



EMPLOYEE

ASSISTANCE NEWSLETTER

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ASK, DON'T TELL: HOW TO HELP SOMEONE IN GRIEF

Cary Imeson, EAP Counselor

As therapists in an Employee Assistance Program we are privileged and challenged to work with many clients on a variety of issues. Perhaps one of the most challenging is grief. So often what our grieving clients want/need to talk about is not only their own overwhelming loss and sadness, but how difficult their interactions have been with family, friends, co-workers who genuinely want to help, but seem to say all the wrong things. Psychotherapist, author, and grief advocate Megan Devine speaks and writes powerfully and eloquently on the subject of grief. Her Facebook page *Refuge In Grief*, and her book *It's Ok That You're Not Ok* are tremendous resources for those who are grieving, and for those who need better tools to support a grieving friend or family member.

The following is an excerpt from a 2010 blog post on her website www.refugeingrief.com where Megan provided insight into how to help a grieving person:

Being with someone in pain is hard. But we can't talk about what helps without also saying what does not. I want to show you what it's like for someone in pain to hear platitudes—those things we say when we don't know what to say. And maybe, just maybe, this story will help you find a different way to stand in the discomfort of how hard it is to help.

I just came back from meeting a retired minister who has a beautiful farm. She lives near my folks, and had heard about the sudden and tragic death of my partner. I will admit I had some—expectations. I expected that, if I brought up my partner's death, she would have something wise or comforting to say, something about life and love. She did not.

The minister and I talked for a few minutes. After awhile, I brought up the subject of loss. She did not mention her faith at all, and the only thing she had to say about love is that I will find someone else, that Matt would expect me to; she has heard my mother talk about him, and she knows what he would want. And then she reminded me that the cycle of life goes on.



Really? Years as a minister, and this is the best you can do? Tell me I will love someone else, eventually, as though that is my main concern right now? The best you can do is tell me what someone you have never met would want for me, as though I myself wouldn't know?

I realize I expected her, as a minister, to "know better." I expected her to be able to stand there with me, even as a nearly complete stranger, and—I don't know—ask. Ask about god, ask about faith. Ask about love. Wonder with me about how this will unfold. Not give me useless, pandering platitudes about what great things await me "in the future," and how life will always go on.

Why is it that so many people feel that the best way to comfort me now is to tell me I will not always feel this way, that I will move on, that Matt would want me to, that I will have someone else, that I should remember the "cycle of life" and realize all is as it should be. Clueless people. Ignorant, innocent people. The person I planned on spending my life with just died. And the best thing you can come up with is that he is replaceable, and to look at how the daffodils come up.

This is the recurring theme: Quick! She's in pain! Let's talk her out of it. Let's tell her things will be

better someday. Let's remind her to be grateful for what she had. Let's tell her how smart and funny and kind she is. And let's be sure, because we know it is weighing her down, to reassure her that someone other than the man she loves will eventually be beside her.

I know you do not know what to say, and you are fumbling, and trying to be helpful. You hope against hope, inside your own hearts and minds that I will actually "be happy" again, that I will "find someone else," that I will "recover," because then there is hope for you. Then you have evidence that you would survive this if it ever happened to you. Oh look—love survives. It's okay. Everything will be okay.

Please stop it. I know pain is hard to witness and hard to tolerate. Please stop telling me what you think I should hear. Please stop telling me about later, stop telling me about my glorious future, that Matt expects and wants me to have.

Please stop pointing out how life goes on. Stop. I am here. Now. Do not tell me about "later." That completely ignores my "now." What happens or does not happen "later" is irrelevant.

Stop assuming you know what my deepest fears are; stop trying to calm those assumed fears for me. Stop telling me, as though you have the answers, as though there are any answers. Please. Stop telling me. Ask first. And I don't mean "ask me what I need." I mean—ask. Ask what this is like for me, ask before you make an assumption about what is real for me. Ask before you jump right in with your solutions to things that are not problems for me.

Or, simply stand here, right here, in this present moment, not telling me how much better it will be later. You can't make this better by trying to take the present away from me.

You are most helpful when you stand with me, without changing it, without fixing it, without making assumptions. It is okay to not have any answers. Please. Ask, don't tell. Be clueless with me. Wonder is a very good thing.



Saint Alphonus
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EAP MISSION Saint Alphonus Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, confidential counseling service that assists employees and their families with issues that affect their quality of life at home and work.

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE FILM "GROUNDHOG DAY"

By Jared Belsher, MA, LCPC

Many of you probably know the 1993 film "Groundhog Day" starring Bill Murray. In the film, Bill Murray's character Phil Connors is a TV weatherman who gets stuck in the small town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, reliving Groundhog Day over and over again.

It's a comedy classic but many people aren't aware of the valuable life lessons that can be learned from the many trials and tribulations endured by Phil Connors. In fact, because of the many life lessons found in the film, Groundhog Day has been called one of the most spiritual films ever made.

At the beginning of the film, we are introduced to Phil Connors, a vain, self-centered weatherman, who begrudgingly travels to Punxsutawney with a news crew to film the unveiling of the town's groundhog for Groundhog Day. After filming the Groundhog Day event, the news crew is forced to stay overnight in Punxsutawney because of a blizzard. The next morning, Phil wakes up and discovers that it's Groundhog Day all over again. For reasons unknown to Phil, he ends up reliving Groundhog Day over and over again. Phil's emotional reactions to reliving the same day range from confusion to despair to despondent. Eventually realizing that there are no consequences for his actions, Phil decides to do whatever he wants. We see Phil driving over mailboxes,

evading the police, and robbing an armored truck. Phil then tries to pursue Rita, his producer, but after spending many days learning her likes and dislikes and using that to his advantage, he is still unsuccessful. After failing to win over Rita and feeling miserable reliving the same day, Phil becomes despondent and decides to end his life. Phil steals the town's groundhog and drives off a cliff and kills himself—only to wake up to relive Groundhog Day yet again. Phil tries to kill himself many more times but after each attempt he wakes up again unharmed on Groundhog Day. Seeing no solution in sight, Phil tells Rita how he has been reliving Groundhog Day and they spend the day together brainstorming ideas about what he should do. It's at this point that Phil realizes that he needs to change how he has been living his life.

He realizes that instead of focusing on what he wants, he should be spending his time improving himself and helping others. Phil learns to play the piano and how to ice sculpt. We also see Phil giving money to a homeless man, cheerfully greeting a hotel guest, and being supportive of his film crew. By the final scenes of the movie, we see Phil making a heartfelt news segment about Groundhog Day, saving the lives of two people, changing a flat tire for a group of women, saving the engagement of a young couple, fixing a man's back problems, and playing the piano to a ballroom full of people. All of Phil's charitable deeds even wins him the admiration of Rita. In the final scene, we see Phil finally waking up on the day after



Groundhog Day with Rita by his side. He turns to her and says, "Is there anything I can do for you today?" Phil has transformed himself from a vain, self-centered man to an unselfish man who has improved his life and the lives of those around him.

Two important life lessons can be learned from the film: The importance of self-improvement and the importance of doing things for others. As Phil found out, in order to improve ourselves we often need to change how we're living our life. Phil showed us that figuring out what we need to do differently can be difficult but with enough perseverance and grit and trying different ways of living and behaving we can finally achieve what we want in life. Another lesson that can be learned is that we can get a lot of fulfillment from doing things for others. For the first half of the film, Phil only did what was in his best interest. It wasn't until he started improving himself and helping the people around him that he got what he wanted.

Many people find themselves in similar "Groundhog Day" situations in their lives. They may continually date the same type of person who mistreats them or continue to do the same unhealthy habit to their own detriment. Fortunately, there are counselors who can help guide us in the right direction and point out the unhealthy habits we are engaging in and help us correct them. If you find yourself in a "Groundhog Day" situation in your life and need guidance in how stop the cycle, please contact the Saint Alphonsus EAP department to set up an appointment for free EAP counseling sessions provided by your company.

CRISPY BRUSSELS SPROUTS By Ginny Bayuk, Billing and Reporting Specialist

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. fresh brussels sprouts, halved, or cut into wedges if they are bigger
- 1-2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder, *optional*
- salt and pepper to taste

Dijon Aioli

- 1/4 cup mayo, I use avocado oil mayo
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp dijon
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 tsp fresh chopped or dried parsley

INSTRUCTIONS

Oven Method

- Preheat the oven to 400° F.
- Toss your brussels sprouts with olive oil, garlic powder, salt, and pepper.
- Arrange them on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake for 18-20 minutes, or until they are crispy and golden enough to your liking!
- Toss them half way.
- Dip the brussels sprouts in the dipping sauce and enjoy!

Air Fryer Method

- Add brussels sprouts (mixed with olive oil, salt, and pepper) in a single layer on the air fryer basket.
- Cook at 380° F for about 6 minutes, toss them around and cook for another 5-7 minutes or until they're crispy and golden. Every air fryer is different, I personally like mine super crispy so I keep them in longer! Just keep an eye on them.

Aioli

- Combine all the aioli ingredients except for the parsley.
- Mix together and chill until the brussels sprouts are ready.
- Serve aioli in a small dipping bowl and top with fresh or dried parsley.



THE HEALING POWER OF FORGIVENESS

By Susan Murphy, EAP Counselor



It's pretty safe to assume that almost everyone has been hurt at some time or another by the words and behaviors of others. Although the pain from these infractions or shortcomings generally wane with time, you may continue to experience residual feelings of anger, resentment, and bitterness. As these negative feelings accumulate, it may be you who ends up paying the greatest price.

The act of forgiveness is a decision—a commitment to begin a process of change—to let go of resentment and thoughts of retaliation. Despite the fact that you have been offended, the negativity doesn't have to remain a part of your life.

Letting go of resentments and bitterness opens the doors for new experiences. Anger and resentment interfere with the flow of positive energy and create emotional and spiritual stagnation.

A good analogy for how this blockage can negatively impact your overall wellness is apparent in the adage that "resentments just rent space in your head for free".

Forgiveness is not about ignoring the impact of the offense(s) on your life, relationships and overall wellbeing.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that the offender is no longer responsible for the act(s), or that the behavior is justified or minimized—you can forgive the person without excusing the act. You can move out of the role of being the victim

“Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.”

— Mark Twain

and become empowered by releasing the power and control that the offender or situation have held over you.

Forgiveness brings about a renewed sense of contentment that helps you go on with your life, your goals, and enjoy wellness.

The inability or unwillingness to forgive can occlude other relationships, including new ones. Being in the presence of the person who hurt you may be tense, stressful, and even overwhelming. It is important to do what is best for you—and to love and respect yourself enough to follow through with setting personal boundaries with both those who have hurt you as well as those who think their ideas are in your “best interest.”

The overall benefits of health with respect to the act of forgiveness include:

- a reduction in anger and negative thoughts
- fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety and chronic pain
- lower blood pressure
- a lower risk of alcohol and substance abuse
- an increase in spiritual and psychological wellbeing.
- Try to focus on how forgiveness will change your life, and the happiness, and the spiritual and emotional healing that will materialize as a result of it.

Forgiveness is not only difficult, but it evokes a fear in all who embrace the concept; otherwise it would be just another sensible and simple thing to do! When the offender won't admit wrongdoing, or doesn't even acknowledge your pain, it seems even more difficult to forgive. It is often helpful to put in writing one's thoughts and feelings, to talk with a spiritual guide or leader with whom you feel connected, or even with an unbiased friend or relative.

You may want to consider discussing these issues with a mental health professional to gain additional insight and support. You may also find it valuable to reflect on the times that others have forgiven your offenses. Remember that the act of forgiveness alone holds the promise for a greater experience of peace, gratitude, and overall health and wellbeing. You can choose to be empowered.

INFIDELITY

Melissa Young, EAP Counselor

Infidelity is often thought of as something that happens to “some other couple.” Despite this belief, estimates indicate that 22% of men and 14% of women will engage in an extra marital affair at least once in their married lives.

Many people often declare that they would never cheat on their spouse and although statistics show that the majority of married people hold true to that promise a significant number do not. In talking with both the offending party and the offended, most often neither saw the affair coming.

So how do affairs come into being? And who are people most commonly having affairs with? What are the warning signs to take heed of? What is considered infidelity anyways?

Affairs often occur when people are not intending to cheat. According to one expert in the area, infidelity happens when there is a need, an opportunity to meet that need and a person feels uninhibited, for a variety of reasons, to act on the opportunity to have their need met. Needs may include such desires as a longing to feel more attractive, powerful, loved or fulfilled sexually. The opportunities to meet the varying need may arise in a bar, with a coworker, at conventions or even on facebook. People may experience less inhibition in meeting their need as a result of consuming too much alcohol or other substances, suffer from a medical condition, a personality disorder, or have difficulties asserting their needs directly to their mate, or carry a belief system that supports being unfaithful to one’s partner.

Warning signs that a person may be headed toward having an affair can include spending increasing amounts of time with someone who they not only feel attracted to, but have an interest in. If that person is the gender, has the body type, age and personality that is attractive to the other person, then the risk of infidelity increases. If more time, resources and energy is progressively being spent with the “attractive other”, despite potential consequences, then an affair may be more likely.



When a person expresses a concern about their significant other’s relationship with someone, that concern should be respected. Helpful suggestions in avoiding a potential affair may include; “If it feels wrong (to your mate) it may be wrong,” keep no secrets, elevate your mate when with an “attractive other,” and pay attention to one’s “inner voice.”

What is infidelity anyways? In this day and age of greater and greater technology the ability to connect with others, both anonymously and overtly is omnipresent. With greater access, the opportunities and venues for infidelity can present novel challenges for today’s couples. The various types of infidelities are too vast for the scope of this article.

However, the dictionary defines infidelity as:

1. **marital disloyalty; adultery**
2. **unfaithfulness**
3. **a breach of trust or a disloyal act; transgression.**

I prefer to consider what fidelity might be defined as. One author described fidelity this way, “Fidelity: giving yourself emotionally to one person.” Another expressed emotional fidelity as,

“When you dig deep into your heart and come face to face with new insights, with whom do you share your revelation?” If the answer is someone different than your mate, you might have some soul searching to do.

If infidelity is a concern in your relationship, know that professional help is available to you and your mate. There are countless devastating consequences as a result of infidelity, however many marriages and committed relationships have survived and even thrived following an affair when appropriate help is sought.

Saint Alphonus Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Regular Appointment Hours:

8:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Monday-Friday
(special appointment hours by request)

Phone: (208) 367-3300

Location:

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Counselors:

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