



Volume 24, Issue 2

Balance

A newsletter to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.



Balance is a newsletter produced by your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and spotlights relevant issues related to personal and professional wellness. The EAP is a confidential and free resource, available to you to help manage life's various challenges. If any of the topics below resonant with you, consider contacting your EAP for more information, including referrals for local EAP counselors.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Workplace communication problems are common, but almost no one blames themselves when they occur. Instead, we point to the other guy, who dropped the ball, didn't speak up, or didn't do something else. Understanding your role in fixing workplace communication issues before they happen is key to dramatically reducing them. It starts with understanding what's called the "communication loop." First described by mathematician Claude Shannon in 1948, the communication loop is a model for effective communication.

There are eight phases:

- 1) A person deciding to communicate.
- 2) Writing a message they want to convey.
- 3) Configuring the message.
- 4) Choosing the channel to send the message (e.g., email, text).
- 5) The receiver getting the message.
- 6) The receiver decoding what was sent.
- 7) The receiver understanding the message.
- 8) The receiver sending feedback to the sender that the message was received.

Within the loop are many risks of interference and communication breakdown. When communicating, keep these steps in mind. Anticipate what can go wrong. For example, you email a colleague on vacation who has not set up an away message. You hear nothing back. Now you're frustrated and don't know how to interpret a lack of response or feedback. The communication loop is broken, so you phone, and a voice recording explains the absence on vacation.

A critical part of effective workplace communication is taking personal responsibility for your messages, both received and sent, and being proactive in pursuit of the feedback—closing the loop.

Monitor your communications to keep the ball rolling, and you'll experience more workplace success, fewer headaches, and less frustration related to communication breakdown.

Source: <https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2019/04/the-communication-process/>



WHEN WORRY WAKES YOU UP

Anxiety and stress can contribute to wakefulness at night, nervousness, and night sweats, as well as sleepiness during the day. Both can also affect the part of the brain responsible for our fight-or-flight response. While examples of stress might be arriving late for a presentation, and forgetting a thumb drive you need for the presentation, anxiety is a true mental health disorder that fuels nervousness, worry, and apprehension. Are you one of the 40 million people who suffer from anxiety, or is stress the culprit? Talk to a medical, mental health, or employee assistance professional to discover the right intervention and get relief.

MAINTAINING MORALE IN THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

“Hybrid workplaces”—those with on-site and remote workers—have grown dramatically in the COVID-19 era. They can be a win-win for employees and employers but be mindful and avoid “remote worker bias.” This is the tendency to view remote coworkers as not contributing as much. This perception can lead to morale problems and decreased productivity if unhealthy competition for resources, benefits, awards, and information becomes part of a “we versus them” culture. To prevent slipping into remote worker bias, 1) avoid participating in biased “water cooler” gossip about remote coworker performance, 2) share information and opportunities with remote workers to elevate and value an inclusive workforce, and 3) meet with off-site workers so you see the “real person” frequently or whenever possible.

This reality check will help keep a wall from growing between you and your coworkers.

WORRIED ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER'S MENTAL HEALTH?

Have you noticed changes in a family member's mental health that have you concerned? Changes in mood, personality differences, worries and fears, strange thoughts, anger issues, unusual habits, sleeping or eating too much, and more could be signs of mental illness, but not necessarily.

- Does their behavior interfere with their daily activities?
- Is their social life or occupational functioning adversely affected?

If you are concerned about another's mental health, the best first step is to speak with a professional counselor/EAP to discuss the issues. You can then determine appropriate next steps, including how to encourage your loved one to get help.

Mental illness is common, with one in five people experiencing a mental illness in any given year, but a supportive loved one is often the path to early and successful help.



LEARN TO DE-ESCALATE CONFLICT IN RELATIONSHIPS

The ability to de-escalate a heated argument or conflict is a life skill that can help you avoid unnecessary stress and, in the workplace, allow you to experience greater job satisfaction. Conflict is not an inherently bad thing if it leads to positive outcomes, but many of our verbal skirmishes create serious tension. Unnecessarily intense arguments can erode trust, build resentment, and ultimately undermine productivity. To help de-escalate conflict, keep this in mind – you will rarely succeed in winning control over someone or outwitting them in a heated exchange.

To interrupt tension quickly, try one of these three tactics:

- 1) Interrupt the flow of anger with a relevant statement about something you both agree on. This often creates a “reset” effect and halts intensity.
- 2) Switch your role from “co-arguing” to that of an empathetic listener. This also flips the script.
- 3) Let go. Don't tie your psychological survival to winning or losing.

Virtually all heated arguments are fueled by the fear and psychological impact of loss. It is often easier to end a conflict by reminding yourself you don't have to prove anything to the other person. To become a de-escalation pro, practice these intervention techniques. You will fear conflict less, discover the arguments that are worth pursuing, and create more collaboration, while making your job more enjoyable.

DO YOU NEED A SOCIAL MEDIA BREAK?

Could you stand to be away from all your social media apps for a week? You may reap positive mental health benefits that include less anxiety and depression and increased mental well-being. That's what 154 research participants experienced after abstaining from social media of any kind for seven days. Participants were randomly chosen, but each previously used social media an average of eight hours a day. How much time do you spend on social media? Another study identified 46 harms from social media use, most being some psychological harm or impact. The point of taking a week's break isn't quitting altogether, but rather gaining awareness of the impact and the benefits that can come from moderation.

Source: [https://www.bath.ac.uk/\[social media break\]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/[social media break]) and [https://www.uts.edu.au/\[search “dark side social media”\]](https://www.uts.edu.au/[search “dark side social media”])

Kepro's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program through Kepro assists organizations and their workforce in managing the personal challenges that impact employee well-being, performance and effectiveness. Kepro's life management consultants employ a comprehensive approach that identifies issues impacting the employee and assists them in developing meaningful solutions.

The Employee Assistance Program can be accessed any-time, for free, confidential support from a professional consultant or online resource. Call or log on today.

 **Phone:** 1.800.999.1077

 **Website:** www.EAPHelplink.com

 **Company Code:** DOUGLAS

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