



BALANCE

Employee Assistance Program Newsletter
Spring 2025

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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

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As spring begins, we would like to take the opportunity for each of us to celebrate the journey of forming a healthy version of self. In so doing we have dedicated this issue of Balance to overall well-being which includes healthy self-esteem and individual self-care.

The following articles involve self-care strategies, understanding self-defeating behaviors and simple ways to practice self-kindness. We have also taken time to include articles involving self-worth, self-esteem, and self-identity. Lastly, we have provided simple tips on what self-care really looks like.

Healthy self-esteem and self-care are critical to overall well-being. Valuing oneself and prioritizing your needs fosters a positive self-image and supports resilience and confidence in navigating life's challenges. We hope this issue finds you well and supportive of your ongoing journey toward personal growth and your authentic self.

"Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life"

Golda Meir, former Prime Minister of Israel, 1969-1974

Practicing Self-Care

There is no better time than now to begin taking care of your health and well-being, and to make “self-care” a priority. Many of us associate self-care with getting adequate exercise and proper nutrition, but it’s more than that. Self-care practices generally take place before or after work, not during. However, being at work does not negate the need for continued self-care. Considering the total number of hours we spend weekly at work, it’s important to our well-being to practice good self-care while at work as well as outside of work.

Self-Management

Most importantly, take care of your physical and mental needs first.

1. Eat well. Consider replacing that candy jar with fruit, raisins, almonds, or other healthy snack items.
2. Drink at least 8-oz glasses of water per day.
3. Exercise, even if it’s just a short walk before work or during lunch. This not only increases endorphins, but exercise actually helps you sleep better at night.
4. Block out time in your schedule for “personal” time, just as you would block out time for a meeting. This will allow you to think about something other than work or chores for a few moments.
5. Make time for silence. Sometimes sitting in the back yard to watch the squirrels or taking a walk after dinner helps to drain noise of the day from the mind.
6. Practice extreme self-care, especially when you are under additional stress. Culturally we have been taught that being selfish is equal to not being responsible. In actuality, taking care of you first is the foundation of responsibility.

Work Management

We all have ways of managing various aspects of our work. Here are some ideas that may be inspiring. As you become more aware of your own unique self-care needs, you may consider expanding this list by adding your own.

1. Set and maintain professional boundaries. Do not extend yourself in areas outside your job title or professional role.
2. Balance your work schedule and life demands so no one day or one week is too much.
3. Make time throughout the workday for intermittent self-care breaks (e.g., lunch or afternoon walk, social time with coworkers, or listening to relaxing music).
4. Create a healthy workspace for yourself. Start by organizing your desk or workspace.
5. Plan ahead. Develop a short list (2-3 items) of top priorities each day.
6. Minimize procrastination and maximize a sense of control.
7. Before committing to a project, assignment or committee position, etc., first consider your needs and available resources, and whether it will lead to overextending yourself
8. Separate work from your personal life.

Home Management

Strive to achieve a sense of freedom both physically and mentally. This entails releasing yourself from the clutter that builds up in your home.

1. To de-clutter properly, you must first empty out the entire drawer, closet, box or whatever you want to work on.
2. Make sure you have large bags or containers for the giveaways and items to be returned to other rooms.
3. Clear off excess from counters and shelves. This will immediately make your room look more organized and give you a feeling of being more in control.
4. Always store items where they will be used.

Doing just a few of these things regularly, to renew your energy, manage your time and revitalize your spirit is essential.

If you’d like to speak further about these concerns, feel free to contact us at **845-638-8880** or email **MNH-EAP@**

montefiorenyack.org

References

7 Steps to Better Employee Self Care in the Workplace. Psychology Today. Dana Gionta, PhD

Understanding Self-Defeating Behaviors

Self-defeating behaviors are a series of habitual choices that inhibit the fostering of healthy feelings, values, and actions. Initially, self-defeating behaviors “seem” to work by enabling a person to “cope” with the pain of an experience. These behaviors, however, are deceptive and isolating because initially they “seem” to make us feel better by temporarily restoring our equilibrium, but in the long run, they don’t solve the problem or heal the pain. In fact, they often compound problems and cause further difficulties and discomfort.

Consider the kind of romantic partner or friend that you typically choose. Do you have a habit of forming relationships with others who are?

- Unavailable.
- Disloyal
- Emotionally, psychologically or physically abusive.
- Self-centered or narcissistic.
- Extremely dependent.
- Jealous or controlling.
- Unable to express kindness/affection
- Have substance use difficulties
- Have significant emotional problems.

Logically, you probably know that you won’t be able to have a caring and enduring relationship with the type of person you’re usually attracted to; however, your emotional reasoning and the familiarity pulls you toward the same type of relationship time and again. Until you gain awareness regarding your involvement and choices with regard to your relationship with others, you’ll tend to be attracted to a certain kind of person because of the way you interact with them and the way they treat you feels familiar. Staying in an unhealthy relationship may be because you’re trying to achieve a different outcome in your adult relationships than you had with your family of origin or with others who have hurt you or didn’t meet your needs.

If you’re interested in receiving support to address self-defeating behaviors, please contact the EAP for confidential guidance and support at **(845) 638-8880** or email MNH-EAP@montefiorenyack.org.



Self-Kindness

The need to practice kindness for ourselves is often overlooked. In fact, most self-care is ignored leaving our bodies to feel the impact, which can then lead to burnout, nervous exhaustion, and the risk of developing mental health or substance abuse challenges. Research supports the vital role that self-care plays in maintaining wellbeing and resilience. Consistently practicing self-care and kindness toward oneself can boost happiness, enhance productivity, foster emotional health, and reduce chronic illness.

Self-kindness does not need to be complicated, but rather can be small, intentional acts that cater to our emotional, mental or physical needs. If you are feeling drained, give yourself a moment to reset and strengthen yourself.

The following are simple ways you can practice kindness towards yourself:

1. Create affirmation cards. Writing positive statements and placing them in your home or at work can create an environment that is uplifting. Doing so can boost self-esteem and overall mental health.
2. Connect with a friend. Social connections are vital for mental well-being. Whether reaching out to an old friend or taking the time to connect with a close buddy can help reinforce your support network.
3. Express yourself creatively. Art and other creative activities can reduce stress and improve mood. Try drawing, painting or even writing music. Often these activities can help process emotions and engage with our inner self.
4. Make a mood-boosting playlist. Music can deeply impact on our emotional self and help us to relax. Create a playlist that is meaningful and includes music that lifts your spirits.
5. Join a community group. Whether it be an on-line or an in-person community group that shares your interests. Book clubs, gardening groups, or even a mindfulness circle can offer emotional support and connection.
6. Journal your thoughts and experiences. Writing down feelings can release stress and negative emotions. Whether you prefer structured or free form writing, journaling can help to clear the mind and gain clarity.
7. Schedule a “nothing” day. Sometimes the best act of kindness for oneself is to do nothing. So often we push ourselves too hard without giving our minds and bodies an opportunity to recover. Scheduling a “nothing” day lets us recover both mentally and physically.
8. Spend time outdoors. Research shows that spending time outdoors reduces the risk of depression and increases serotonin levels and vitamin D production.
9. Read a new book. Put your technology down and get lost in an enjoyable book. Consider audio books too. There are dozens of “must-read” lists to help you start.
10. Meditate. Incorporating meditation and/or practicing mindfulness can help bring calm and balance. Put this forward in your regular routine.

It is important to remember that self-care is not a one-time event, but a continuous practice. If you would like to know more about self-kindness reach out to the EAP for confidential support and guidance at **845-638-8880** or email MNH-EAP@montefiorenyack.org.



Self-Worth and Self-Esteem

A healthy sense of self-involvement involves three key elements, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth. Together these aspects reflect one's self-image. A positive self-image is essential for any kind of success we seek to achieve. Only when we are comfortable with who we are and confident in what we can do, will other people believe in us and our abilities. This applies to both our personal and professional lives.

How a person feels and thinks about themselves is understood as pride. Pride is ultimately esteem for oneself. A positive self-image is associated with a favorable view of oneself, including one's gifts, abilities and attributes. In other words, to have a healthy pride one must be in a position to like or love themselves. Quite simply, self-esteem is how a person perceives him or herself.

The acceptance of, respect for, confidence and satisfaction that one has in oneself as a person are all aspects of self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on an internal image of ourselves that we carry around, consciously and unconsciously. The importance of a healthy self-esteem for the foundation of one's existence cannot be underestimated. It defines how we perceive ourselves and life in general. It enables us to live consciously, assume responsibility, respect others, and take care of ourselves. Self-esteem allows us to be proud without being overbearing, approach circumstances with a positive outlook, know we are worthy of realizing our dreams and understand that we deserve a joyful life. It allows us to make choices that are supportive instead of defeating.

Self-esteem is an important factor in determining one's success and happiness in relationships, career and many other areas of life. It affects emotions such as depression, anxiety and anger. Self-esteem encourages others to treat us with respect and enables us to feel better about ourselves.

Self-esteem requires unconditional self-worth is based upon an unconditional valuing of every human being, including oneself. Unconditional self-worth means seeing oneself and others as basically good. No matter how poor, unsuccessful, weak, sick, unattractive or wrong we are we still care about ourselves and others' well-being. Unconditional self-worth reduces anxiety from fears of failure, rejection, illness and many other sources. Genuine caring for oneself and others tends to make a person kinder and less judgmental. Research has associated unconditional self-worth as a significant factor of mental health and happiness.

The second part of self-esteem is conditional self-confidence. Self-confidence is conditional because it depends upon your success in various life situations. There are many different types of self-confidence including academic, social, financial, athletic, intellectual, etc. The more a situation is similar to one we have been successful in repeatedly, the more likely we are to feel confident. Similarly, the more unfamiliar or the less past success, the more we may lack confidence. Also, general positive or negative attitudes can affect confidence in specific situations. It's important to take a look at one's more general beliefs about themselves and their abilities and replace negative ones with more positive ones. Self-confidence is necessary in order to grow, evolve and reach our goals. Self-confidence allows us to recognize our potential and what we are able to become.

Lastly, changing self-esteem can be a complex task. One way to build self-esteem is through positive affirmations. These are words that suggest positive ideology and ideas and are meant to be read or recited frequently. We can also improve our self-image by associating with positive and supportive friends and family. Words of encouragement and praise from these individuals can work wonders for our self-image. Often, we are able to believe in ourselves more if someone believes in us.

Possessing a strong and secure sense of self will allow you to be highly motivated to work at achieving your goals and will give you the angle you need to be successful in whatever and wherever life may take you. If you or someone close to you is struggling with low self-esteem or poor self-image, contact the EAP for confidential counseling and assistance at **845-638-8880** or email MNH-EAP@montefiorenyack.org.

Self-Identity and the Authentic Self

How do you define yourself and describe yourself to others? Would the description change if it were an old high school friend, a new employer, or a prospective partner? The answer is likely “yes” as many factors contribute to how we see ourselves. Self-identity is defined as “who we are and what our relationship is to other people.” The authentic self is who you are when no one else is looking, separate from the outside world. We are true to ourselves when we act in a way that is congruent with our beliefs and our value system. The result is a sense of wholeness, completeness, security, honesty, and self-acceptance. When our self-perception and self-portrayal do not match, we may experience guilt, remorse, deception, and general uneasiness.



We begin the quest to determine who we are in early childhood. As we grow and develop, our self-identity expands beyond the external characteristics with which we were born. Children develop an “awareness of self” between the ages of 4 and 6 years old. At this age they usually describe themselves in terms of concrete physical attributes like their hair/eye color, height, gender, and favorite activities. Older children begin to use their skills and competencies in comparison to others as a means for self-identity. For example, what they are good at and what is their role in the family. Adolescents will begin to focus on the unique and individual qualities of their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Early adulthood offers an opportunity to challenge beliefs that were passed down to us by our parents, determining which ones will be kept and others discarded. Each of these stages offers individuals a different aspect, helping to create a comprehensive view of the self. By expanding our self-identity over time, we choose what we see as valuable.

A “secure identity” is knowing who you are, what you like, and the acknowledgment of both your strengths and weaknesses. Working with what makes you different or unique is the road map for self-acceptance. Self-acceptance does not indicate perfection but rather is part of the formula for a positive life strategy, especially when faced with challenges. Still, many people continue to form or reinforce their identity based on “others” rather than the “self.”

All individuals hold the power to define themselves and who/what they want to be. Becoming the person, you wish to be includes embracing the self you started out as. In adulthood we often lose aspects of the self due to the reality of societal expectations and norms.

Here are some ways to connect with your inner authentic self:

1. What interests did you have as a child? Which do you currently engage in?
2. What are your interests now? How many do you engage in at least 1x per week?
3. What are the top five purposes in your life?
4. What are your spiritual beliefs? How often do you put into practice these beliefs?
5. What one subject do you enjoy talking about for hours?
6. Imagine two days that would be ideal for you. Where would you be? What would you be doing? Who would you be with?

If you or someone you know is struggling with their identity or self-acceptance, consider contacting the EAP for free confidential support and assistance at **845-638-8880** or email MNH-EAP@montefiorenyack.org.

An illustration of an iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg, which is above the water line, is white and jagged. The much larger part of the iceberg, which is below the water line, is a deep blue color and has a complex, layered structure. The background is a gradient of light blue at the top and darker blue at the bottom, representing the sky and water respectively.

WHAT WE THINK SELF-CARE LOOKS LIKE

- bubble baths
- massages
- spa days
- yoga

WHAT SELF-CARE REALLY LOOKS LIKE

- setting boundaries
- getting proper rest
- trauma healing
- crying
- difficult conversations
- purging negativity
- nourishing your body
- meditation
- learning from triggers
- letting go of attachments