great choice. How did you feel when you were making that choice? How did you come to that conclusion? Think about what made it a great choice. Looking back at the positive decisions you've made will allow you to see that you're capable of making good decisions. Once you realize that you'll be able to find the decision-making strategy that works best for you. I find that I don't feel much hesitation when I'm making a good decision; I feel centered when I'm confident in my choices.
6. Choose what will give you more options in the future. No one wants to feel stuck limited in the choices available to them. Some decisions limit your flexibility and may cause more unnecessary stress in the future. Try to make the decision that may be the hardest one to go with at first but is likely to pay off in the long run. Allow the excitement about who you can be overcome your fear of making a difficult choice.
7. Ask the Miracle Question. When it's time to make a tough decision, ask yourself the Miracle Question from Solution-Focused Brief Therapy: “Suppose tonight, while you slept, a miracle occurred. When you awake tomorrow, what would be some of the things you would notice that would tell you life had suddenly gotten better?” By asking yourself this question, you can fast forward to a future in which the decision has already been made, helping you determine whether it's the right choice for you.

When we find ourselves in a dilemma over making a major decision, our logical mind sometimes convinces us that we need more time, need to ask more people, aren't yet ready to decide. This may leave us paralyzed in fear of making the wrong decision. When we feel stuck in this way, we don't make any forward motion. Even deciding not to make a decision is a form of decision-making; therefore, it's important to go with whatever your mind and instincts are telling you. Listen to that inner voice that chimes in when necessary, because if you're open to it, you'll be able to hear it tell you what it is you really want. Once you know what you want, your logical mind can make it happen in a way that has better consequences for your future.

When it comes to making decisions, don't be afraid to make mistakes, to fail and fall, because a lot of the time, the best decisions come from doing what scares you the most. The likelihood is that making the difficult choices will produce the outcomes you're looking for. Although there's no way of knowing where life will lead you, it's important to honor and respect yourself enough to make your own decisions.

SUPERVISOR SESSIONS:

Managing Difficult Employee Situations

In this two-part training series, we will provide current supervisors with an opportunity to receive a refresher training on what the Employee Assistance Program is and how it can assist supervisors in navigating challenging and sensitive issues that arise in their employees.

Recommended for: Supervisors & Managers, City Partners

Upcoming Courses:

September 11, 2019, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 204
and

September 25, 2019, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 204

REGISTER HERE

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we hope you found the information useful!*

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