Take the Employee Frontline Survey!

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February is National Black History Month

In February, we celebrate National Black History Month, to recognize and honor the experience and achievements of Black Americans. Each year the Association for the Study of African American Life and Heritage designates a theme for Black History Month. This year's theme is “African Americans and the Vote” to mark the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment which established the right of women to vote, as well as the 150th anniversary of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 which technically gave Black men the right to vote. In actuality, African Americans living in the South were almost entirely disenfranchised due to the passage of laws that erected barriers to voting, from poll taxes to literacy tests. You can read more about the prolonged struggle for African American voting rights that continued through the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and beyond.

Here are some additional ways to commemorate Black History Month:

- Explore the countless stories and accomplishments of Black Americans, including the famous (such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Jackie Robinson) and the remarkable but less-well-known, such as William Powell (aviation pioneer), Mary Church Terrell (champion of racial equality and women’s suffrage), Bill Traylor (important 20th century visual artist, born into slavery) and Audre Lorde (poet, writer and civil/women’s/LGBTQ rights activist).
- View one of the Smithsonian Institution’s Learning Lab Collections about Black History.
- Check out the NAACP’s list of “28 Ways to Celebrate Black History Month.”
- Bookmark and visit the Equal Justice Initiative’s online “A History of Racial Injustice” calendar, which spotlights significant (yet some lesser known) events and incidents in our nation’s history.
- Try out a new podcast, such as Uncivil (regarding the Civil War and the many important stories that were left out of our history books) or 1619 (observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in the U.S.).
- Read a book with your children, such as Black is a Rainbow Color by Angela Joy, illustrated by Ekua Holmes, or one of the Coretta Scott King Book Award recipients.

With so much to learn, honor, and remember, we invite you to celebrate black history and culture all year-round.
Use EAP for Acute Stress

EAP counselors do more than help employees solve problems. They also possess serious listening and empathy skills, and offer emotional support that provides relief from the anguish you may be feeling. Whether your troubles are caused by a life crisis, a difficult time, or even a grim personal circumstances, don’t dismiss asking the EAP for help even if you believe “the EAP can do nothing to help me in this situation.” Don’t live in fear, lose sleep, feel physically ill, or experience a constant sense of foreboding doom by “going it alone.” Instead, partner with the EAP for support that can help you through a difficult period.

Deciding to Stop Enabling

Have you decided to stop enabling someone you love who has a serious or chronic personal problem (for example, an addiction)? Enabling, despite its harm, is nothing to feel ashamed about because it is a natural response to protecting someone you love from the serious consequences of their behavior. The key is making the change—switching to healthier and purpose-driven detachment that facilitates your recovery from enabling and may influence change in your loved one. Get support for your decision. It’s a big one that will test your resolve. Counseling and support groups can make it dramatically easier. So, talk to your EAP to discover a self-help group that matches your needs. No other mentoring or teaching format has been shown to produce more rapid and certain change.

Should You See a Therapist?

If sadness, grief, fear, and conflict are common human experiences, when is it time to see a psychotherapist? Consider these four broad sets of circumstances: (1) Fear or other powerful emotions that follow traumatic events and relentless worry or intrusive thoughts are creating distress and disrupting otherwise pleasurable activities and experiences. Why go: Constant emotional anguish can contribute to headaches, weight loss, digestive problems, and strain on valued relationships. This can compound the primary issues of concern, thereby causing more harm. (2) Those who care about you start expressing concern about your health and suggest counseling. Why go: Others often see changes in our behavior and demeanor before we recognize them ourselves. However, these individuals may not verbalize concerns immediately and might wait until more acute or repeated symptoms occur. (3) Conflicts with those you love are too frequent and outnumber the positive experiences you once enjoyed. Why go: Frequent conflict builds resentment, which can contribute to a belief that differences are not reconcilable. Conflicts may become more difficult to resolve or resist resolution as time passes. (4) You’re using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress. This one is a bit tricky because the starting point is not psychotherapy but an assessment by an addiction medical expert or other professional to rule out addictive disease. Why go: Life problems are difficult to resolve when worsened by substance use, which might indicate a primary disease process, not secondary to distressing problems. If you relate to any of these scenarios, consider contacting EAP. An EAP counselor can help you find a therapist in your area that takes your insurance and meets your needs.

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