



The Three C's: Change, Conflict & Communication

Executive Assistants Group

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Tom Sweeney, CEAP
Employee Assistance Program
Department of Enterprise Services

Change, Stress and Distress

Change:

To make different; transform or convert

1. Situational: one event causing stress or distress
2. Cumulative: additional events impacting you
3. Traumatic: situation with magnified impact on you

Stress:

The body's response to demand: physical, psychological and emotional

1. Eustress: everyday stress of life
2. Distress: feeling “all stressed out”



Impact of Distress

1. **Physical:** increased heart rate, blood pressure and perspiration; headache and GI issues; illness and disease
2. **Mental:** impaired decision-making, problem-solving, concentration, focus, attention and memory
3. **Emotional:** uncertainty, fear, depression, anxiety; grief and sadness; powerless, hopeless and helpless; frustration, anger
4. **Behavioral:** isolation; temper tantrums; violence; misuse of food, medication, substances, computer, etc.
5. **Workplace:** performance and/or attendance issues and/or interpersonal conflicts



Coping

The ABC approach:

Activating stressor – event or situation

Beliefs – thoughts and perceptions about A

Consequences – physical, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal

Plan – consistent and dedicated action

Primary issues:

- Responsibility and accountability
- Challenge or problem
- Chosen or imposed
- Control or influence

What fits for you?



Another Approach

Situation management:

- requires action to influence outcomes and cope effectively in stressful situations

Self-control:

- requires taking personal responsibility for actions and reactions to a situation



Effectiveness

Situation Management:

- problem-solving and decision-making skills
- task and time management skills
- communication and conflict resolution skills

Self-Control:

- perceptions, attitude and behavior
- thoughts, feelings and behavior
- resilience



Resilience

- Ability to bounce back
- Focus on individual responsibility and accountability

- Key qualities:
 1. Positive
 2. Focused
 3. Flexible
 4. Organized
 5. Proactive

- Stress Management will increase resiliency
 1. Diet and nutrition
 2. Exercise, movement, stretching, breathing
 3. Social support – personal and professional



Your Life

“Civilization exists by geological consent subject to change without notice.” Will Durant



Balance (as best as possible)
Positive, Focused, Flexible, Organized, Proactive



Resilience Exercise

1. Your mission, should you accept it:

Examine how you treat your mind, body and spirit

2. Your responsibility:

Change what is unhealthy

Strengthen what is healthy

3. Your purpose:

Improve your quality of life

Improve your coping with change, stress and distress

Take care of yourself like no one else can

4. Your payoff:

Professional - _____

Personal - _____



Conflict in the Workplace

1. Employee specific concerns
2. Personal Stress carry-over
3. Burn-out, Compassion Fatigue
4. Employee Personality conflicts
5. Workgroup concerns



Employee Specific Concerns

- Issues:

1. Reorganizations and lay-offs
2. Harassment, discrimination and rights' violation
3. WAC, RCW, policy/procedure and best practices

- Coping:

1. What's happening and who's involved?
2. What's my part in this situation?
3. What do I have control over? What can I influence?
4. Develop an action plan.

- Should I consult?

Mgmt, HR, ADA, Union, AG, HRC, DES, EAP



Personal Stress Carryover

- Self-Inventory:

1. Do my personal problems “leak” or “flood” into the job?
2. Do I “unload” my stress on my coworkers?
3. Do I practice self-abuse or self-care?
4. Are expectations of myself and others realistic?
5. Am I responsible/accountable for my attitude, words, actions?
6. Is it time to consult with EAP?



Unique Workplace Dynamics

- **Burn-Out:** “exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration”
- **Compassion Fatigue:** “state of exhaustion and dysfunction as a result of prolonged exposure to secondary trauma or a single intensive event”
- **Loss:** security, competence, relationships, sense of direction, territory



Personality Conflicts

- Do you feel:
 - misunderstood
 - unappreciated
 - hurt or fearful
 - anxious or stressed
 - frustrated or irritated
 - angry or resentful
 - betrayed or defensive
- Do you act:
 - removed or uninvolved
 - negative or inflexible
 - overly opinionated
 - sarcastic or disruptive
 - argumentative
 - hostile or belligerent
 - untrusting or cynical



Work Group Concerns

1. Team style:

- Goals and expectations
- Stress and morale levels

2. Problem-solving style:

- Negotiation and compromise
- Agreement vs. consensus

3. Conflict style:

- Interaction and personality styles
- Problem or solution approach

4. Management style:

- Micro or macro
- Aggressive, passive or assertive



Communication in the Workplace

1. Passive:

- Uninvolved and hopes someone will say what she/he really wants to say
- Based on fear and anxiety, manipulation and/or lack of skills

2. Aggressive:

- Angry, hostile, berating, sarcastic, dismissive, disruptive
- Based on fear and anxiety, manipulation and/or lack of skills

3. Assertive:

- Minimal fault-finding or finger-pointing
- Listens to and talks with another
- Helps others find solutions, set goals and develop action plan
- Based on confidence, knowledge, respect and acquisition of skills



Coping on the Job

- Realize that your workplace has changed
- Develop realistic perceptions and expectations
- Use reliable sources of information
- Act to diffuse job concerns when they occur
- Use appropriate communication and conflict resolution skills
- Practice responsible and respectful interpersonal skills
- Develop coping strategies and a plan to be healthy
- Consult with your WA State EAP



WA State EAP

Pro-Health and Pro-Performance

Dealing with life's twists and turns?

Contact "your" EAP

Toll Free: 877.313.4455

Olympia: 360.753.3260

www.hr.wa.gov/EAP

