

health *Issues*

...in the workplace

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PART OF THE WORKING TOWARD WELLNESS
WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM



Working
TOWARD
Wellness
LIVE BETTER. LIVE LONGER.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Do you find yourself feeling as if you do not have enough hours in a day to get your work done? Spend time with family and friends? Do the things you really want to? If you feel that you are “spinning in circles” when it comes to your work, family, and social life, then you are not alone. According to a recent Canadian survey by researcher Dr. Linda Duxbury and colleagues, almost 60% of Canadians who are employed outside the home have trouble balancing their work and family demands.

The demands between work and non-work life can be referred to as work-life conflict. Work-life conflict is associated with time crunches at work or at home, scheduling conflicts, and a feeling of being overwhelmed, overworked, or stressed by the pressures of having multiple roles. It occurs when one or more of our roles (e.g. employee, parent, friend) becomes more difficult as a result of fulfilling another role. It can lead to unhealthy outcomes such as poor eating habits, less time for physical activity, lack of sleep, consuming more caffeine/alcohol, working longer hours, unstable relationships with family and friends, stress, depression and mental illnesses. More and more employers are recognizing the negative effects and costs associated with work-life conflict, as it can result in lower organizational commitment, poor job satisfaction, decreased morale, and higher rates of employee stress, absenteeism, and turnover.

The reality is that most of us will experience work-life conflict. The key to dealing with it is to achieve work-life balance. Work-life balance is a state of well-being that we each define in our own way. It involves setting priorities and developing a plan to effectively manage parallel responsibilities at home, work and at play. It involves communicating with all parties involved and realizing that we can't be everything to everyone all the time. As well, employers can play a significant role in helping employees achieve work-life balance by creating more supportive work environments, providing more flexibility, and increasing an employee's sense of control in their work.

This edition of the newsletter provides you with more information about work-life conflict and useful tips for dealing with restoring a healthy work-life balance for you and your family.

fall 2004



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ME TIME

It's all about balance. Not only do we need to find a balance between work and life, but we also need to find a balance between the time we give to others and the time we take for ourselves. This "me time" is important for many reasons:

- provides an outlet or escape from the pressures of our daily lives
- provides us the opportunity to do the things we want to do
- allows us the opportunity to use and explore our talents
- provides us with the opportunity to learn more about ourselves including what we like and what we don't like

What we do during our "me time" is up to us. Individual needs can be social, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, or physical. Activities can range from practicing our faith, to volunteering for a community organization, to enjoying a hobby, to participating in a favourite sport.

But finding the time is often easier said than done. A 2001 national public opinion survey found that more than half (55%) of Canadians felt that they did not have enough free time in their lives. Making "me time" happen in today's "no time" society will take some effort on your part. Try the following:

- find an activity that you enjoy and that fulfills a need. Don't be afraid to "live outside the box" and try something new
- schedule the activity into your day and/or week
- commit to the activity by writing it down on a calendar or recording it in a planner
- explain to your family and friends the importance of this activity to gain their support and encouragement

Don't sell yourself short! Taking time for yourself is an important part of achieving and keeping a healthy work-life balance.

Source: Ipsos-Reid. (2001).
Many Canadians Feeling "Free Time Crunch".
www.prcanada.ca/TRENDWATCH/TIMET.HTM



DINNERTIME CHAOS NO MORE

Is dinnertime at your house chaos? Do you stress over what to have for dinner at the end of every workday or workshift? Here's a checklist to help you and your family take a more balanced approach to dinnertime challenges:

- Plan and make ahead at least two meals for every five workdays. Freeze and re-heat when needed to save valuable time and minimize effort on hectic days. Although this will take up some valuable time on a non-work day, make it a family activity and ask the kids to help.
- Use Canada's Food Guide to make sure that each meal has at least three out of four food groups (Grain Products, Vegetables & Fruits, Milk Products, and Meat & Alternatives). This will help provide a more nutritionally balanced meal.
- Have pre-meal snacks that are easily available to deal with after-work or after-school hunger to help raise blood sugar levels just enough to avoid overeating at meal times (e.g. pre-washed carrots, broccoli, cauliflower; a variety of fresh fruit and low-fat dip; single serving low-fat yogurts; lower-fat microwave popcorn, etc.).
- Rotate cooking and meal preparation responsibilities. Plan and post a weekly schedule for family members so tasks can be shared. Consider who will get home first, which tasks can be successfully completed by children (depending on their ages) and other activities planned for the evening such as an evening class or a hockey practice.
- Make cell phone technology work for you. Have family members "check in" by phoning to let the family know if they are going to be delayed. This allows greater flexibility to be built into the meal (e.g. hold back cooking all of the vegetables, prepare a plate that can be heated up in the microwave later, or decide whether or not to postpone the meal). Remember, if a cell phone is not available, traditional "land" phones work just as well!



People Who Are Either Known or Believed to Have Suffered from Depressive Disorders

- Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, astronaut
- Sir Isaac Newton, mathematician/physicist
- Florence Nightengale, nurse
- Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Britain
- Sheryl Crow, singer
- Charles Schultz, cartoonist

Source: The Society for Depression and Manic-Depression of Manitoba, Inc.





IMPROVE YOUR MILEAGE GET A “HUMAN TUNE-UP”

When is the last time you had the oil changed in your car? Bet you can remember! But can you remember the last time you had a “human tune-up”, an annual medical check-up? To stay healthy, take care of yourself the way many people take great care of their cars—with regular, preventive maintenance. Taking a proactive approach to your health that includes good nutrition, daily physical activity, a smoke-free lifestyle, and enough sleep, can help you improve your health and well-being and reduce your risk of developing a serious disease.

Why do you need a “human tune-up”?

An annual “human tune-up” can help identify issues early that could become problematic later on. Don’t wait until you feel ill to see your physician. Many conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and many cancers are silent

killers. Often, there are no noticeable symptoms until an advanced stage. In general, men and women should have an annual “human tune-up” that includes a health update and information exchange with your doctor. Some of the things that your doctor may want to discuss, or suggest screening for, include:

Men • prostate cancer

Women • breast cancer, cervical cancer, and sexually transmitted infections (e.g. chlamydia, gonorrhea)

Both • hyperlipidemia (i.e. cholesterol, triglycerides), high blood pressure, overweight and obesity, colorectal cancer, diabetes, dental health, eye health, hearing function, immunization status, and osteoporosis

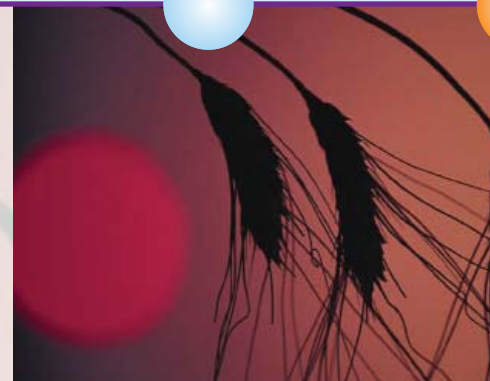
UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

The effects of depression are taking their toll on many people’s lives. According to a recent report on mental illness, approximately 8% of Canadian adults will experience major depression at some point in their lives. In addition to the person who suffers from depression, many more are affected including family members, friends, and co-workers.

Everyone feels down, sad, or blue from time to time. These are normal reactions to loss, life’s struggles, or an injured self-esteem. But, concerns should be raised when these feelings last a long time and affect social relationships or performance at work. This would indicate that a person may be suffering from depression, a serious but very treatable mental illness.

There are two main types of depression: clinical depression and bipolar disorder (also called manic depression). Both illnesses have mild, moderate, and severe forms depending on the number and intensity of the symptoms. Also, symptoms of depression are sometimes confused with another group of mental conditions known as generalized anxiety disorder. This potential confusion reinforces the importance of seeking and receiving accurate professional diagnosis.

Several factors may play a part in the onset of depression. These include: a genetic or family history, psychological or emotional



vulnerability, biological factors such as imbalances in brain chemistry and in the endocrine/immune systems, or a major stress in the person’s life.

People may reduce their risk for depression by using coping strategies to help deal with high levels of stress. These include talking with friends and family who care, finding ways to relax, and being physically active on a regular basis. These strategies will go a long way in helping to maintain balance in a person’s life. If you know someone who may be experiencing depression, use the trust between you to encourage that person to seek help or to continue treatment through their physician and/or trained professional.

To learn more about depression, including risk factors and how to help someone you know who has depression, go to www.cmha.ca or www.webmed.com and enter “depression” as a search term.

Source: Health Canada. (2002). *A Report on Mental Illnesses in Canada*.

SHIFT WORK AND SLEEP

Many of today's companies must operate 24 hours a day to remain competitive and keep up with the demand for products and services. Because several industries operate around the clock, other services (e.g. grocery stores, gyms, drug stores) are expanding their hours to accommodate evening and nighttime workers. Statistics Canada reports that 3 out of 10 Canadians work some type of shift work.

For employees, there are recognized benefits to shift work that include better pay, more available time during the day for childcare, and more daylight hours for recreation. But, harmful health effects can result if some adaptation does not occur. Shift work can affect our "circadian rhythms" or our internal clock. Every individual's internal clock varies slightly during a 24-hour day. This is the reason why some people feel tired at certain times of the day and are more alert during others.

Shift work can disrupt the setting on our internal clock and our sleep patterns. Over time, this takes its toll and can impact performance both on and off the job. People who are tired often think and move slower, make more mistakes, tend to be moodier, and have difficulty remembering. Long-term health concerns can include chronic fatigue, insomnia, and digestive disorders.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SHUT-EYE

Naps

Naps are fine as long as they are short (20-40 min.) Anything longer may make it difficult to fall asleep when going to bed. When rotating shifts, the body needs 24 to 48 hours to adjust. Try to establish a new schedule right away, which may require a nap or two to get you through.

Caffeine

While some caffeine can help with short-term alertness and performance, too much can actually interfere with sleep. Individuals tolerate caffeine differently; however, in general try to cut out caffeine at least four hours before you go to bed.

Things that contain caffeine

coffee	150 mL (5 oz.)	130 mg
tea	150 mL (5 oz.)	40 mg
cola	355 mL (12 oz.)	40 mg
chocolate	30 mL (1 oz.)	6 mg



THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

Most of us have experienced the power of a loving and fulfilling relationship with a spouse or partner. This kind of relationship can be one of the most rewarding experiences in life. It's not surprising that such relationships are strongly connected with our physical and emotional health and well-being.

As we move through life with our partner, we will face many challenges and obstacles. This is healthy and normal. However, it appears that more Canadians are having problems balancing 'work-life' demands with 'family-life' demands. As a result, high levels of stress can lead to greater conflict with our partner. In fact, according to Warren Shepell, a leading Canadian Employee Assistance Provider (EAP), 30% of counselling services used by employees deal with personal relationship issues.

Building and maintaining a healthy relationship with your spouse or partner takes a lot of work and an on-going commitment. Here are some strategies that will help in dealing with daily challenges in your relationship with your significant other:

- Communicate with your partner about matters that are important to you. Think of talking and listening as being like "two sides of the same coin" when it comes to having good communication skills.
- Give your partner your undivided attention when they are speaking to you, and ask that your partner do the same.
- Do not assume your partner knows how you are feeling, or that you know how your partner is feeling.
- Commit to spending more time with your partner and those important to you.
- Draw boundaries between work and life. Limit how much work you bring home.
- Understand that conflict is a reality. Working through conflict and coming to a resolution will strengthen your relationship.

Remember, success in life is present when we have strong, supportive relationships in our personal life that help provide balance and give us a sense of being complete.



Alcohol

Alcohol before bed can actually reduce the quality and length of sleep. Get in the habit of establishing a bed time ritual that does not include using alcohol to help you relax.

Bed Time Rituals

Make the bedroom as dark as possible, turn down the temperature, block out sound by turning on a fan or wearing ear plugs, and try relaxing before getting into bed by reading a book, listening to music or having a bath.

For more information on sleep visit www.sleepfoundation.org

Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily. Shift Work and Health. Catalogue 11-001E. ISSN 0827-0465. Thursday, July 25, 2002.*

LET PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LIGHTEN THE LOAD

How do you deal with stress? If your answer involves moving your body and enjoying some type of physical activity, then you're on the right track. In a 2001 Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) survey, just over 20% answered that they used physical activity as a strategy for coping with stress.

Why does physical activity work to reduce stress? Recent research has found that physical activity encourages the brain to make more of certain types of brain chemicals that improve mood and make us feel good. Regular physical activity also reduces the level of certain types of stress hormones, such as cortisol, which can have a negative effect on our health and increase our risk of certain diseases.

In addition to the "chemical" benefits, physical activity can also be used as a coping strategy:

To relax

Certain types of activities "stretch" our muscles and help reduce tension that we may feel. Examples include yoga, tai chi, and stretching exercises. In general, any activity that you enjoy and that make your joints bend and stretch (e.g. dancing, bowling) are great.

To help problem solve

While we are active, we have dedicated time that we can use to work through problems and come up with solutions.

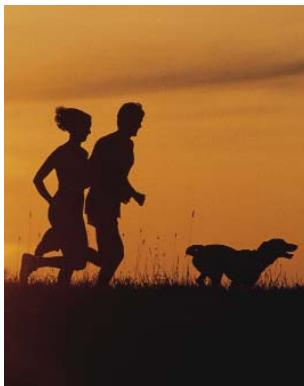
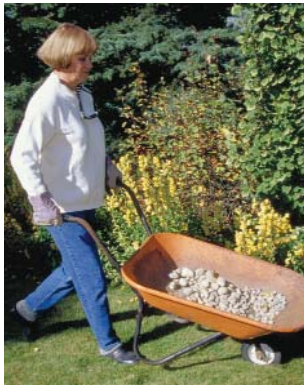
To develop self-confidence

The sense of accomplishment that we feel when finishing a walk, hitting a long tee shot in golf or raking the yard free of leaves increases our sense of self confidence and makes us feel good about ourselves.

To be a positive distraction

While we are active, we are taking some time for ourselves to "escape" from any worries we may have. This positive mental break may be all a person needs to refresh and refocus.

In addition, using physical activity as a coping strategy may lead to other positive lifestyle changes including a healthier diet, quitting smoking and drinking less alcohol.



Source: Canadian Mental Health Association. (April 20, 2001). The 2001 Canadian Mental Health Survey: A COMPAS Report to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

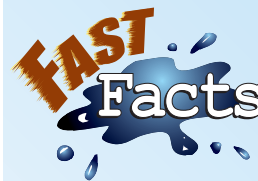


Are you looking for fast and simple ways to put a meal together at the end of your busy workday? Check out Chatelaine Magazine's website for 101 dinner ideas, cooked and prepared in 30 minutes or less. Visit www.chatelaine.com and click on Food and Recipes for the link to 30-minute meals. Then, choose the main ingredient of the dish (e.g. chicken, beef, vegetarian, pasta, fish/seafood, etc.) that will then take you to several recipes using that ingredient. All recipes are complete with nutritional information.

While you are in the Food and Recipes section of this website, take note of other sections that provide lots of recipe ideas for quick meals, such as:

- 5-ingredient wonders
- 11 fast lane dinners and double-duty dinners.

Source: Chatelaine.com September 2004 Issue. Rogers Publishing Ltd.



Do late night workouts make it harder to fall asleep?

There is no medical research to support this fitness myth. However, it depends on the person. Some may find it hard to fall asleep, while others may have no problems at all. Participating in regular physical activity is important for all of us no matter what our schedule or workout time preference. Choose a time that works for you and enjoy being active on a regular basis.



IT'S ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE

Have you ever experienced the following? You are having a great day. Everything is going right and you feel “on top of the world”. Suddenly, you find yourself in an encounter with a co-worker, friend, or family member that leaves you feeling angry, upset, and frustrated. You blame them for making you feel this way and wonder how you should deal with such a difficult and negative person.

It is a reality of life that everyday we come into contact with people who exhibit negative attitudes. Attitude is contagious and can produce a ripple effect with those around you. Positive attitudes give us energy and this energy spreads to those around us. Negative attitudes drain your energy and the energy of everyone else. How do we handle difficult individuals who exhibit negative attitudes? How can we stop ourselves from being affected by these attitudes? Here are a few suggestions:

- 1 The first step is to understand why it occurs. The negativity usually happens when people are stressed, impacted by decisions and issues beyond their control, or a belief that this approach will get them what they want from others. It becomes their coping mechanism.
- 2 Learn not to become defensive and do not take the person's negative words personally. Keep your composure, and prepare yourself to communicate your message clearly to that person in order to get their attention away from their negative “rant”. Focus on creating solutions with the person, not on what is wrong or unfair.
- 3 Become aware of situations in which you typically find yourself becoming defensive or negative. When you deal with stressful situations, take a “time out” or walk away to be by yourself.

The key to dealing with people who exhibit negative attitudes is your reaction. You control whether you react positively or negatively.

SLEEP PROBLEMS, STRESSING OUT AND ALCOHOL



In 2000/2001, Statistics Canada reported about 15% of Canadians over 12 years of age were heavy drinkers. Heavy drinking is defined as drinking five or more drinks at one time, at least once a month within the past year.

Alcohol use is often associated with a number of activities like celebrations or recreational and social activities. In some cases, alcohol is used as a means of coping with stress or as an aid to falling asleep. The truth is, alcohol is a drug that suppresses the central nervous system, including our brain.

It is important to note that individual tolerance to alcohol varies a great deal based on a variety of factors including age, gender, body size and body composition, etc. However, in general small amounts of alcohol can result in a “feeling good”

sensation. It can reduce inhibitions and create a relaxed mood. As more alcohol is consumed drowsiness and dizziness occur. Then comes slurred speech, blurred vision, and loss of balance and coordination. Alcohol will impair one's ability to make decisions.

Taken in even larger amounts, alcohol can cause blackouts (unable to recall what happened while drinking) and breathing to slow down. Those exposed to toxic levels of alcohol can experience alcohol poisoning, leading to illness and in extreme cases death.

Studies suggest that people use alcohol to deal with stress related to money, work, or problems with their personal life. Other studies on alcohol use report that alcohol is sometimes used to induce sleep. However, alcohol actually disrupts sleep. As a depressant, alcohol results in drowsiness and sedation. The problem is that the quality of sleep after consuming alcohol is usually reduced. In fact, after waking from alcohol related sleep, individuals typically do not feel rested and often feel tired during waking hours. Rather than being part of the “sleep solution”, alcohol can actually be part of the problem.

When it comes to using alcohol as a method of coping with stressors the effect is similar. Alcohol may provide the feeling of a temporary relief from the source of stress but the underlying problem has not been dealt with. Alcohol use often makes the original problem worse and can lead to a vicious cycle of alcohol dependency.

The “bottom line” is that moderate alcohol consumption, according to the Low Risk Drinking Guidelines (www.apolnet.org/actpacks/en_pamphMay04.pdf), can be part of a healthy lifestyle. Using alcohol to promote health, induce sleep or deal with stress is not healthy and is not recommended.

Sources: Gilmore, J. (2004). *Health of Canadians Living in Census Metropolitan Areas*. www.statcan.ca/english/research/89-613-MIE/89-613-MIE2004002.htm

National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (July 1998). www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa41.htm



There is no amount or kind of alcohol that is considered safe during any stage of pregnancy. Alcohol intake during pregnancy causes Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The effects of alcohol on the unborn baby last a lifetime.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder occurs once in every 100 births in Canada.

Source: Best Start, FASD fact sheet

TIPS TO REDUCE STRESS

Use relaxation techniques, like deep breathing.

Take a stress break - see a movie or read a book.

Be more physically active.

Develop patience - do one thing at a time.

Try to be a little less perfect.

Learn to say 'no.'

Have fun everyday.

Share your problems with those you trust and love.

WORKPLACE PROFILE

WORKING TOWARD WELLNESS AT THE GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (GECDSB)

The GECDSB promotes a healthy working and learning environment for its employees, as reflected in the success of the Joint Employee Assistance Program (JEAP). The GECDSB's JEAP is also the only repeat winner of the Working Toward Wellness Health Promotion Program's prestigious Gold Award presented by Heart Health Action Windsor-Essex and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

Embraced wholeheartedly by the School Board and its nine employee groups, the JEAP's ongoing mission to promote health and wellness is based on the idea that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". JEAP provides counselling, crisis intervention, and wellness education for 4 000 employees, retirees, and their families. It is aimed at reducing the stress often felt when trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

In February 2003, JEAP Co-ordinator, Renu Khosla, initiated a highly successful Staying Healthy Pilot Program. The aim of the Pilot Program was to provide a comprehensive workplace health promotion program to improve personal and family lifestyle habits. Four initiatives were undertaken, each for four months. These included Healthy Hearts, a Walking Program, Stress Management, and Eating Well. Each initiative involved an initial personal assessment and personal goal setting followed by several educational opportunities. At the end of the four months, participants evaluated their progress. For example,



Greater Essex County District School Board

participants in the walking program tracked the number of steps they walked using a pedometer for the first two weeks. After the initial two weeks, each participant set a goal to find ways to increase the number of daily steps to 10 000, the equivalent of about five kilometres. In the Eating Well initiative, the aim was to increase individual consumption of fruits and vegetables to at least five servings daily.

One hundred and nine participants took part in the Staying Healthy Pilot Program through the Board Office, an elementary school, and a secondary school. They reported a 92% success rate defined as achieving or exceeding their individual target outcomes! Due to popular demand, Renu is now faced with the task of implementing the program throughout the entire School Board. Not surprisingly, she is looking forward to the challenge.

WORKPLACE PROFILE is a new section of the newsletter designed to recognize workplaces that have implemented Workplace Wellness Programs as well as to share successes and challenges with other Windsor-Essex County Workplaces.

To nominate your Workplace Wellness Program as our next profile contact Meghan Toews at 519-258-2146 x 3100 or mtoews@wehealthunit.org



WEBSITE SUPPORT

Interested in bringing wellness to your workplace? The Working Toward Wellness Program offers consultation and support to help workplaces start and maintain a wellness program that works. For more information call 258-2146 x 3100.

**Working
TOWARD
Wellness**
LIVE BETTER. LIVE LONGER.



24 Carrot Press (U.S.)
www.Nutrition4Kids.com

About.com - Caregiver Stress and Its Management
<http://stress.about.com/cs/familymarital/a/caregiver.htm>

Apolnet- Workplace Alcohol Polices
www.apolnet.org/actpacks/ad_wrk.html

Work-Life Conflict in the New Millennium:
A Status Report (2003)
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/work-travail/report2/index.html

National Center on Sleep Disorders Research
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr

Circadian Technologies Inc
www.circadian.com

Canadian Sleep Society
www.css.to

Canada Health Network
www.canadian-health-network.ca

Ontario Association For Marriage and Family Therapy
www.oamft.on.ca

Warren Shepell- EAP Professionals
www.warrenshepell.com
Click resource centre

Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha.ca
Click on "Info centre" for on-line publications

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
www.camh.net
Type "depression" in the search box

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
www.ahrq.gov/clinic/cps3dix.htm#metabolic
Preventative Screening Services

International Coach Federation
www.coachfederation.org/aboutcoaching/index.asp

Do you have suggestions for future topics?

Please submit your ideas to Meghan Toews

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