

## What Does Allen EAP offer?

Allen Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services are a free benefit provided by your employer to help you and your family deal with life's problems and the stress caused by these problems.

You can talk to an EAP Counselor about:

- Job stress
- Depression or anxiety
- Family or marital conflicts
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Relationship difficulties
- Grief & loss issues
- Parenting issues
- Financial Problems

### When should I call Allen EAP?

Does a problem occupy a lot of your time? Does it interfere with your normal activities at work or at home? Have symptoms persisted for more than two weeks? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, it's time to get help.

### How do I make an appointment with Allen EAP?

To schedule a confidential appointment, call (319) 235-3550 or toll-free at 1-800-303-9996, Monday - Thursday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday. Identify yourself as part of your company's Employee Assistance Program. We'll schedule an appointment to meet your needs. Office, phone and telehealth (virtual) counseling sessions available.

### What if it's an Emergency?

If a personal crisis occurs when our office is closed, call (319) 235-3550 or toll-free at (800) 303-9996. An EAP counselor will contact you within one hour of your call to help you stabilize the situation.

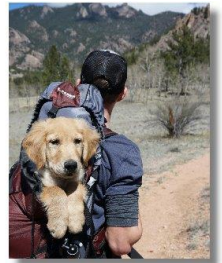
## International Quality of Life

**There's always** something you can do to improve the quality of your life. Welcome to International Quality of Life Month. It's a simple observance and reminder that encourages people to evaluate and enhance their physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. How busy is your life? In the hustle, it's easy to overlook areas of our lives that require improvement. As humans, we tend to merely cope with life's challenges rather than actively seek change to make things better. So, engaging in self-reflection during Quality of Life Month helps remind us that being intentional in the pursuit of happiness and being proactive—taking action—rather than taking life as it comes will actually make life qualitatively better. What tweak or correction in your life might be the one



## Investing in Experiences over Material Possessions

**Research shows** that investing in experiences leads to greater and more enduring happiness compared with purchasing material items. The belief is that experiences create lasting memories and foster social connections that contribute to longer-term happiness and personal growth. For example, you're more likely to frequently and fondly recall a camping trip experience as a child than a toy, both of which brought happiness. While possessions seem to lose novelty over time, experiences stick around and become part of our identity, and the stories we tell about them add to our sense of fulfillment. This year, try embracing new experiences and reflect on whether they truly enhance your overall happiness. If the discovery turns true, create a new habit that will enrich your life.



## What You Should Know about Mini-Stroke

**A mini-stroke**, clinically known as a transient ischemic attack (TIA), is a temporary disruption of blood flow to the brain that results in stroke-like symptoms. Although TIAs do not cause permanent damage, they serve as critical warning signs for potential future strokes. About one in three people will have a larger, more serious stroke within a year following a TIA. Symptoms of a TIA last only a few minutes, but they are similar to a larger stroke and include weakness, numbness or paralysis in the face, slurred speech, trouble understanding others, temporary blindness, dizziness, and loss of balance or coordination. See a doctor without delay if you experience a TIA.



## Loneliness...at Work

**Employee loneliness** is a growing

problem in the workplace. It doesn't mean being physically or remotely isolated or stuck in a back office.

Workplace loneliness refers to feeling disconnected and emotionally detached from coworkers despite being

surrounded by people all day. If you feel like you are simply "going through the motions" at work, lacking meaningful social connections, and experiencing a diminished desire to engage or collaborate on projects, this sense of feeling invisible or undervalued can harm productivity and mental health.

Loneliness can happen when social connections don't meet our personal needs, even in busy office settings. This often includes feeling like you can't be your true self, which makes it seem like no one really knows who you are. A recent survey found one in five employees feels lonely on a typical workday. Try this engagement fix: Decide to build relationships with coworkers rather than leaving it all up to chance. Initiate conversations and show genuine interest in others' experiences. Look for common interests to discuss. Invite a colleague for coffee or lunch. Small efforts to connect with others can make your workplace feel more supportive and reduce feelings of loneliness. Try talking to your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for advice on feeling more connected at work. Remember, these feelings can sometimes be linked to depression, and your EAP can help figure out whether that's a factor in your workplace loneliness.



## Respond Better in a Workplace Crisis

**Workplace crises**—violence, accidents, equipment breakdowns, or incidents that damage mission, function, and reputation—happen. Know how to support your organization in a crisis so that you avoid contributing to confusion and chaos through miscommunication. 1) Don't panic. To avoid panic, use a tactic called "presence of mind." For a few seconds, focus not on the crisis but on yourself. Decide not to panic, take a few slow breaths, and count to ten slowly if needed. This helps stop the cascade of physiological reactions known as the "fight or flight" response. 2) If your organization has protocols and procedures for dealing with a crisis, be familiar with them so when a crisis happens you can act as needed. 3) Avoid sharing rumors. Increased anxiety can lead to rumor sharing as a coping mechanism and as a way of "filling in the gaps" when accurate information is scarce. 4) If safety is an issue, make it the priority in a crisis. 5) Maintain confidentiality. Don't share sensitive information about the crisis outside official channels.



## Make Your New Year's Resolution a Magnificent Obsession

**Make your** New Year's resolution a "magnificent obsession" (MO) so it drives you forward with continuous action and gives you a consuming passion for achievement. On the other hand, a goal is also important, but achieving it may require encouragement, rewards, or accountability as keys to success. An MO is fueled by intense passion—you don't need reminders to stay on course or have to revisit the "why" to reinspire and motivate you. That's because the MO itself is compelling, energizing, and nonnegotiable. To transform your goal into an MO, ignite massive passion, reexamine your "why," expand the goal's importance, link to something bigger than yourself, and tie it to a purpose that has impact for others you care about. When you feel your goal is fueled by inspiration and not self-discipline then you've got it!



## Stress Tips from the Field: Journey through Forest Bathing

**Forest bathing** is a practice that involves immersing oneself in the sights, sounds, and smells of a forest. Originating in Japan during the 1980s (called "shinrin-yoku"), forest bathing encourages individuals to slow down, be present, and connect with nature through mindful sensory engagement rather than merely hiking or exercising. To practice forest bathing, make use of all your senses—sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. (Regarding taste, if the forest doesn't offer a safe means of tasting something, just substitute a carried snack to savor.) Forest bathing can reduce stress levels by lowering cortisol (the stress hormone), improve mood, enhance immune function, and lead to improved cardiovascular health by lowering blood pressure and heart rate.



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EAPworks is published quarterly by UnityPoint Health – Allen Hospital for Allen EAP clients to provide reliable information on health-related topics. It is not intended to provide medical advice on personal health matters, which should be obtained directly from a physician.