



BALANCE

Employee Assistance Program Newsletter
Winter 2023

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The EAP is a professional and confidential counseling service available to you and your family to help resolve personal problems before they affect your health, family or job. There is no cost to you or members of your family for services provided by the EAP.

In those cases where referrals are necessary, they can often be made to prescreened professionals or community organizations whose charges may be covered within the allowances of your health insurance. Call **845-638-8880** to arrange an appointment with an EAP specialist.

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From the Director

Susan Mazzarella, LCSW, CEAP

As the pandemic continues to move forward affecting households, altering relationships and roles and changing routines we continue to take this opportunity to explore the evolving dynamics currently seen in families. This, our winter issue of BALANCE, is the second in a two part series that began this fall involving the many challenges facing families today.

This newsletter will explore the complexities in locating affordable and reliable childcare and provide ways in which families can achieve work life balance while shedding light on several myths and misconceptions involving work life balance. As well we'll discuss the strains and stressors involved in single vs. two parent households.

We hope this information finds you safe and well in the New Year!

Susan Mazzarella, LCSW, CEAP

"We must take care of our families wherever we find them"

Elizabeth Gilbert, American Journalist

Current Childcare Challenges

Marisa Kuropatkin MS, LMHC

One of the many struggles that have been exacerbated throughout the pandemic is the availability and need for quality childcare. Many families faced new challenges related to childcare as our needs evolved throughout the pandemic and now. Urbansitter, a company dedicated to supporting families and caregivers, conducted a recent survey of more than 600 working parents across the US. The survey found that 71% of families report that it is very difficult to find childcare right now. The industry of childcare has had many staff leave the workforce, many daycares have closed and those daycares that are still open often have long waiting lists. In addition, families are faced with having to weigh out the need for their children to have safe and appropriate supervision with the possibility of exposure to illness which can then be passed on to other members of the family. As more people reached out for childcare needs, the cost of childcare has risen as well. The study showed that 49% of parents surveyed spend at least \$1,000/month on childcare with 23% spending over \$2,000/month. In two parent households, individuals have been forced to make the choice to leave careers so that they can focus on their children. Over 1 million women have left the work force over the past 2 years directly related to childcare needs. For many, it has become a privilege to be able to work outside of the home and to afford the childcare that is needed to do so. Many single parent homes continue to struggle to meet the financial needs of their family while also being able to find secure childcare to be able to do so.

Organizations are acknowledging and responding to this challenge by recognizing that childcare is an essential component to a competitive workforce. With the US Labor shortage reaching critical levels, employers have been forced to recognize the importance of childcare and how it effects their organizations bottom line. Organizations such as PepsiCo, meet these needs with on-site child care options, subsidies for childcare as well as flexible working hours and environments. However, even companies who provide subsidies are recognizing that many families are unable to access quality childcare. In response to this realization, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Center for Education and Workforce released a roadmap for employers that can help them identify and meet the dynamic childcare needs of their workforce in a way that makes sense for each individual company. The "roadmap is intended to help senior leaders and business owners learn their options for supporting working parents with their childcare needs. It is also intended to help leaders understand what to expect when embarking on this journey and how to take action." This roadmap can be accessed by employers through www.uschamberfoundation.org. By adapting policies, employers can help improve the overall well-being of parent employees and in turn increase their retention, loyalty and engagement.

As systemic changes are taking place, parents should know that they are not alone in their struggles. Reaching out to local community parenting groups can help to get in touch with local resources and find a community of people who can truly empathize with the current challenges that exist. Additionally, expanding your search for childcare resources outside of your area may be necessary as well as going on a waiting list for childcare agencies. Often time, looking for references from friends, co-workers and families is helpful. Social media, including the Facebook community, has group's specific to your geographic area as well as Meetups specific for parents, all of which can assist with your childcare search. In Rockland County parents can reach out to Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc. for help. Child Care Resources can help with accessing funding to cover the cost of childcare, information on childcare programs in the county as well as assistance in finding and choosing the best program for you and your child, all at no cost to the family.

The saying that "it takes a village" has never been more appropriate than right now.

For more information on childcare challenges or support in this journey, please reach out to the EAP team at 845-638-8880 or email EAP@montefiorenyack.org.

Resources:

2022 Urban Sitter Working Parents and Childcare Report- www.urbansitter.com

Childcare Resources of Rockland, Inc.- <https://childcarerockland.org>- 845-425-0009

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation- Employer Roadmap- www.uschamberfoundation.org/earlyed

[As Child Care Challenges Threaten the American Workforce, Business Leaders Call for Action | EdSurge News](#)

www.meetup.com

www.facebook.com

Is Work Life Balance a Myth?

Susan Mazzarella, LCSW, CEAP

Questions often surround the notion of work life balance that can leave many of us wondering if work life balance is a myth. Misconceptions regarding work life balance are often unhelpful as they encourage us to have false expectations. While setting goals is important, we must recognize that they need to be achievable and realistic. When we set unattainable goals we often revert to comparing ourselves to others and envying others. When we accept the myths and realities of work life balance we're able to operate from a more mentally healthy foundation, without having to rationalize or justify its challenges.

Closer to the reality is that work life balance can exist and the following myths and truths can help us to attain it:

1. **Working long hours is necessary for job and career success.** This notion is ultimately flawed and can undermine work life balance. If long work hours mean less personal and family time or leads to poor work life boundaries and/or workaholism the notion of work life balance will be unachievable and will often lead to various and significant levels of stress. Ultimately making work life balance unattainable.
2. **Small or mid-size companies don't offer many options.** Not every company can compete with the perks offered at Google, but that doesn't mean it's impossible for companies to offer amenities and options that will promote and reinforce daily life balance. Flexibility in working hours and the possibility for hybrid or remote work are both examples of this. Small and mid-size organizations can encourage balance between home and career and can do so by sponsoring employee and family events, encouraging their managers to model and reinforce work balance for employees and can create partnerships to offer staff discounts for engaging in recreational activities. Moreover companies should be creative and thoughtful when designing a program to encourage work life balance.
3. **Good time management skills will allow you to achieve work life balance.** Many of us think of time management as checking off all the commitments on one's to do list. Rather than trying to focus on getting everything done a much more realistic and achievable goal may be to focus on what is really important to us. To do so you need to identify and prioritize what the most crucial items to commit to are both at work and at home. By structuring commitments with values you're in a better position to achieve work life balance. Focusing on what is truly important allows each of us to manage our attention and what we accomplish throughout the day.
4. **The use of technology will allow us more leisure time.** Although useful as a tool to organize our schedules, calendars and commitments technology keeps us connected 24/7 and by default contributes to poor work life balance. Therefore, it's critical to provide clear expectations about when you are and are not available for others to reach out to you and then follow through with that expectation.
5. **Career and job success equals happiness.** The myth of working hard, making money *and then you'll be happy* is unrealistic and untrue. Moreover study after study shows us that this notion is misleading and that happiness and contentment is to a greater degree about discovering our true selves and finding joy in our relationships, interests and passions. Consider pursuing multiple interests whether within your career, personal life or both.

Creating balance between work and life enables us to focus on many different areas of our well-being without letting one area overwhelm the other or pull you down.

If you or a loved one is struggling with achieving work life balance please contact the EAP at 845-638-8880 or e-mail us at eap@montefiorenyack.org.

References:

www.umassglobal.edu
www.forbes.com

Single Parenting in the 2020's

Yandira Melon, LCSW, CEAP

Parenting is difficult; however, during the last several years it has become even more so. Historically, the American traditional or nuclear family has focused on heterosexual households with the female being the stay at home parent while the male wage earner worked outside the home. In the 1960's however this changed with an increase in single parent households predominantly due to births of unmarried females and increases in the rate of divorce. Since then the single parent household has typically been headed by a female. Today single parent households continue to grow as a result of various life events and/or personal choices, therefore there are currently many other types including:

- Adoption by single adults (male or female)
- Grandparent or extended family member
- Widowed
- Artificial insemination
- An absent biological parent

Single parent households are each different and have their own unique challenges, however all have a common theme which is to provide financially and emotionally for their children. Single parenting can sometimes feel as though there is no one else to turn to help with daily responsibilities and decision making. There is also often a sense of greater individual burden in the single parent household which can leave some single parents feeling alone and isolated.

These additional challenges may include:

Financial strain – One paycheck may be the only steady income that can be relied on therefore financial stress impacting single parent households is common. In 2019 data reports show that 30% of single parents live in poverty compared to 6% of married couples* It's important to allocate time to review your family's financial needs, which includes developing a spending plan.

Child care – Reliable and affordable childcare is difficult to find. (For more information on childcare refer to "Current Childcare Challenges" in this issue of Balance)

Difficulties with discipline – Because of physical and emotional stress single parents may find it difficult to provide appropriate discipline. Reaching out to a counselor or therapist for help may be necessary to explore age appropriate parenting skills, limit-setting and support.

Feeling alone – Unique struggles may leave single parents feeling depleted and overwhelmed. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and allow necessary time for self-care and opportunities for replenishment.

Feeling guilty – Single parent households may find it necessary due to financial demands to work longer hours or non-traditional workdays, therefore the single parent may be away from the home for longer hours and this may create a struggle balancing work and family. Because of this it is not uncommon for some single parents to experience guilt, frustration and even anger.

Difficulty establishing a daily routine: Creating and adhering to a daily schedule can help to create a sense of control and accomplishment in the day. Consistent routines provide healthy emotional development and help children feel secure and connected to other family members and their environment.

Seek or create a support system- Ask about and explore possibilities for support within one's extended family and the community. If extended family is not available, an online or community support group can provide an opportunity to talk to others about coping strategies. Hearing how other similar families are managing can help you to know that you are not alone and may provide opportunities to learn from those experiencing the same challenges.

Make time for oneself – As a single parent it's crucial to make time for yourself or with others. It's important not to neglect physical, emotional or mental health. Involving oneself with something enjoyable re-energizes us to keep going and role models to children self-care.

Regularly ask yourself:

Have I had a healthy balance in the last month between work and home?

What changes can I make to create more balance in my life?

If you or a family member is struggling with single parent challenges reach out to EAP for free and confidential support and guidance at 845-638-8880 or send an email to us eap@montefiorenyack.org.

References:

The Consequences of COVID-19 on the Mental Well-being of Parents, Children and Adolescents, Psychiatry, April, 2021

* Child Well-Being in Single-Parent Families, Annie E. Casey Foundation, August, 2022

Resources:

Greenpath - Not for profit debt consolidation and bankruptcy services.

www.greenpath.org

Consumer Budget and Credit Counseling

www.cc-bc.com

