



Let's Talk

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Savoring the Moment

Living in the moment and fully enjoying the good times can have a huge impact on your life.

The motto for some is *carpe diem* (or “seize the day”). A related sentiment you may want to put into practice is to live *la dolce vita* (“the sweet life”).

Taking time to enjoy life

One of the most important aspects of savoring the moment is slowing down. Oftentimes, we rush through life and forget to go slowly enough that we can be fully present in a given moment.

Slowing down allows you to be fully aware and enjoy a beautiful sunset, a loved one's smile, or a good meal with friends. Taking a break from your usual hectic pace can give you time to more deeply experience and appreciate the good times in your life. This can greatly enhance your psychological and emotional well-being.

Relaxing into the moment

Slowing down often starts with deeper, slower breathing. When the breath becomes longer and fuller, we start to bring ourselves more deeply into the moment. A simple breath exercise—like counting how long it takes to inhale and exhale—can be an effective way of slowing down the body and the mind.

Begin this exercise by paying attention to your breathing. Count how long it takes you to breathe in—then how long it takes you to breathe out. Then, begin to make the counts longer for your inhales and exhales. This will help you relax the mind and body, so it will become easier for you to be more present to your experience.

Being aware

Savoring the moment requires two seemingly contradictory skills: staying

relaxed and being attentive. Relaxation enhances our ability to be in the moment, while being focused and aware allows us to fully enjoy our present experience.

One way to practice savoring the moment is to eat mindfully. This is an exercise in slowing down and taking in the details. Try to use all your senses: look at the food—the colors, how it's arranged on the plate; smell your food—enjoy the aroma and anticipation of eating it; take a small bite—savor the taste and feel of the food.

Focusing on the positive

In many ways, living *la dolce vita* is about choosing the positive over the negative. Rather than focusing on the things that might be lacking in a particular experience, highlight the things that bring you happiness and contentment. □



DEALING WITH BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

Bullying doesn't just happen on the playground; it can also occur in the workplace. A recent study found that **35% of Americans have been bullied in the workplace** and 15% have witnessed bullying at work.



Bullying is aggressive, inappropriate, and unreasonable behavior. Workplace bullying:

- Is fuelled by the bully's need to control others
- Can affect the whole office – the personal interests of the bully become more important than the work that needs to get done
- Has repeated behavior – the bullying becomes a pattern of interaction
- Includes behavior that escalates to involve others who will side with the bully
- Has many of the same characteristics of domestic violence
 - the abuser uses intimidation and manipulation to get what he or she wants

Some typical bullying behaviors in the workplace include:

- Threats
- Intimidation
- Humiliation
- Exclusion from your peer group
- Harassment

EVALUATE YOUR SITUATION

Here are some questions to consider:

- Are you being singled out? Or, does this person treat everyone poorly?
- Is it that the person has a difficult personality, but is otherwise reasonable?

DOCUMENT YOUR EXPERIENCE

If you are being bullied, get in the habit of recording the details of when you are bullied. Be sure to document:

- Dates and times
- Actions and details (for example, the sequence of events)
- If any of your coworkers were present to witness the bullying
- Whether or not the person who did the bullying treats any of your coworkers the same way

WORKING IT OUT YOURSELF

If you are being bullied and you don't feel physically threatened, you can assert yourself by:

- Telling the person how their behavior is negatively impacting your work
- Setting boundaries – telling the person what types of behavior you will no longer tolerate
- Warning the person that there will be consequences if his or her inappropriate behavior continues

GETTING YOUR SUPERVISOR INVOLVED

If you feel that you need assistance dealing with bullying, contact your immediate supervisor for help, and, when you talk to him or her, provide the following information:

- Describe what is happening in detail, and provide evidence, if possible, of the bullying
- Explain how the situation is impacting your ability to do your work
- Stress that you want to find a constructive way of addressing the situation

GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

Remember, bullying is not your fault. It is someone else's inappropriate behavior. If you are experiencing bullying and the effects have become overwhelming, contact your EAP. Help is available all day, all week, all year: **1-800-222-0364**, TTY: 1-888-262-7848. □

Signs You Need Help: SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Taking the first step to openly discuss your addiction problem can be difficult, because of the shame and stigma attached to it.

You're not alone. Substance abuse problems affect many lives across a broad spectrum—people of all ages and backgrounds—from middle school students to people in their "golden" years. The substances being abused can also cover an equally wide range—everything from street drugs to improper use of prescription medications.

TAKING AN HONEST LOOK

While it is often difficult to do, taking an honest look at your behavior can put you on the road to change and, ultimately, recovery. The thing to determine is whether or not your use of a substance has become abuse. Ask yourself if your substance use has had a negative impact on your life.

One of the first steps needed for change is an honest evaluation of your own behavior. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Have you ever thought you should cut back on your substance use?
- Has anyone ever told you that you should cut back?
- Have you ever felt guilty or shameful about your substance use?
- Have you ever used a substance in the morning just to be able to function normally?

TAKING A LOOK AT YOUR LIFE

Substance abuse can have a powerful effect on your life. Some warning signs include:

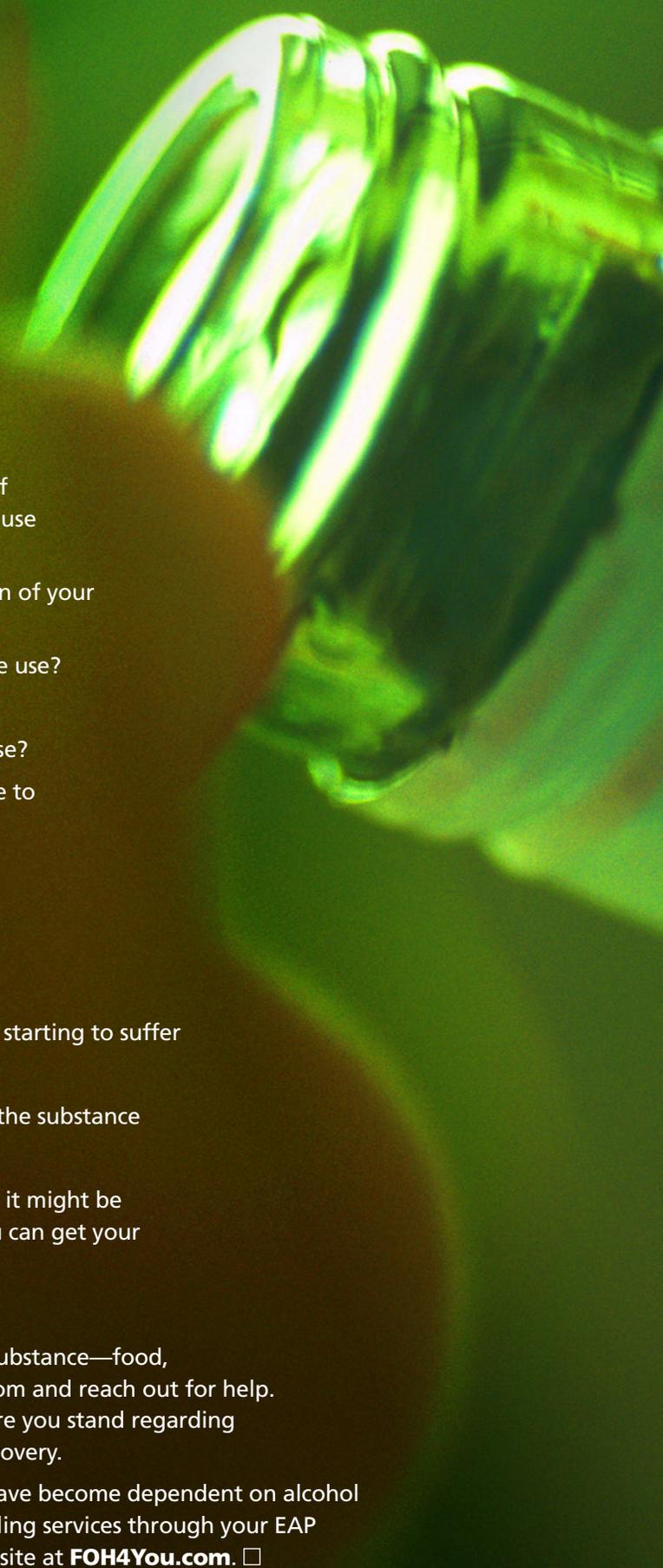
- Missing work, school, or other responsibilities
- Noticing that your relationship with friends and loved ones is starting to suffer
- Needing more of your substance of choice to "feel good"
- Not remembering everything you did under the influence of the substance
- Feeling like you need the substance to feel "normal"

If you've experienced one or more of these signs and you think it might be related to your substance use, talk to a professional so that you can get your life back on track.

SEEKING HELP

If you feel like you have an unhealthy relationship with some substance—food, gambling, alcohol or other drugs—take that first step to freedom and reach out for help. Don't hesitate to find someone who can help you explore where you stand regarding your substance use and point you to the right path for your recovery.

Help is available from numerous sources. If you find that you have become dependent on alcohol or another substance, seek help immediately. There are counseling services through your EAP at **1-800-222-0364**, TTY: 1-888-262-7848, or visit us on the website at **FOH4You.com**. □



READY FOR ANYTHING: FAMILY SAFETY PLAN

Disasters—we hope they never happen. Nevertheless, we need to be prepared for one, should it occur.

Whether it's an earthquake, hurricane, flood, forest fire, or a man-made disaster (like an oil spill or chemical leak), the effects can be catastrophic. In the event that a disaster does occur, you'll be glad you planned ahead, especially if you have to go days without basic necessities like water or electricity, or if you have to evacuate your home.

BE PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

Put a kit together that has things you'll need in an emergency:

– Water

At least a three-day supply for every member of your family. A good rule of thumb is a gallon per person per day—three days for three people would be nine gallons. Don't forget water for pets and a supply for any cooking needs.

– Non-perishable food

Canned foods, peanut butter, dried fruit, nuts, crackers, meal-replacement bars, prepackaged meals that only require water, etc.

– Bowls, plates, and utensils—don't forget a can opener (non-electric) and scissors to open packages

– First aid kit

Bandages, disinfectants, aspirin and other mild pain relievers, tampons or sanitary napkins, and any medicines used regularly by family members. Keep copies of prescriptions handy, too.

A FAMILY MEETING PLACE

If you're unable to return to your home, you'll need to have an agreed upon meeting place. Decide with your family what the most practical meeting place would be. You'll want to take into consideration that there may be clogged roads and overloaded public transportation, so someplace that is in walking distance may be best.

With the meeting place, it's important to have a plan B. Your original meeting place may not be feasible due to the nature of the disaster and you may need a second place to meet. A third place—plan C—is also a good idea.

ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE

Should you be unable to meet at your designated point, you may need to communicate with your loved ones. Remember that local phone lines may be overloaded. You may have to relay a message through an out-of-town friend or relative. Remember to write down the person's number in a low-tech format like on a piece of paper. Social media sites, like Facebook, can also be a way to communicate that you're safe and sound.

A little preparation can go a long way to keeping your family safe, secure, and together during a disaster. □



This newsletter is brought to you by the Federal Occupational Health (FOH) Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP provides assessment, counseling, referral, management consultation, and coaching services to Federal employees and agencies throughout the United States.

For administrative details about the program, contact Chiquita Cooper at 404-562-7950, ext. 125, or email Chiquita.Cooper@foh.hhs.gov.

To visit us on the Web, please go to FOH4You.com.

Help is available all day, all week, all year. **1-800-222-0364**, TTY: 1-888-262-7848.

Let's Talk is available electronically at FOH.hhs.gov/eapnews.

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