



# TheLexLine

A newsletter from The **Lexington** Group, Inc.  
Employee Assistance Program

**WINTER 2018**

## For Your Information



### RELATIONSHIPS 101

Couples who stay together – and stay happy – use positive communication skills. Practice these positive techniques in conversation with your partner:

- Show genuine interest in your partner.
- Take turns talking.
- Communicate understanding of your partner's problem.
- Validate your partner's emotions
- Show affection.
- Don't give your partner unsolicited advice.

### BETTER SLEEP TIPS

- Lie on your back in bed and relax each muscle of your body.
- Visualize various parts of your body relaxing.
- Concentrate on doing some deep breathing as you lie in bed.

### MEN AND DEPRESSION

According to the latest medical research, men who are depressed may not exhibit the mixture of sadness, guilt or withdrawal that dominates diagnostic descriptions for depression. Instead, say mental health professionals, signs indicating depression in men may include behaviors such as: chronic anger, behaving recklessly, drinking heavily or using drugs, driving fast or seeking out confrontation. If you need help – for you or a family member – contact your EAP for confidential counseling, referrals or information.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### Strategies to Decrease Stress-Driven Overeating

Do you ever use food to relax or calm your nerves because of too much stress? For many people, reaching for food is an automatic response to stress. Feeling tense? Reach for a cookie. Many don't even realize they have this "automatic" programming.



When you're feeling stressed, food can have a calming effect. The trouble is that eating food as a response to stress does nothing to alleviate the real cause of stress. Though "comfort foods" might provide short-term relief, using food to relieve stress can lead to an unhealthy habit of stress-driven overeating.

If you are overweight, or if you feel guilty, mad at yourself or believe something's wrong with you due to your eating in response to stress, the information below can help you decrease stress-driven overeating:

#### Information, tips and strategies

**1. Understanding your brain...It's not just about having willpower.** Withstanding the urge to eat certain unhealthy foods or withstanding the strong desire to overeat is not "just about having willpower." Your brain is constantly trying to achieve balance. When you're faced with too much stress, powerful signals go off within the brain to urge you to do something that will calm and relax you, to relieve the brain of the feeling of stress. Eating certain foods can release powerful mood-altering chemicals in the brain that can provide a quick "high" or mood lift. Stress-driven eaters have trained their brain to reach for certain foods to provide relief from stress. It is difficult to ignore these strong messages consistently. However, you can retrain your brain and learn other pleasures (besides eating) to effectively satisfy your urges.

**2. Learn to distinguish the difference between physical hunger and eating to relieve stress.** Many people are unaware that they eat food in response to stress and confuse the physical discomfort brought on by stress with the physical discomfort of needing food. Getting a handle on stress-driven overeating begins by recognizing the difference between physical hunger and emotional eating. Physical hunger builds gradually, is felt below the neck (stomach), occurs hours after a meal, goes away when full, and eating leads to a feeling of satisfaction. Emotional hunger develops suddenly, is felt above the neck (having a "taste" or craving for chocolate), is unrelated to the last time you ate, persists despite fullness, and eating leads to feelings of guilt. When you feel the urge to eat,

## Stress-driven overeating...

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get in the habit of asking, "Is it physical hunger or is it emotional hunger?"

**3. Increase your self-awareness.** Use a food diary to identify when and why you eat to manage stress. For at least one week, write down what you eat, how much you eat, how you're feeling and how hungry you are. You may become aware of situations or feelings that trigger stress-driven overeating. For example, you may discover that you overeat on evenings at home after work as a way to reduce fatigue and relax. With this awareness you can then consider ways to take care of your emotional stress without involving food.

**Face stress-causing problems head-on.** If stress triggers overeating, address the sources of stress. Look for solutions to the problems at hand, talk them over with a friend or counselor, or write in a journal. Acknowledge and address feelings of depression, anxiety or anger. Do whatever you can to reduce feelings of stress.

**Engage in healthy activities that give your brain pleasure and stress relief.** Just as you may have gotten used to eating as a reaction to stress, you can retrain your brain to seek other sources of pleasure that increase the mood-lifting chemicals in the brain that create feelings of calm and relaxation. You might consider the following:

- **Exercise** - Exercise is proven to reduce stress, improve your mood, help control appetite and improve sleep quality. All of these factors help reduce emotional eating. Even a ten-minute walk can make you feel less stressed and more calm.
- **Meditate** - Repeat a positive word, phrase or prayer. It gives you a break from negative thoughts, relieves stress and promotes calm and relaxation.
- **Listen to relaxing music** - Studies have shown that listening to relaxing music can decrease the production of a substance in the body called cortisol. Cortisol can lead to cravings for carbohydrates. Music can also relieve stress and increase relaxation.

## SELF IMPROVEMENT

# Six Small Things To Improve Your Conversations

In serious conversation, and also in social small talk, little things can have a big impact. Here are seven small things you can add to enhance the quality of your conversations:



1. Use the other person's name from time to time during the talking, such as, "I agree with you, Betty, and will support your proposal." Our names are precious to us and nearly everyone has a feel-good experience when being addressed by name. "Gary, would you call me tomorrow with the quote?"
2. Instead of asking general questions such as, "How's it going?" ask specific personal questions like, "How does your son like dental school?" Being specific shows that you remember details about matters important to the other person, such as the family, special interests, certain challenges. Routine and general questions usually elicit only routine responses like, "Fine thanks."
3. Respect people's time for talking so that you don't hold them hostage. If you're uncertain ask, "Do you have a few minutes to talk now?" This is especially useful for telephone conversations.
4. Give the other converser their turn to talk. You can do this by talking in paragraphs, not chapters, and then signaling it's their turn with a question like, "What are your thoughts?"
5. When you're with someone, give your full attention. The gift of your presence and attention is quietly powerful and strengthens relationships. Fully engaged listening is rare in our multi-tasking worlds of work and home. When you listen, just listen. Don't wander.
6. End your conversation gracefully and not abruptly. When appropriate, thank or compliment the other person when you are ending. "I really enjoyed talking with you and understand the situation much better now. Thanks a lot."

# The Lexington Group

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Caring and individualized help for personal and family concerns is only a phone call away.

For confidential help 24 hours a day, call The Lexington Group, an international Employee Assistance Program provider at:

United States	1-800-676-HELP (4357)	Marshall Islands	1-800-676-4357
Canada	1-800-567-4343	Mexico	001-888-819-7162
England	0-800-169-6706	Puerto Rico	1-800-676-4357
Cayman Islands	1-855-328-1185	TTY	1-800-955-8339
Ireland	1-800-812-411		