

# livingwell

## WHEN RELATIONSHIPS START TO UNRAVEL

It's easy to take our frustrations out on our partner, especially when the demands of work and family seem to be pulling us in multiple directions. Whether we are caring for an aging parent, small children or precocious teens, or have even just been spending too much time at the workplace - the first thing that seems to suffer is our relationship. We may find that we're irritated with or hurt by our partner all too often, or may just have a sense that we're drifting apart.

For millions of couples, this scenario may sound all too familiar. You know that it's important to spend one-on-one quality time together, and that any solid relationship needs nurturing. It's just that arranging some alone time can be a challenge when other responsibilities seem to take priority. The truth is, though, that doing so is essential to a long-term, happy relationship. More often than not, your relationship must take precedence or it will start to fall apart. Here are some helpful suggestions for making all of it work:

- If you have children, find a babysitter you can count on, and set up a 'retainer' relationship with the sitter so that you commit to an outing with your partner once a week.
- Explore shared interests, such as visiting a new town or trying a new sport, artistic endeavour or weekend spa.
- Plan a getaway with your kids to a location that offers childcare service.
- Find different ways to handle conflict that don't include angrily criticizing or blaming your partner. Present the issue as a problem the two of you need to solve together.



- Don't let work-related stress weigh on your relationship: turn to each other for advice, support and empathy - but know when to leave work at the office and benefit from down time.
- Look for the positive. Find reasons to compliment your partner or show your appreciation for the little things he or she does.
- If you aren't getting what you need from your partner - let him or her know. Communicate rather than internalizing your frustrations. Be honest with each other and work together to find solutions.

### TAKING PROBLEMS TO THE NEXT LEVEL: SEEKING HELP

At some point you may want to step back and look at your relationship objectively. Are you where you want to be as a couple? Are you both happy or do you need more from each other and the relationship than you're currently getting? If your efforts to

support and accommodate one another aren't working, it's important to recognize that you don't have to cope with the problem alone. With the help of a counsellor who specializes in relationship-based counselling, you can work together to overcome the challenges you are experiencing in your relationship, and develop new, healthy strategies for improving it.

Call FGI's EAP for more information and counselling services. Specialists are available to work with you on a wide range of issues including depression, marital and family issues, addiction, work-related problems and personal issues...




**This service is available at no cost to you and is paid for by your employer.**

**Call 1-800-268-5211**

### Inside...

- ▶ Taking back your life: overcoming anxiety
- ▶ Building better relationships at work
- ▶ Taking control of healthy weight living



There are many everyday situations in life that can generate anxiety. Situations like making a speech in front of a large group of people or driving on a busy highway during a blizzard can cause us a great deal of concern. In times of high stress like these, hormones, including adrenaline, are released into our blood stream. The heart starts to beat faster, breathing becomes rapid and we tremble and sweat. More often than not, these symptoms are actually a good thing because they allow us to focus our attention on the task at hand, helping us to cope or accomplish what we set out to do. That's why all great stage actors or professional athletes often say that they actually *like* being a little anxious before their performance because they know that this will help them to concentrate.

For people with anxiety disorders, however, these types of physical responses and symptoms are triggered at the slightest provocation and result in bouts of anxiety - sometimes to the point where the sufferer is immobilized with fear. Anxiety disorders are the most common of all mental health conditions and can impact an individual's health, personal relationships, work performance and quality of life.

## **IN FACT, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS. THESE INCLUDE:**

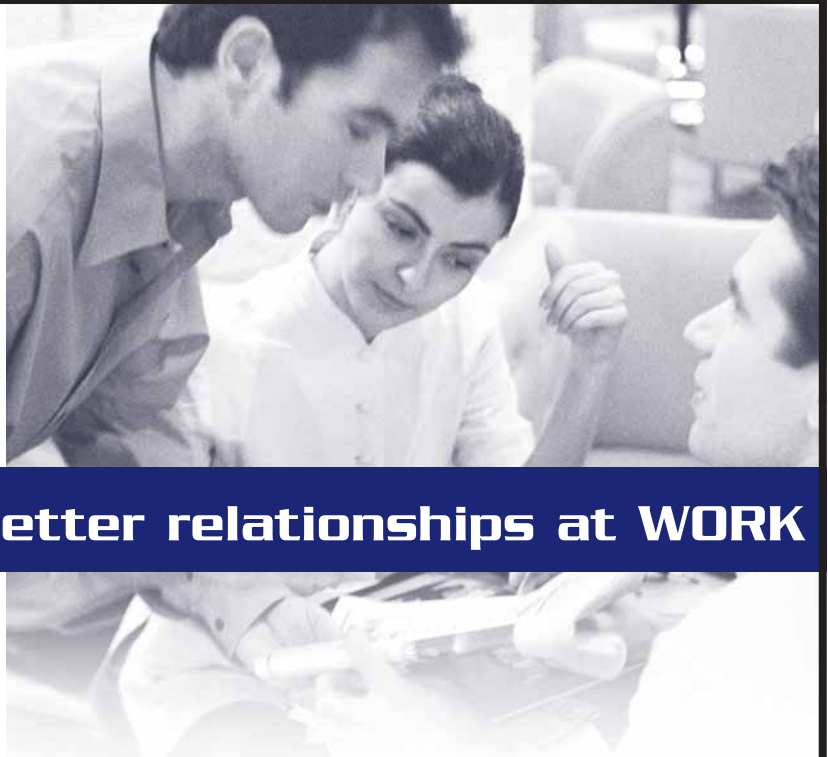
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder.** This is much more than normal anxiety as the sufferer is consumed with exaggerated worry and tension, even though there is little or nothing to worry about.
- **Social phobia**, or social anxiety disorder, involves a chronic fear of people, social situations and excessive self-consciousness.
- **Panic disorders.** Sufferers experience sudden, irrational bouts of panic and feelings of danger or impending doom.
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)** includes frequent, repeated thoughts leading to repeated or persistent rituals (such as locking the door several times to make sure that it's locked).
- **Specific phobias** are irrational fears of situations or things that present little or no danger - such as heights, closed-in places, flying or spiders.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder** involves reliving a traumatic event (e.g., seeing someone harmed or involved in a terrible accident) and feelings of numbness and disinterest in daily activities.

## **TREATMENT OF ANXIETY DISORDERS**

The good news is that anxiety disorders can be treated. Quite often, professional counselling can help with identifying the "triggers" that can lead to anxiety. With this knowledge, the individual can then begin to work on developing new and better ways to cope with these events. If, however, the symptoms are intense, severe and/or chronic, a combination of counselling and prescribed medication is the best form of intervention. Given the potential impacts that anxiety can have on one's quality of life, it's important to get help early because this condition can be effectively treated.

For more information or to make an appointment with a counsellor, call **1-800-268-5211.**

The dynamics that exist in the workplace are multi-layered - on a regular, sometimes daily basis, we must interact with our superiors, our colleagues, within and between departments, and often across cultures and time zones. Given this complexity, most of us are required to frequently adjust the way we communicate and interact with people - which can be a challenging task. Therefore, it shouldn't be surprising when we are misunderstood or step on a few toes along the way. So why are we caught off guard when we discover that we've offended someone or overstepped our boundaries? Probably because practicing effective communication requires a lot of exactly that - *practice*. Consider the following advice when you want to improve your relationships at work or just avoid unnecessary conflict:



## **BUILDING** better relationships at WORK

- Not all co-worker relationships have an established context. Keep in mind that you probably don't know what kind of pressures the other person is under before you press too hard for action or a response.
- Think about the way you phrase a question or an answer before you communicate it. Ask yourself if it's polite, if the timing is right, or if you might be better off not saying it at all.
- If you're confronted with a potentially challenging situation, talking face-to-face is almost always more effective than using email.
- Realize that most people don't like to be told they're wrong. Find a way to make some positive as well as negative points, or to phrase your comments in a way that "saves face" for your colleague.
- Don't feed a co-worker's anger. Give yourself a day to think about it and step back from the problem in order to gain some objectivity.
- Demonstrate that you're flexible. Communicate that you'll be supportive no matter what decision is reached.

Be aware that it's okay to acknowledge intense feelings, and that there are ways to express your own anger and frustration in a very constructive way. For example, when you're feeling frustrated with a colleague at work, rather than keeping things inside and allowing this feeling to fester (which can only lead to further stress in the relationship), you can let the person know what's on your mind, in a positive way by simply filling in the blanks of the following sentence: "I feel \_\_\_\_\_, when you \_\_\_\_\_, because\_\_\_\_\_.

This way, you take responsibility for your feelings (rather than blaming someone else), and the other person gets clarity on the things that are troubling you about the relationship.

### **WHEN CO-WORKER CONFLICT CONTINUES...**

If there's no end in sight and you're becoming over-anxious, reluctant to go to work - or even fearful for your job, contact a professional counsellor for additional support and advice on how to effectively deal with conflict. Remember that the EAP is a completely confidential service and is available at no cost to you.

**Call 1-800-268-5211**

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# 5 STEPS TO HEALTHY WEIGHT & A HEALTHY FAMILY

Maintaining a healthy weight throughout life, without resorting to dead-end fad diets, can be challenging. A growing number of Canadian adults appear to be losing the battle of the bulge - Statistics Canada reports a 24% increase in obesity since 1995. And as countless female "boomers" enter menopause, they will also be at risk to put on excess weight. Alarming, obesity among children and youth is also reaching epidemic proportions. Recent studies have revealed that over the last 15 years, the obesity rate is up 50% among 6-11 year olds, and 40% among 12-17 year old adolescents. As for our US neighbours, the current estimate is that 1 out of 4 American children is obese! The truth is, healthy weight living begins at home. Parents endorsing a healthy weight lifestyle can really make a difference for the entire family. Children will be more willing to join in when the whole family is committed to the pleasure of healthy eating and the fun of active living.

FGI now provides 2 new programs for winning the healthy weight challenge:

- Healthy Weight for a Healthy Family
- Winning the Menopause Weight Challenge

For more information & assistance in helping your family lose weight, speak with our registered dietitian who will personalize a plan for your family. You will receive a pedometer to help you count the positive steps you're taking.

## 5 STEPS to a Healthy Weight and a Healthy Family

1.



Make healthy weight lifestyle a priority for you and your family.

2.



Create a healthy weight home environment, keeping it well stocked with tasty nutritious food.

3.



Eat a balanced breakfast every day and make dinner a family affair, as often as possible.

4.



Introduce new foods regularly and give a new twist to old favourites. Variety is key to eating well and, variety is the spice of life!

5.



Get moving. Wear your pedometer and challenge yourself to increase the number of steps you take in a day! Physical activity will make you feel better and burn calories from occasional treats.

For more information or assistance with any counselling or WorkLife balance needs, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It's a free, confidential service for you and your family.

Call **1-800-268-5211**

(in English)

**1-800-363-3872**

(en français)

You can also visit our website at [www.fgiworldmembers.com](http://www.fgiworldmembers.com) for more information and resources.

We welcome any suggestions you may have about topics you'd like to see covered in LivingWell. Please contact **Barbara Jaworski**, Director, WorkLife Solutions by e-mailing [bjaworski@fgiworld.com](mailto:bjaworski@fgiworld.com), writing to the address below, or calling her at FGI at: **1-800-263-4533**

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