



# Behavioral Health Services

## Employee Assistance Program

Call for More Information or  
Professional Confidential Counseling  
301.766.7600 or 1.800.635.2774

## Understanding and Becoming Empowered

The self-empowered individual will tell you it takes practice to become self-empowered. Yes, practice! Practice making conscious choices and taking positive, healthy actions, whether they are mental, emotional or physical. Review the following empowering habits and ask yourself the question: are your choices self-empowering?

### **1. Familiarize yourself with your internal dialog and replace the negative with positive self-talk.**

It has been said that our minds think at 500 to 600 words per minute! It is safe to say that not all those words are positive or empowering. Start listening—you may be surprised. Being aware of the times and situations that you commonly engage in negative self talk can be empowering. After all, once you are aware, you can then choose to substitute positive, confident and empowering thoughts.

### **2. Avoid blaming external forces for feeling bad and negative thoughts.**

If you are stuck in traffic and frustrated, do you blame the other drivers, the city for poor planning, etc.? Why? You have the ability to choose your reactions. Perhaps you could now choose to make time stuck in traffic more useful. What are three actions or beliefs you could adjust to change your reactions to commonly upsetting situations? For example, in traffic, always have one of your favorite tapes available to listen to, or leave earlier or later to avoid the traffic.

### **3. Avoid blaming yourself for not being in control or not doing it all right.**

If someone asked you directions to a place you have never been would you ridicule yourself for not knowing? No! You would do your best to direct them or suggest a place they could get directions. Yet, many people looking for directions in their own life will beat themselves up for not knowing the way. It takes time to get familiar with the route, even if one has "been there and done that." Be patient and realize that detours will occasionally come up.

### **4. Be conscious of playing the victim and martyr roles.**

Too often empowerment is lost playing the "poor me" role. The victim and martyr game usually boils down to manipulation or is a form of self-abuse, both of which stem from fear. We beat ourselves up because we think we deserve it for some reason. "If I were more..." or "If only I did this or that," then we would deserve better. Or, maybe we are trying to ensure getting our way through manipulation: Making others feel bad, so they will give in to our wants.

### **5. Recognize your payoffs for being stuck.**

Investigate what you get out of staying in a negative situation. There are often several. For example: when you know you need to let go of a dead end job and find something better, but resist. What benefits are you getting out of not going out and finding something better? Some might be you won't have to confront fears, you will not waste time looking for another job, you do not have to explain a lack of education or why you are leaving the other job, you will not have to listen to others ask you why, or maybe you are afraid you might get another job that is worse. Once you recognize your payoffs, you will have the ability to notice patterns and develop effective ways to deal with the negative payoffs.



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### **6. Determine what you want and act on it.**

Would you hire an employee then set them to work without giving them instructions or training? They would aimlessly shuffle papers, get bored and likely not accomplish what you wanted. Instructions and a plan, or at the very least a goal and practice is needed. The same is true with new situations and behaviors.

Additionally, do you find you say things like "If only I had this, I could do that?" Stop waiting for things to be handed to you. Do not sit back and wait for life to happen to you. Avoid the "if only" trap and take the needed steps to create what you want.

### **7. Be aware of the way you communicate to others.**

Pay attention to the way you interact with people. Do you find complaining and criticizing is common? Remember like attracts like. Do you really want to spend your time with people whose main focus is negativity? Choose positive people and conversations! You will feel stronger and more empowered and it helps ward off negativity.

### **8. Notice the gifts and lessons in life, especially in bad situations.**

If you hate your job for instance, remind yourself of the things you have learned, friends you have gained, or the other pluses. This will empower you by allowing you to see the positive in the situation and other situations.

### **9. Act as if and you will become.**

It has been said "Act as if and you will become." Try it. It really works. Put your chin up, smile, think positive thoughts, remember happy times, notice all you have to be grateful for, and you will feel lighter, happier, and more empowered.

Whereas, if you frown, groan, grumble, focus on everything wrong in the world and think back at things you think you did wrong, how could you not feel down, lethargic, and negative?

**Self-empowerment takes practice. But, the rewards make it worth it!**