



Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

April 2014

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What to Expect From Your First Counseling Session

Taking the initial step in scheduling an appointment with a therapist can oftentimes be the most difficult. However, it is quite common to also experience some anxiety leading up to the first session. Knowing what to expect at your first visit can help to alleviate some of that stress.

When you first arrive at your counseling session, there may or may not be a receptionist. If not, have a seat in the waiting room. Your counselor should be out to introduce him or herself and show you to the office. If you're not sure where to sit, feel free to ask the counselor. You will probably be asked to fill out some paperwork with your general demographic information. You will also be asked to sign some forms. This simply gives the therapist permission to bill a third party, such as your insurance company or Employee Assistance Program (EAP), for services rendered. You will give your permission for the counselor to share with the third party some general information about why you are seeking help, your diagnosis (if you have one), and your goals for the sessions. Your therapist should go over this with you and also address issues of confidentiality. What you and your counselor discuss remains confidential. There are certain exceptions to confidentiality, such as if there is risk of harm to yourself or someone else, or in cases where there is any suspicion of child or elder abuse. Counselors are mandated reporters, so they are required to report these risks to the proper authorities.

The counselor will initially ask you why you are seeking treatment. Expect to discuss your presenting issue, and how it is affecting you emotionally. The counselor may also ask general questions about your background in order to get a better idea of where these issues stem from. It's important to be honest about your concerns and about your history, and a good therapist will never make you feel judged or shamed.

One common misconception is that significant headway in resolving your issue will be made within the first session. The initial session is a time for information-gathering and assessing your situation. Don't expect the counselor to dispense a great deal of advice or feedback during the first session. Instead, the therapist may re-frame or clarify what you've said. He or she may jot down notes while you speak, for help in remembering key points. The counselor will also work with you to determine a goal for your sessions. Think about what it is that you specifically want to achieve from counseling. The goal you choose should be SMART:

- S—Specific
- M—Measurable
- A—Attainable
- R—Realistic
- T—Time-limited

In general, therapy sessions will last between 45 and 55 minutes. After your first session, you will probably have a good idea of whether or not you believe this counselor will be a good match for you. If you are unsure, try to give the counselor another session or two before you make a decision to seek out a different therapist. The first session can sometimes feel awkward or uncomfortable, but by the second or third session, you should know if this provider is a good fit for you.

Source: Chambers, M. (2014). What to expect from your first counseling session. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

Chat Reminder

What to Expect from Counseling

Connect with Deer Oaks and a counselor for a live confidential chat.

When:

April 16, 2014

Where:

www.deeroaks.com

Session Time (CST):

12:15 PM to 12:45 PM





Remember This: You Can Improve Your Memory

Worried because you searched a half hour before finding your reading glasses or car keys? Concerned that it took a couple minutes to remember the name of the familiar-looking woman who said hello to you in the restaurant?

You probably don't have much to worry about, said Dr. George Grossberg, an internationally recognized Alzheimer researcher and director of geriatric psychiatry at Saint Louis University School of Medicine. As annoying as it may be, temporary "tip of the tongue" forgetfulness is one of the changes that happens as we age.

"We tend to let things that are unimportant to us slide," Dr. Grossberg said. "We forget for the moment and it's frustrating. But if the information comes back to us later when we really think about it, we have an annoying little problem that isn't particularly serious.

"If, on the other hand, the information is important to us, isn't there when we want it, and doesn't ever come back to us, that's a more serious problem. The person who has Alzheimer's disease and misplaces her reading glasses probably won't even remember that she needs them to see. She knows the man next to her is familiar, but can't remember that he's her grandson and his name is Mark."

Sometimes people become forgetful because they're on sensory overload.

"In our society, we're all on chronic systems overload. We're multi-tasking – talking on our cell phones, listening for beepers to go off, walking into a store to shop," he said. "It's very easy for certain things to get lost in the shuffle. That's not Alzheimer's disease."

So how do you know if you have a serious problem, and is there anything you can do to bolster your memory? Dr. Grossberg offers this recipe for brain health:

- *Try to figure out what is causing your forgetfulness.* Did you make a wrong turn while driving while you were talking on a cell phone and listening to the radio? Maybe you're trying to do too many things at once and need to put down the phone or turn off the tunes.
- *Exercise your body.* Along with improving your cardiovascular health, exercise increases your "feel-good" brain chemicals, which improves your mood and prevents depression. Depression is a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease.
- *Exercise your mind.* Research shows mental challenge can help rewire connections in the brain, which enhance its activity and make it more resistant to diseases. So find a new hobby, learn to play chess, use your left hand if you're right-handed, or study a foreign language.
- *Take care of yourself.* Controlling risk factors for cardiovascular disease such as high blood pressure, smoking, high cholesterol, and obesity may help decrease your risk.
- *Get a good night's sleep.* Not getting enough deep, restful sleep causes mental impairment later in life. Besides, if you're sleep deprived, you won't think clearly and are more likely to forget. Find out why you're not sleeping if that's a problem.
- *Feed your brain.* Some research shows antioxidant vitamins have protective powers against Alzheimer's disease. The B vitamins, particularly B12, and folate are very important in how brain cells function. Talk with your doctor about taking a supplement if necessary.
- *Check your meds.* Sometimes medications – prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs – can cause memory or concentration problems, which you should discuss with your doctor.

Agility Means Mobility



Want to be able to move around well as you age? Finding it more difficult to get down on your knees (and get up)? Interested in keeping your joints strong and flexible to meet the demands of daily life?

Join the club. Without our ability to get around, all kinds of health problems set in, according to the CDC. MySilverAge.com challenges not just seniors but everyone else to work out to improve mobility with these three (3) functional fitness workouts:

- **Use sandbells to minimize strain.** While exercise equipment such as dumbbells strengthen arms, many weights can place too much strain on the hands. A sandbell—a weighted, contoured fabric bag filled with sand—is an easier alternative for older adults and others who have trouble gripping items, because they offer customizable weight and grip for strength exercises, while minimizing stress and strain on hands.
- **Use interval training for quick bursts of energy.** Children tend to have short bursts of energy followed by periods of rest before they start again. Keep up with the kids with interval training. Walk on a treadmill at a normal speed for 5 minutes, then increase to a more challenging pace for 1 minute and repeat.
- **Use an exercise ball for better balance.** Good balance is vital for safe walking, stair climbing, and avoiding falls. Use an exercise ball in place of a chair during traditional workouts, such as lifting weights, to help improve balance. The instability of the ball forces all the body's muscles to work together to support stability and steady balance.

Health-e headlines™

Food history

In the 1930s, Mexican immigrants were a small segment of the population in the U.S. Today, Mexican cuisine makes up the largest slice of the ethnic foods market. Ground beef tacos, enchiladas, burritos, tostadas, and beans are popular Mexican foods among non-Hispanic Americans, according to the Institute of Food Technologists.

Health-e headlines™

Fill your plate the healthy way

The best way to tackle a food buffet line is to peruse the items first, then start at the healthier end where you find salad and fruit, said Brian Wansink, a behavioral economist at Cornell University. The first three items you encounter will make up about two-thirds of your plate, so make it the good stuff, the researchers advise.

Health-e headlines™

An EAP Reminder

Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.





Clinician's Corner..

Monthly Advice from the Deer Oaks Clinical Team

What to Expect from Counseling



When I'm meeting someone new for the first time and they hear that I'm a psychologist, one of the most frequent things I'm asked is, "Oh, are you analyzing me right now?" I'll usually laugh and make a comment about being off the clock, but it does serve as a reminder that a lot of people have common misconceptions about the role of a therapist, or the goal of going into counseling.

I think that the analogy of a sports coach is a pretty good fit. Could a professional baseball team make it to the World Series without a coach? Well, there's a shot, but think of how much a coach does. He provides his players with insights, tips, and encouragement that they may not have even thought about. He provides guidance, reinforcement, support, and tangible solutions when they make a mistake in play. A counselor does the same exact thing.

Have you ever felt like you were simply stuck? Perhaps a new issue arose in your life and you weren't sure how to best deal with it. Or, perhaps, the issue isn't new, but you've been thinking that maybe it's time to get an outside opinion. Many of us feel this way, and although our friends and family often offer support in their own way, it can be biased since they are looking out for what they think are our best interests. This is how a counselor can be similar to a coach – he or she can be unbiased, objective, supportive, and give you guidance and concrete tips to move through life's road bumps.

EAP counseling is unique in that it is meant to focus on short-term goals. Instead of trying to keep you coming back for years, our goal is to quickly identify what you would like to gain from counseling, set a goal, and achieve those targets within a few sessions. Your counselor will ask a little bit about what's going on in your life, what brought you to counseling, and will then suggest a schedule for your sessions and maybe even some homework assignments to keep you on track between sessions. Counselors are meant to be collaborative and are always open to your suggestions, thoughts, and feedback. Oftentimes, I'm told by clients that they gain from counseling as much as they put into it; counseling isn't a process of passively accepting advice, but instead offering your own suggestions, trying new solutions and learning from what's worked and not worked for you in the past.

And, just a reminder, all EAP sessions are 100% confidential. Nothing that you talk about with your counselor goes back to your employer or anyone else for that matter. So batter up! You'll be surprised at the success short-term counseling can bring.

By:
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How To: Help Aging Parents with Money Management



Are you in the sandwich generation? Those in the sandwich generation are caring for their own children while also assisting aging parents. This can be a financial stress on you, so it's important that you figure out a plan that helps both your parents and yourself. As with most important financial and personal situations, it's essential that you and your spouse be in agreement with how to assist your parents with money management.

Analyzing your parents' financial situation

When helping aging parents with their finances, the first step is to understand exactly what their current financial situation is. This discussion is easier if your parents live close to you, but regardless of their residence, talk to them about their finances in person. Understand what bills your parents currently have and whether they are being paid

on time, as well as what their savings and revenues are. If everything is in order and your parents aren't overwhelmed taking care of things on their own, then you probably only need to check on them periodically.

However, if your parents are having financial difficulties, it's in your family's best interest to identify the problem and work toward a solution. Determine if the problem is with cash flow, or with the work required to actually pay the bills. These are two very different problems, with very different solutions.

When the problem is lacking the financial means

If your parents do not have the financial means to cover their bills, you'll have to consider some options, such as selling their home or taking out a reverse mortgage. There is also some financial assistance for seniors available. The National Council on Aging has set up a Web site that offers information on benefits available to seniors. Look into all options before choosing the one that's best for your family.

When the problem is the work required to pay the bills

Your parents may have the financial means to cover their bills, but could have difficulty with the amount of organization and work required to pay their bills and manage their investments appropriately. In that case, you or another family member may want to consider taking over bill payments. You could set up automatic bill pay for most of the bills, and manually pay the others. For financial advice, consider hiring a personal financial planner.

Regardless of the current situation and solution, you or another family member need to continually assess your parents' financial standing, as it could change even in a short period of time. Keeping the lines of communication open is the best way to ensure you help manage their situation, and avoid any financial penalties from late payments.

About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.