

COUNTY OF VENTURA



Employee Assistance Program

Fall 2006

Quarterly Newsletter

This quarterly newsletter has been developed to further the EAP's goal of promoting the mental health and well being of all County employees.. This and future issues will offer education, useful suggestions, resources and even humor on a broad range of topics including marriage and family, mental health as well as workplace satisfaction and productivity.

In addition, a section will be devoted to highlighting the achievements and innovations of County departments and programs. Employees can learn about the efforts, successes, and achievements. of other County employees .

Any questions, topic suggestions or recommendations can be forwarded to Scott.Barash@ventura.org

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to County employees and dependents that are enrolled in a County sponsored medical plan or opt-out plan.

Staffed by licensed mental health professionals, the EAP provides counseling services to help in times of personal or emotional crisis or when you just want to explore solutions to personal problems affecting your life. Issues may involve marital or family tension, drug or alcohol abuse, loss of loved one, work-related problems, or other emotional problems brought about by the stresses of daily living.

Employees and/or family members can receive up to 5 visits with an EAP in-house staff at no charge.

EAP Services are:

- **No cost to you**
- **Confidential**
- **Professional**
- **Available to you and eligible family members**

For additional information or to set an appointment call the EAP at:

805-654-5138

Family Life

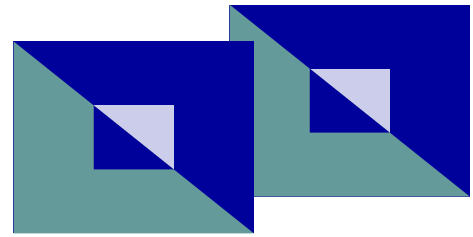
Understanding the teenage brain... *Is that even possible?*

A recent study has prompted scientists (and parents) to begin to rethink some of the reasons behind those troublesome teen years where good judgment and good manners, seem to disappear. A researcher with the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Jay Giedd has spent the past 13 years examining the brains of teens using high-powered magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Dr. Giedd's scanning studies have proven adolescent careless risk taking, insensitivity, and emotional intensity is cause by more than just hormone changes. Not only is the brain of the adolescent not fully developed, it does not reach maturity until around age 25. Before the imaging studies, most scientists believed the brain was fully developed by the age of 12.

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Your Mental Health and Well Being



DEPRESSION: A PERSONAL CHALLENGE

According to the National Institute of Mental Health:

- 9.5 percent of the population, or about 18.8 million American adults, suffer from some form of depression each year.
- About 97 percent who reported depression also reported that their work, home life and relationships suffered as a result.
- Currently, Depressive Disorders are the reason for about 15% of doctors office visits
- Of those who develop symptoms of depression, only about 20 % seek or receive adequate treatment.

Depression is an illness that affects an individual's thoughts, feelings and physical condition. It can present itself in a number of ways. Along with the persistent experience of a sad or irritable mood, symptoms may include the loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities, difficulty in concentration, changes in appetite and sleep, as well as a decrease in feelings of self-worth. Depression does not necessarily need to have an identifiable cause such as divorce, death of a loved one, etc. Depression can also be a family trait and can occur without warning at any age. Depression frequently causes problems with work, social and family issues without an individual realizing it. The reason is that many times when someone is depressed the symptoms are considered something else. Physical problems, sleep problems, fatigue, even laziness can be signs of depression in disguise.

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Other Helpful County Programs

The Work/Life Program

The Work/Life Program is designed to help and assist County employees navigate the many challenges that take place in balancing work obligations and family responsibilities. The program offers resource and referrals for child care and elder care, lactation rooms for new moms returning to work, Balancing Work/Family Seminars and advocacy for flexible and alternative work schedules.

For more info or resources, contact Patty McWaters at 805/477-7234 or at patricia.mcwaters@ventura.org.

The Wellness Program

The Wellness Program offers all Regular County employees and their spouses a variety of health promotion services to help reduce their personal health risks and control increases in medical costs. Attend an annual Wellness Profile and receive a valuable array of tests (including a blood panel that measures total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides and glucose) and a personalized results booklet to help you get healthy and fit. The Wellness Program also offers a wide variety of classes and seminars on topics such as healthy eating, exercise, weight loss, diabetes management and more.

To view the current Wellness Program Schedule and for more information go to <http://ceo.countyofventura.org/benefits/wellness> or call the Wellness Program at 654-2628.

Mental Health and The Family

Identifying Depression In Children and Adolescents

Children and adolescents who cause trouble at home or at school may also be suffering from depression. Because the youngster may not always seem sad, parents and teachers may not realize that troublesome behavior is a sign of depression.

In a recent study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), about 2.2 million adolescents ages 12 to 17 (9 percent) experienced at least one major depressive episode in the past year. An estimated 28% of these teenagers also reported alcohol use within a month of the survey while 21% also used some time of illicit drug (The report is available on the web at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/>).

If one or more of these signs of depression persist, parents should seek help:

- Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying
- Hopelessness
- Decreased interest in activities; or inability to enjoy previously favorite activities
- Persistent boredom; low energy
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Low self esteem and guilt
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased irritability, anger, or hostility
- Difficulty with relationships
- Frequent complaints of physical illnesses such as headaches and stomachaches
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Poor concentration
- A major change in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home
- Thoughts or expressions of suicide or self destructive behavior

If you have a concern about your child's behavior or emotions, you should discuss them with your Primary Care Physician, EAP counselor, or other mental health professional.

THE BURNS DEPRESSION CHECKLIST

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The following is a list of symptoms that people may experience when they are depressed.

This list is not intended to provide a diagnosis for a depressive disorder or is a substitute for a professional evaluation.

If multiple symptoms persist for two weeks or more you may want to consider talking to your primary care physician, contacting the EAP, or other mental health professional for an assessment.

Thoughts and Feelings

Feeling sad or down in the dumps _____
Low self-esteem _____
Feeling unhappy or blue _____
Feeling worthless or inadequate _____
Crying spells or tearfulness _____
Guilt or shame _____
Feeling discouraged _____
Criticize or blame yourself _____
Feeling hopeless _____
Difficulty making decisions _____

Activities and Personal Relationships

Loneliness _____
Avoiding work or other activities _____
Loss of motivation _____
Loss of interest in family and friends _____
Loss of pleasure or satisfaction in life _____
Spending less time with family or friends _____
Loss of interest in work or other activities _____

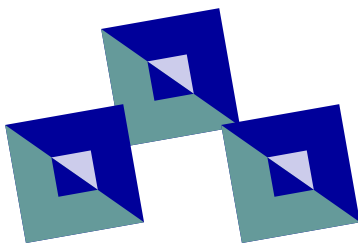
Physical Symptoms

Feeling tired _____
Loss of interest in sex _____
Decreased or increased appetite _____
Worrying about your health _____
Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much _____

Suicidal Urges**

Do you have any suicidal thoughts? _____
Would you like to end your life? _____
Do you have a plan for harming yourself? _____

**** Anyone with suicidal urges should seek health care or mental health assistance immediately**



Focus on the Workplace

Just for fun

Wordspy.com has accumulated a database of newer workplace words, not found in normal dictionaries, but slowly becoming acceptable slang. The following are a few examples:

presenteeism

The feeling that one must show up for work even if one is too sick, stressed, or distracted to be productive; Describes workers who show up for work but are not productive due to stress, low morale, injury, or illness.

corporate anorexia

A business disorder, marked by an extreme fear of becoming inefficient that leads to excessive cost-cutting to the point of serious loss of business and sometimes bankruptcy.

warm-chair attrition

The loss of workplace productivity due to employees who dislike their jobs and are just waiting for the right time to quit and move on to something better.

ghost work

After a round of layoffs or firings, the work that used to be done by the former employees and that must now be handled by the remaining staff.

bozo explosion

The large number of inept employees that a company ends up with when it hires an incompetent executive, who in turn hires incompetent managers, who then hire incompetent workers.

enronomics

A fiscal policy or business strategy that relies on dubious accounting practices, overly-optimistic economic forecasts, and unsustainably high levels of spending.

boomerang

1. An employee who quits to take another job and later returns to the company. 2. An employee who is laid off and then rehired as a consultant or contract worker.

lion food Anyone in middle management or a similar administrative position.

seagull manager (SEE.gul MAN.uh.jur) A manager who only interacts with employees to criticize their work or when a problem arises.

Program Innovations:

Highlighting the Creativity and Achievements of
County Departments and Programs

Ventura County Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Whether it is a bioterrorism event such as anthrax or smallpox outbreak, major disaster or catastrophe, or other health threat such as a pandemic influenza outbreak, the task of The Emergency Preparedness office, under the auspice of Health Care Agency Public Health Department plays a critical role in public safety. This office coordinates essential medical care, provides public education, and assures supplies, resources, and medical professionals in the event of a large-scale medical emergency. In addition, the office assists organizations and agencies with disaster planning to meet the needs of vulnerable populations such as the elderly and disabled. Current projects also include recruitment of medical volunteers for a Medical Resource Corps and developing a Trauma Response Network of mental health professionals.

The Public Health Department Emergency Preparedness office reminds all county employees to take steps to prepare themselves and their families in the event of a disaster. The American Red Cross has preparedness checklists available on their website at www.prepare.org. The Emergency Preparedness Office can also answer questions about your role as a designated County Disaster Service Worker in the event of an emergency at 981-5331.

Children's Services Family Decision Making (FDM) And Team Decision Making (TDM) Programs

Faced with the difficulties of daily living, many families struggle with providing the necessary and proper care of their children. Children's Services of the Human Services Agency has been refining two specific programs that bring parents, extended family, friends and community service providers together to discuss the needs and the best interests of those children faced with the adversity of abuse, neglect, or foster placement. The Family Decision Making Program (FDM) and Team Decision Making Program (TDM) are evolving programs that are directed at keeping the family together if possible but still providing for the child's safety. The FDM sets up voluntary meetings with family members using trained facilitators with the goal of assisting them in developing their own self-directed plan to insure the safety of children and prevent the necessity of family separation. The TDM, promotes a team decision making process in the care of children who may already be in the court system but the provision of coordinated services could result in a more rapid return home or less restrictive placement. Additional information regarding these programs can be obtained by contacting Leann Ryland @ 654-3280.

*Suggestions for other County program acknowledgements
can be forwarded to Scott.Barash@ventura.org*

Understanding the teenage brain... Is that even possible?

(Continued)

The brain develops in stages, generally from back to front and “prunes” unnecessary brain cells as it goes. The brain regions that reach maturity earliest control vital functions such as vision, hearing, touch and spatial processing. The last part of the brain to be “pruned” is the prefrontal cortex, in charge of such functions as--planning, setting priorities, organizing thoughts, suppressing impulses, weighing the consequences of one's actions, etc. In effect, the part of the brain aimed at “being responsible” has not matured yet.

Temple University Psychologist. Laurence Steinberg also writes, “ It's like turning on the engine of a car without a skilled driver at the wheel.” Kids are more prone to take risks and less likely to think about the consequences.

Alice Park, author of an article on the subject states “It's useful to learn that teenage behavior is not just a matter of willful pigheadedness or determination to drive you crazy--though these, too, can be factors. It might be more useful to help them make up for what their brain still lacks by providing structure, organizing their time, guiding them through tough decisions (even when they resist) and applying those time-tested parental virtues: patience and love.

Copies of article written by Alice Park detailing these discoveries can be obtained online at: www.time.com/time/covers/1101040510/.

DEPRESSION: A PERSONAL CHALLENGE (Continued)

Being depressed and being sad or blue are very different. All of us will experience sadness at many points in our lives as a natural reaction to painful circumstances but depression is different. Sad feelings usually pass within a few days or weeks, once we adjust to the stress. But, if these feelings linger, intensify, and begin to interfere with daily responsibilities, depression may be something to consider. Extreme mood shifts can also be a sign of a problem.

A person struggling with depression also becomes burdened with feelings of being overwhelmed, helpless, hopeless, and exhausted. These types of negative thoughts and feelings can immobilize a person and can make some people feel like giving up. Suicidal thoughts can develop in some cases. It is important to realize that these negative opinions and beliefs are often part of the depression and serves to prevent the person from being able to see that there are better options as well as treatments that can assist them.

People often try to deal with problems themselves. This might work, but often it isn't enough and since there are different types of depression that can differ in length and intensity, getting help can be extremely important. With proper treatment, nearly 80% of those with depression can make significant improvement in their mood and life adjustment. If you have questions about how you are feeling or any concerns about whether you might be depressed contact your primary care physician, the EAP or other qualified medical or mental health professional with your concerns.

To Find out more about Depression:

1. Depression: What is it? What to do about it?
(www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/booklets/depression/depress.html)
2. Website for the National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm>
3. Psychology Information Online: <http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression>
4. General Information on Depression: www.depression-guide.com