



EAP EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

May 2024



Table of Contents

Caring For Your Mental Health
• P. 2

Identity Crisis in a World of
Technology • P. 3

Helping Someone Who Isn't
OK • P. 5

DEER OAKS PRESENTS

May On-Demand Seminar

*Balancing Act -
Strategies for Mental Health*

*Available OnDemand starting May 21st
Access via deeroakseap.com*

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: CARING FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It affects how people think, feel, act, make choices, and relate to others. Mental health is more than the absence of a mental illness—it's essential to your overall health and quality of life. Self-care can play a role in maintaining your mental health and help support your treatment and recovery if you have a mental illness.

ABOUT SELF-CARE

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

Here are some tips to help you get started with self-care:

- **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals, and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Also, limit caffeinated beverages such as soft drinks or coffee.
- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy such as journaling.



- **Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.
- **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down at night, or replay them in your mind.
- **Focus on positivity.** Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to your friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.

Self-care looks different for everyone, and it is important to find what you need and enjoy. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. In addition, although self-care is not a cure for mental illnesses, understanding what causes or triggers your mild symptoms and what coping techniques work for you can help manage your mental health.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Seek professional help if you are experiencing severe or distressing symptoms that have lasted two weeks or more, such as:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Inability to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities

Don't wait until your symptoms are overwhelming. Talk about your concerns with your primary care provider, who can refer you to a mental health specialist if needed.

WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

If you or someone you know is struggling or having thoughts of suicide, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at <https://988lifeline.org/chat>. You also text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741) or visit <https://www.crisistextline.org>. Both services are free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls are confidential. In life-threatening situations, call 911.

Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (Reviewed 2022, December). Caring for your mental health. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov>



IDENTITY CRISIS IN A WORLD OF TECHNOLOGY

WHAT IS AN IDENTITY CRISIS, AND HOW CAN IT OCCUR?

An identity crisis is a developmental life event where a person questions themselves, their purpose, and their place in the world around them. This is a time of deep analysis, reflection, and exploration of various ways a person sees themselves. An identity crisis is not a diagnosable condition; instead, it's more of a point in life where there's an increase in self-reflection.

Forming your own unique identity is one of the most important internal conflicts people experience. This doesn't just happen once in your life either. You might experience it multiple times as the world around you changes and as you grow. Learn to adapt and find out new things about yourself as you go.

While experiencing an identity crisis, you might find yourself pondering over certain questions more than usual, such as these:

- What am I passionate about?
- What are my beliefs?
- Who am I?
- What are my values?
- What is my purpose in life?
- Where do I want to go?

While reflecting on oneself is normal, an identity crisis can be brought about by a big change or increased stress, for example:

- Starting a new relationship
- Ending a relationship
- Starting a family
- Grieving a loved one
- Starting or losing a job
- Moving locations

TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY— SELF-IDENTITY VS. SOCIAL IDENTITY

Technology has changed the way people view themselves and others. It has also changed the way people express themselves. This allows for positive and negative impacts on an individual's self-identity.

A person's self-identity includes the knowledge and understanding of themselves, such as their personality, strengths and weaknesses, and likes and dislikes. Everything that makes a person unique is their self-identity.

Humans are social beings, and they learn from things and people around them to better develop self-awareness and get feedback. It is due to this feedback that social media and technology have largely impacted the development of self-identity in people of all ages. Instead of being validated by people you love, social media has expanded people's exposure to external validation. This doesn't focus on the attributes you value, but instead on what society values. This can lead to developing less self-identity and more social identity; it can even lead to a focus on the uncertainty of your own value and purpose.

HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HEIGHTEN IDENTITY

It's not all bad though. Technology, while increasing people's exposure to external sources of validation, depicts its own version of identity. Many people find social media to be an expression of freedom and exploration, while others find social media a good way to document their lives.



Social media and digital technology have the means to be a creative outlet for some people. Hobbies, such as digital art, editing, and photoshop, and connecting with people of similar interests on group-discussion posts can also add to one's self-identity. This allows them to showcase their strengths and be supported by external sources. Social and digital media also allows the individual to be in control of their own content.

Social and digital media will always have an impact on the lives and identity of individuals, but you can control the impact it has on your self-identity. Questioning yourself and your place in this world is normal; it shows that you're growing and learning.

Source: Veretis. (2021, August 9; Revised 2024 [Ed.]). Identity crisis in a world of technology (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).

HELPING SOMEONE WHO ISN'T OK

Going beyond the conversation of asking if someone is OK is a difficult step to take. It takes a lot of courage to simply ask, "Are you okay?". However, it takes a stack of bravery to go a step further and genuinely help someone who isn't okay.

Initially, when asking if someone is okay, people tend to frame the question in a manner that encourages a positive response rather than a genuine response. This includes, "You're okay, right?" or "You're okay, aren't you?". This positive framing occurs because people are unsure about how to respond and help if the answer is no. However, this isn't really helping your friend; it instead emphasizes the stigma around not addressing or discussing mental illness. Read the tips below, and keep them in mind when helping someone who isn't OK.

TIPS FOR HELPING SOMEONE WHO ISN'T OK

Talk it out with them.

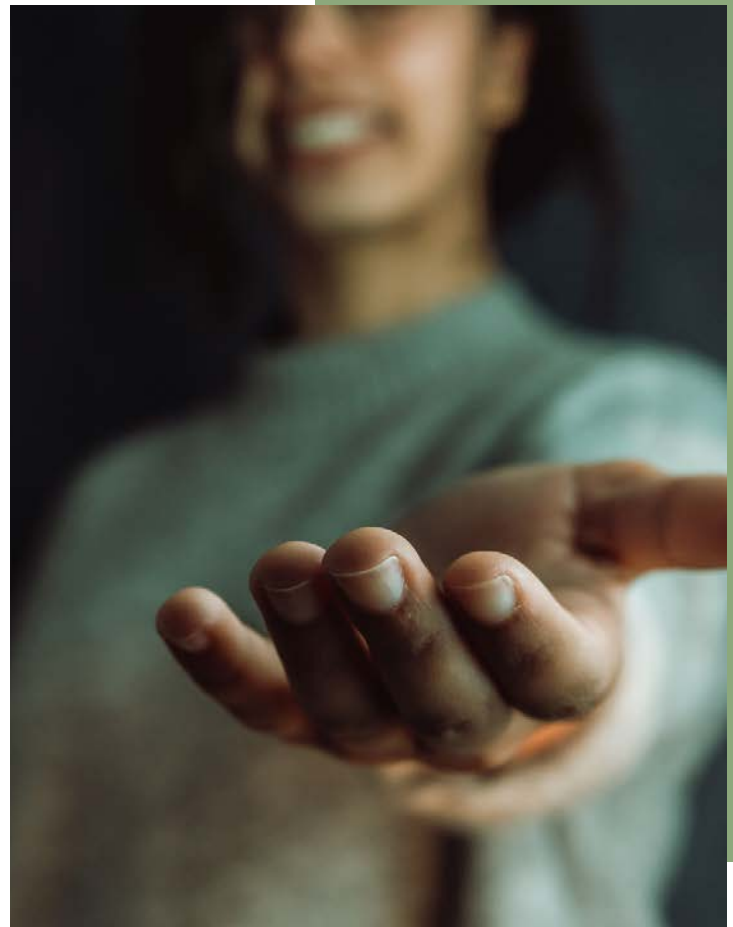
Encourage them to articulate how they are feeling, which is best done through an open conversation, allowing them to freely express their thoughts. This open conversation makes the person feel more comfortable, which in turn makes them more willing to open up to you.

Listen and care.

Through the simple acts of actively listening and caring, real connections and relationships will be formed, which can be critical in today's fast-paced, changing world. Listening can be helpful even without any actions, as it can be a major relief for someone who is going through a tough time to talk about it.

Ask questions.

Taking the approach of asking questions, rather than providing answers and opinions, will be of great benefit to the person not feeling okay. This allows them to share their thoughts, concerns, and feelings freely and without judgment, making them feel heard and less alone in this situation. In the end, developing a solution does not lie with the helper, but generally is the most effective when it's developed by the person themselves.



Ask how you can assist them.

This begins with you letting them know that you are there for them and will support them through it all. Offer them your assistance whenever they require it, but allow them to choose the time and type of help. Don't smother them; some people need space and time before they are willing to accept help.

Suggest self-help strategies.

Putting time aside for self-care is vital for your mental health. As a friend, you can suggest these strategies and even offer to do them together. These include exercise, healthy eating, journal writing, relaxation, or whatever activities you find enjoyable. However, do not force these activities onto the person; suggest them kindly, and allow them to do it on their own accord.

Suggest further help.

Sometimes, just talking and suggesting self-help strategies isn't enough, which is totally all right. There are many professionals and professional services available that can further assist individuals. As a friend, you can check if they are connected to a professional support service or network. This is particularly critical, as these people need to know they are not alone and that there's further support available. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Helpline is a 24-hour support service (<https://988lifeline.org>), or in an emergency call 911. Additionally, directing them to support networks gives them the opportunity to read about other people who have gone through a tough patch; this hopefully reduces their feelings of loneliness and provides them hope for the future.

Consider your own mental health.

Supporting a friend or a family member through a tough time can be difficult and draining. It's essential that you consider your own mental health and wellbeing throughout the process. This means constantly checking up on your state of wellbeing, assessing your own mindset, and ensuring you look after yourself and your needs. If at any time you feel overwhelmed, depressed, highly stressed, or drained, you should consider seeking help and support from either a close friend, family, or a professional support network.

Remember that a conversation could drastically change or even save a life. The simple gesture of asking if "you're okay?" is the first step to helping. This next step—the step of helping—is the one that really makes the difference.

Source: Veretis. (2020, September 29; Revised 2024 [Ed.]). Helping someone who isn't OK (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).