



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

September 2021

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



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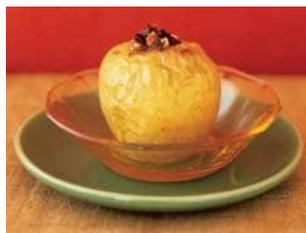
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Responding to a Troubled Loved One or Friend

While suicide rates have declined during the pandemic, increased numbers of adults and children are experiencing thoughts of depression, anxiety and helplessness. September 5-11, 2021 is National Suicide Prevention Week. When a loved one or friend talks about ending their life, consider it something to take seriously. You can help and support them by following the Five Action Steps below. These steps are supported by evidence in the field of suicide prevention:

Ask—It may be a tough question, but it is important to ask someone directly if they are having suicidal thoughts or contemplating ending their life. Studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.

Keep them safe—Work with the person to remove any lethal means available to them (e.g. firearms, knives, medications, etc.). Take them to an emergency room, or seek help from a medical or mental health professional. Reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the at-risk person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.

Be there—Be present, listen with compassion and without judgment and let them know you care about them. If possible, do not leave them alone. Findings suggest

acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.

Help them stay connected—Work with them to connect to others who also care—friends, family, therapists, clergy, teachers, coaches, and the like. Also connect them with the 24/7 crisis care resources. Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's number in your phone so it's there when you need it: 1-800-8255 (TALK). Also give the person Lifeline's number, and see that it is readily available to them anytime they might need it—in their cellphone, on their night stand, in the car, in a book bag, on the refrigerator or wherever it makes sense.

Follow up—Check in regularly with the person you are concerned about. For the days and weeks after the crisis, let them know you are thinking about them and that you are there to help if needed. These check-ins will go a long way to help that person feel cared about and start on the road to recovery. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential assessment and counseling services. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.



Ten Ways To Help Set Boundaries

Constant demands and requests from coworkers, colleagues, friends and families can leave you drained and frustrated. It's not an easy thing to say no to someone or something. Change your perspective—you're saying yes to you and to your priorities and needs. You're not saying no to a person, but to their request. Boundaries protect your comfort zone. Here are effective ways to set and maintain boundaries and gain time, energy and respect for yourself and others:

1. **List people who drain your energy.** Even if you like them, they take your time without your permission.
2. **Identify which boundaries you need to set.** Try to determine if you have trouble setting boundaries with specific people or specific situations, whether it be coworkers, friends or clients.
3. **You have a right to set boundaries.** Many people mistakenly believe that setting boundaries upsets other people. While others may not get what they want in the short run, you will garner more respect from them and for yourself by standing up for your needs.
4. **Make a short affirmation to describe your new boundary.** Try short phrases such as "I get to decide how to spend my time," or "My time is valuable and irreplaceable." Use an affirmation to remind you that setting boundaries is the right thing to do.
5. **Rehearse away from work.** Talk to yourself in the mirror, write in your journal, record yourself, or find a trusted friend to role-play with. This is new behavior. The more you practice it, the better you will become.
6. **Offer options to the other person.** Look for a win-win situation by taking control. For example, "I know that you would like to speak with me. Right now, I need to finish this task. Can I call you later or would tomorrow be better?"
7. **Communicate without anger.** Be clear and respectful. Use language that feels comfortable to you. Keep in mind that you are saying no to an unreasonable request, not a person as an individual.
8. **Relax.** Before you respond, breathe deeply. Remember, you are saying yes to you and your time.
9. **Think ahead and prepare.** List common situations that could use a boundary. If one of them comes up, you will have a pattern of action you can use at your fingertips.
10. **Check all your life's boundaries.** See if you need to set boundaries with family and loved ones. They can be a wonderful part of a full life, but they too can cause a drain on our energy, time and vitality. Look at how you can set boundaries in all areas of your life so that you are able to truly create the life you desire.

If you are concerned about your mental well-being, Behavioral Health Systems is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150. With a robust network of providers, BHS is able to provide care tailored to your specific needs and preferences.



Investing in Your Family

Families are busier than ever before, so make an extra effort to let your spouse or partner, children, parents and other special people in your life know how important they are to you. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Make time to listen thoughtfully to your loved ones. Be careful not to jump in with your opinion too quickly.
- Schedule time alone with each of your children. Let them decide how they want to spend this special time.
- Make a date with your spouse. Plan something special like you did when you were dating.
- Take your kids for a walk after dark. Look for stars in the sky, and listen for the night noises. Children remember these out of the ordinary times spent with parents.
- Give lots of realistic, specific praise to your children.
- Allow each of your children to plan the dinner menu one day each week.
- Create a special hand signal that means "I love you" to your family. Use it often.
- Invite each of your children to go for a ride in the car alone with you. Make your destination a surprise (the

park, the ice cream store, etc.), but plan on the ride being half the fun. You'll be amazed at the subjects that your children will talk about in the car!

- Have a family movie night once a week. Watch a movie that interests everyone, pop some popcorn, and enjoy the time together.
- Pull out your old board games and have a game night. Include all generations of your family. Some great games are available on DVD or video game consoles too.
- Show films or photographs from when you were young. Compare them to your children's photos. Share your family history. Encourage your parents to tell your children about things that you did when you were young.
- Tell every single member of your family how much you love them. Tell them often.
- Never underestimate the power of a hug!

Be careful to keep family activity schedules from becoming a burden. It's important to have time for some of the little things that create the best memories.

Baked Apples with Cherries & Almonds Ingredients: • 1/3 cup dried cherries, coarsely chopped • 3 tablespoons chopped almonds • 1 tablespoon wheat germ • 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar • 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon • 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg • 6 small Golden Delicious apples, about 1 3/4 pounds total weight • 1/2 cup apple juice • 1/4 cup water • 2 tablespoons dark honey • 2 teaspoons canola oil

- Preheat the oven to 350 F. • In a small bowl, toss together the cherries, almonds, wheat germ, brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg until all the ingredients are evenly distributed. Set aside. • Peel and core each apple, stopping 3/4 inch from bottom • Divide cherry mixture among the apples, firmly filling. • Arrange apples upright in oven safe pan • Drizzle honey and oil over the apples. • Cover with aluminum foil • Bake until tender, approximately 50 to 60 minutes • Transfer to serving plates and drizzle with remaining juices, serve warm

