

Balanced Living

September 2023



Understanding Your Role as a Team Member

With multiple people involved in accomplishing a project, it's critical that everyone know what is and is not expected from them in their team activities. In most cases their technical contributions are the primary reason they were selected for team membership, and that expertise will form the foundation of their participation. However, there is much more to being an effective team member than knowing how to perform specific tasks. How well you end up working together, and therefore, how well you meet the team's objectives depend on how well you understand your role. You need to:

- Commit to team goals.
- Ask for clarification if necessary.
- Identify and define related roles

Commit to Team Goals

Team goals are often established by the person who assembled the team. Generally, the task is identified first, and then the decision is made to form a team to tackle it. But sometimes the team sets its own goals at the beginning of its life cycle. In either case, to be a fully empowered and effective team member, you must clearly understand the team's purpose, goals and objectives, and vision for success and feel that they are yours.

Fully participate in any discussion and encourage the team to spend enough time on decisions that that you feel comfortable committing to those decisions. Whether serving as a member of a team is something you do full-time or an add-on to your usual job, you must feel committed in order to be willing to expend the energy it will take to be effective.

Ask for Clarification

Team members often leave their first meeting with even more questions than they had when they arrived. If there is one word that describes what it takes to be an effective team member, that word may be initiative. From the beginning, you need to take responsibility to clarify anything you don't understand.

Asking clarifying questions is particularly vital in a team setting. The difficulty of communicating effectively increases exponentially with the number of people involved, and a misunderstanding on a team can be very expensive in hard costs and human costs alike.

Asking clarifying questions also helps your team leader overcome the challenges he or she faces. The more you seek and obtain answers, the less the team leader has to worry about whether you understand, are committed, and are on board. So, ask questions, and don't wait for someone else to notice that you need answers!

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Identify Related Roles

You are on the team to provide some professional or technical expertise required to accomplish the team's goals. If it's not clear to you why you were included, ask your team leader. If others with related expertise are on the team, identify how you can integrate your efforts to avoid redundancy and ensure that all bases are covered.

You have another role besides a technical one—that of team member. Do you have responsibilities related to getting the team going, helping it function, pulling it back on track, performing administrative tasks? Clarification of roles and responsibilities is an important team process, and if your leader doesn't do it in a formal way, you can request that it be done. Being aware of the roles of others on the team will facilitate smooth working relationships.

Effective teams don't spontaneously occur just because a group of people has been put together in a room and given an assignment. High performing teams start their development process with a shared vision of what it means to be a team and how the team will work together to accomplish its goals.



Social Media, Youth & Comparison

With so many posts across feeds, timelines, and social media apps, young people today may start to compare themselves and their lives to what they see on their screens. Sometimes this can help them make sense of the world, be motivated, or get inspired. But other times this can negatively affect their confidence, self-esteem, and body image. They may not even be aware that they are comparing themselves to others and the negative thoughts that come with it.

As adults in young people's lives, it's natural to want to protect children from what they see online. While it's not always possible to protect them in a world where social media is unavoidable, we can look for signs they are struggling and provide support and resources to help them cope and be confident in themselves.

Common Comparison Traps

Body Image

Many young people today are struggling with body image and insecurities. Social media is full of classmates, influencers, and celebrities showing off their seemingly perfect looks – most of which are edited.

What you can do:

Remind youth that they are only seeing a small sample of what people really look like, and how those people want to look online. Social media doesn't represent all the different body types, skin tones, and hair textures in the real world. Encourage kids and teens to think about all the things they appreciate about themselves and their bodies and make a list in a journal or the notes app on their phones. This list is something that they can go back to when they feel comparison thoughts creeping up.

Online Popularity

For young people, their social media profiles are extensions of themselves. When they don't have as many likes, followers, or views as their peers, they often take this personally, which can make them feel isolated, rejected, and hurt.

What you can do:

Acknowledge their feelings – when something hurts, it hurts, no matter how trivial it may seem to you. Remind them of all the people who support them in their lives offline and that there is more to life than social media profiles. Let them know that the number of likes or anything else on social media doesn't define who they are. This may be a good moment to remind them that only they can define themselves.

FOMO: Fear of Missing Out

FOMO is the feeling of worry or insecurity about missing out on something like an event or opportunity. You may have experienced this but called it something else, like being left out or feeling unpopular. Young people can experience FOMO more often as social media is an endless stream of posts about parties, games, or celebrations they couldn't attend. Or maybe youth are watching others hang out with friends, do activities they've always wanted to try, or take trips to places they have never been. All of this can make them feel left out and lonely.

What you can do:

Encourage youth to make real experiences and memories offline. Tell them that they don't have to do what everyone else is doing online to feel fulfilled. They can create their own goals, discover new hobbies or clubs, and build stronger relationships with those who are already in their lives. Remind them that a lot of what gets posted online is staged to some degree, and things tend to look more exciting than they actually are. If you also find yourself experiencing FOMO while on social media, be honest about it with your kid and work together to find space offline – being a healthy example is important for them to see.

Tips to Help Youth Avoid Social Comparison

Social comparison is an unfortunate part of the social media experience, but there are things you can encourage young people to do to avoid it:

- **Remind Them to Take Social Media Breaks**

The break can be for a few days, hours, or weeks. No matter the length of time, it will help give them a break from what they see online.

- **Encourage Them to Connect Offline**

While social media is great for building relationships virtually, it doesn't replace our need for face-to-face interaction and connection to others. Hanging out with friends or talking on the phone is a good way to combat the loneliness they may experience when scrolling on social media.

- **Suggest They Clean-Up Their Social Media Feed**

Have them think about what on social media makes them feel bad about themselves, scared, anxious, or lonely. Remind them that it's always OK to mute, snooze, unfollow, block, and report harmful posts and accounts. Also, remind them that they do not need to react to, respond, or engage with posts that make them uncomfortable.

- **Help Them Build Self-Esteem**

Teach them that they can find validation within themselves instead of seeking it from others online. They can reflect on their own lives – what makes them proud, what they love about themselves, their goals, hopes, and dreams.

Someone's life on social media is only a fraction of what their life is really like. Reminding young people that what they see online isn't always accurate and that they can create real and valuable experiences offline will help them cope with social comparison.

Mental Health America | Back-to-School Toolkit 2023 | mhanational.org/youth-tech



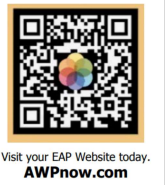
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How to Help Someone Struggling

You might have a family member or friend who is struggling. It's important to know some basic facts about suicide, be able to recognize warning signs, and know how to support someone who may be experiencing a crisis.

Risk Factors

Some risk factors include: Depression, mental health disorders, substance abuse disorder, family history, previous suicide attempts, experiencing violence or injury, having guns in the home and exposure to others' suicidal behavior.

Recognizing Warning Signs

Talking about wanting to die or making a plan, feeling hopeless or trapped, experiencing emotional and physical pain, feeling like a burden to others, increased use of drugs or alcohol, extreme mood swings and irregular eating or sleeping habits.

What You Can Do

1. Ask—Start a dialogue with the person by directly asking if they are contemplating suicide.
2. Be there—Show your support and be present.
3. Keep them safe—The goal of this step is establishing an immediate safety plan, including removing any lethal means available to them.
4. Help them connect—Assist them in establishing ongoing support so they have a list of contacts available in times of crisis. This could include community resources and a counselor.
5. Follow up—Check in and see how they're doing.

Crisis Resources

For crisis support and resources, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by dialing 988 or use their online Lifeline Crisis Chat. Both of these services are free and confidential. Call 911 for emergency services.

Your actions can make a big difference. Odds are that suicidal feelings are temporary, though it certainly doesn't feel that way to the individual in real-time. With timely support from family and the community, individuals can get the help they need and recover from a crisis.

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Webinar Now Available:

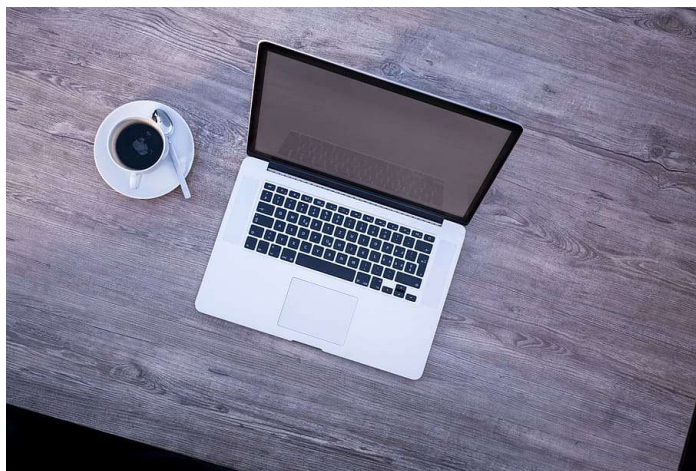
Involvement and Engagement

Learn how small acts of kindness and a state of flow can change your life. Do you ever ask yourself, "What can I do today to change my life for the better?" Thankfully, research supports that there is something we can do about it, and it's actually quite easy. In this webinar, we will explore two actionable concepts, acts of kindness and flow, that you will enjoy adding to your daily/weekly routine and that will help you live a happier, positive, purposeful life!

Log-in any time this month to watch the webinar!

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The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

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Healthy Aging

September is Healthy Aging Month. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), aging increases the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, cancer, and dementia. The good news is that adopting and maintaining a few key behaviors can help older adults live longer, healthier lives. Healthy behaviors can help aging adults live more independently as well.

Six Tips for Healthy Aging According to the CDC:

Eat and Drink Healthy. A nutritious diet involving a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins also can help boost immunity and lower the risk of specific health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers.

Move More, Sit Less Throughout the Day. Exercise can help reduce stress and anxiety levels, improve balance and lower the risk of falls, enhance sleep, and decrease feelings of depression. Most importantly, people who exercise regularly not only live longer but also may live better — meaning they enjoy more years of life with less pain or disability.

Don't Use Tobacco. If you use tobacco, take steps to quit. It is never too late.

Get Regular Checkups. Checking in with doctors annually, and possibly more often, depending on overall health, may help reduce risk factors for diseases such as high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Regular check-ups can also help catch concerns early and improve the chances for effective treatment.

Know Your Family History. Discuss recommended screenings and additional testing with your doctor that is recommended based on your family history.

Be Aware of Changes in Brain Health. Discuss any memory changes or concerns about your brain health with your doctor.

Source: [6 Tips for Healthy Aging | CDC](#)



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The Importance of New Hobbies

Sometimes, finding an hour of free time in our busy days can feel impossible. When you do find that hour or two, how do you spend it? The importance and benefits of hobbies cannot be overlooked, and while developing new hobbies can feel uncomfortable, it is worth the time and effort!

Three Benefits of Having Hobbies

Hobbies help structure your time. We tend to allow tasks to take up the amount of time that is available. If the whole evening stretches in front of you, it can be tempting to stay online, answering a few more emails. But, if you had a book club or a tennis match to get to, you may complete those tasks more efficiently, freeing up that time for your hobbies.

Hobbies can foster new social connections and help build friendships. Many hobbies offer the chance to meet new people in our communities. Social connection is a crucial ingredient in a happy and meaningful life, and bonding over a shared interest or passion is a great way to ignite a new friendship.

Hobbies promote health and decrease stress. Hobbies keep us active, sometimes mentally, physically, and/or socially. Hobbies can also help grow our self-concept, reminding us that we are more than employees, parents, or spouses; we're also chess players, athletes, and artists! Diving into a hobby can distract you from a difficult day at work and provide a challenge and a chance to increase your self-confidence.

Five questions to ask yourself as you begin your search for a new hobby:

1. Do you enjoy competition?
2. Is there a particular skill that you would like to develop?
3. Are there activities that you enjoyed in childhood that you would like to revisit now?
4. How much time and money can you devote to a hobby?
5. With what types of people would you like to interact with through your hobby? Or would you prefer a solitary pursuit?

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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How to Keep Your Cool for Back to School

It seems to never fail that as soon as August rolls around, it's an inevitable reminder that summer is over and busy schedules are upon us. Whether you are a student, working full time (or both), or a parent trying to juggle kids' busy schedules on top of your own, the "Back to School" time of the year can seem overwhelming. However, with proper planning and intent, this time of the year does not have to seem daunting.

Here are a few ways to help ease the stress of those overbooked busy schedules:

- Have a planner- whether it's a physical planner you can write in or one you can use on your computer or phone. To stay organized, it's essential to have a visual of your daily, weekly, and monthly schedule.
- Practice time management skills and know what to prioritize.
- Set aside at least 15 minutes each day for yourself doing something that makes you happy, whether reading a book, listening to a podcast, going for a walk, calling a friend or family member, etc.
- Make sure that your health is a priority- getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, exercising, and eating nutritious foods will help alleviate the stress of a busy schedule.
- Don't be afraid to say no- saying yes to all invites can lead to burnout. It's okay to prioritize your mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Incorporate stress management techniques that work for you- this can come in many forms, but a few examples are meditation, self-care, some physical movement, taking a break from electronics, getting out in nature, setting realistic goals, etc.,
- Create a morning and evening routine that you enjoy and look forward to.



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Mediterranean Roasted Vegetables

Ingredients

- 2 Roma tomatoes *quartered and seeded*
- 2 zucchini *8 to 12 oz, halved and sliced on a diagonal*
- 1 eggplant *about 12 oz, halved and sliced into semicircles*
- 1 yellow bell pepper *seeded and sliced into strips*
- 1 red onion *halved and sliced*
- 2 tbsp avocado oil
- 2 tsp dried Italian herbs
- Generous pinch of sea salt and black pepper
- 6 fresh basil leaves *sliced into thin ribbons, optional*

Directions

1. Get ready. Preheat the oven to 400F. Line two large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Load up the trays. Place half the veggies on one tray, half on the other. You can mix and match them if you want.
3. Spice it up. Drizzle half the oil onto each tray of veggies. Sprinkle half the salt, pepper, and Italian herbs onto each tray of veggies. Toss well with your hands and then spread the veggies out into a single layer. Don't overcrowd them.
4. Bake it. Roast for 20-30 minutes until the veggies are tender and the edges are golden brown.
5. Garnish. Sprinkle with the fresh basil and serve.

Nutrition

Per Serving:

Calories: **87** | Protein: **2g** | Carbohydrates: **10g** | Dietary Fiber: **3g** | Fat: **5g** | Saturated Fat: **N/A** | Sodium: **8mg** | Calcium **26mg** | Potassium: **463mg** | Magnesium: **N/A**

Coping with the Sunday “Scaries”

The Sunday “scaries” refers to that sinking feeling or anxiety some people experience on Sunday night when they realize the weekend is over and Monday morning will soon arrive, and along with it what awaits at work. Gain control over this state of mind by jotting down your tasks and goals for the week. You will feel more control and quickly dispel the sense of dread. Anxiety is often reduced by self-care techniques, so experiment with an enjoyable form of relaxation. For more impact, incorporate this into a regular evening routine. Try a bit of “thought blocking” replaced with an activity that keeps your mind occupied. Plan your Monday on Friday by taking a bit of time to go over your schedule for the next week. You’re more likely to stay in the present come Sunday night.

Is There Hidden Meaning in Your Job?

Do you feel bored with your job, unable to leave, and helpless to change your state of mind? There are personal interventions you can try that have worked for others. Start by taking time to think about your interests, goals, and values (what’s most important to you in your life). Next, search for how these things are hidden within the scope of your job’s essential functions. Don’t be too quick to say, “There’s nothing!” For example, do you value “meaningful relationships”? If so, can you make your job more meaningful by mentoring others, being more helpful, collaborating, engaging more empathetically, and lessening your isolation? These behaviors have ripple effects at work and can lead to more positive interactions, cooperation, teaming, and sharing of ideas. Resource for you: “From Burnout to Purpose: Simple Strategies for a Soul-Fulfilling Approach to Work,” 2022, by Gina Calvano.

Stress Tips from the Field: Newly Divorced Stress

End of summer is a time when many divorces occur. If you’re newly divorced, serious stress can naturally follow your decision, regardless of how tough it was to make. Emotional stress is common among divorced couples, includes grief and sadness, and negatively affects self-esteem. Other stresses, such as coparenting challenges, financial concerns, and navigating changes in your social life, can also be challenging. Your goal is to create a new life with new routines. Don’t go it alone or remain in isolation. Bring tough challenges to your organization’s employee assistance program to get the support you need.

Impress the Boss with Your Reliability

Reliability is a soft skill valued by employers because reliable employees demonstrate consistent results with accuracy and achievement. They also help reduce supervisor stress about outcomes, predictability, and timely communication. To ramp up your reliability, you need to deliver consistent, high-quality work and let your boss’s positive response motivate you to consistently perform in this way. Take the initiative by identifying issues or problems upstream and resolving them before management is forced to resolve them. Be adaptable to sudden change (“roll with the punches”), and develop a sense for what, how much, and when your boss needs to communicate.

Marijuana Edibles: What Parents Should Know

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports a significant increase in the number of children who have consumed marijuana edibles leading to the need for emergency medical assistance. A rise of 214% in emergency room visits by children under the age of 11 has occurred in the past two years. Eating products of any kind that include THC is more dangerous than smoking cannabis due to both the unpredictable and inconsistent amounts of THC added to these products and the tendency to consume more of the cannabis product, especially if the intoxicating effects of THC are not immediately felt. With 23 states now legalizing cannabis for recreational use, this health risk is not likely to diminish. Marijuana edibles can create psychotic effects and may not be much different in appearance from a gummy vitamin. Parents should follow these six guidelines regarding teen and child substance abuse prevention: 1) provide accurate education about risks and legal consequences of substance abuse; 2) discuss peer pressure and how to respond to it effectively; 3) educate young people early about stress management and coping strategies; 4) practice, model, and encourage open communication about issues and concerns young people experience; 5) discuss expectations and boundaries for your family regarding substance abuse and what the consequences will be for crossing these boundaries; and 6) know where to get help, counseling, information about counseling, or early intervention when you suspect your child is using illicit substances. Begin this search via your employee assistance program.

Have You Added Plants to Your Workspace Yet?

Indoor plants have been shown to favorably impact individuals' physiological and cognitive functions. One study even showed their presence can lower blood pressure. Indoor office lighting is suitable for many kinds of plants, including the following: snake plant, ZZ plant, peace lily, pothos, Chinese evergreen, and dracaena. So, get some healthy greens on your desk by searching images of these plants to see which ones will work for you.

Source: Effects of Plants

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9224521/

You Probably Don't Need Counseling for That

The diminishing stigma of seeking professional mental health counseling is a positive development. However, it's worth noting that many concerns presented to counselors can be resolved through alternative means. A few misconceptions often prompt seeking a professional counselor when one might not be needed. These include: 1) believing there are no alternative resources, such as self-help strategies, support networks, or community resources, including an EAP; 2) linking emotional distress with the notion that seeking professional help is essential for thorough and ultimate resolution; 3) believing a professional counselor will provide an unheard-of, inspiring, or motivational answer to a personal problem that instantly resolves it; and 4) using a professional counselor as a procrastination step to intellectualize (examine, analyze, rehash) the nature of a problem to feel as though one is making progress, while one is only resisting or procrastinating in the taking of action steps needed to create change.

Prepare for Disasters and Catastrophes

No matter where you live, a natural disaster or catastrophe can happen. Are your family and home prepared to face an event that could completely upend your life? Denial ("it won't happen here (or to me)") and procrastination in taking preparatory steps are your worst enemies. Find information and steps to take, along with guidance and checklists, at www.ready.gov. After experiencing the effects of a disaster or catastrophe, be mindful of signs or symptoms indicating a need for mental health support—such as emotional distress that lingers, sleep disturbances, somatic or physical symptoms like headaches and gastrointestinal distress, or a desire to withdraw or remain isolated.

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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