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Throughout 2016, FEI's resiliency experts wrote about topics that illuminated the recurring themes organizations faced across the country and beyond: Civil unrest and maintaining workplace respect. How to address the now well-documented epidemic of opioid addiction. The importance of wellness and resiliency resources to our employees and their dependents.

Others shared personal stories to reveal how the work we do at FEI translates beyond the workplace and into our everyday lives, and we spent the month of May exploring mental health challenges and combatting stigma.

It is our continuing hope that by providing these resources to you, your workforce is able to remain resilient in any situation—be it a personal concern that requires the use of your EAP, or a crisis situation that relies on the organization working alongside your crisis management provider.

We’re pleased to present the highlights from our 2016 Manager Exchange and Crisis Management blogs, as well as a special series on Mental Health Awareness. We believe these guidelines, recommendations and stories will help you find the tools needed to better manage your organization and prepare for the potential crisis.

Please join us as, together, we pursue workforce resilience.
“A resilient workplace requires the constant exchange of new ideas, collaboration between partners, the sharing of experience for the greater good, and a commitment to the implementation of best practices. FEI’s Manager Exchange blog is a repository of the collective experience and expertise of our consulting staff, offering tips, guidance and perspective for addressing challenging workplace issues.”

~ Julie Sharp, FEI Account Manager
The ACE Study: Managing in the Kinder, Gentler Workplace

Julie Sharp, FEI Account Manager

February 3, 2016

In 1998, Kaiser Permanente and the CDC collaborated on a groundbreaking research study with implications for every sector of society, including the workplace. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study linked childhood trauma to a higher risk of chronic disease, social and emotional problems, depression, suicidality, and violence (both as a perpetrator and a victim). The study asked over 17,000 people about their experiences of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness or incarceration in the family. The results indicated that repeated exposure to trauma in childhood has a significant impact on an individual’s developing body and brain. A great synopsis on ACEs can be seen in Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris’ TED Talk video.

From ACEs Too High, the ACE Study uncovered five main findings:

• ACEs are common. Sixty-four percent of people have at least one.
• They have implications for health and well-being across the lifespan.
• They often occur together. If you have one, you are 87 percent more likely to have two or more.
• The more ACEs you have, the greater the risk for physical and emotional issues. People with ACE scores higher than six have a higher risk of their lifespan being shortened by 20 years!
• ACEs contribute significantly to workplace absenteeism, health care costs, mental health, emergency response and the criminal justice system.

The good news is that organizations, agencies and employers across the country are becoming more aware of the impact of ACEs and are integrating trauma-informed and resilience-based practices into their culture. In fact, the entire town of Tarpon Springs, Fla., has adopted a trauma-informed approach to building community and addressing the city’s social and economic issues!

The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, for which FEI is a social enterprise, is at the forefront of the movement to integrate trauma-responsive practices and policy into our society. FEI’s workplace violence prevention program, too, focuses on building a respectful and resilient workforce, integrating a trauma-informed perspective into all levels of the program.

Research is showing that the brain is able to change, grow and overcome many of the challenges caused by traumatic stress in childhood. Practices such as mindfulness, regular exercise, nutrition, quality sleep and positive relationships all contribute to developing resilience and restoring the brain to its intended state.
How might ACEs show up at work? In a recent conference of EAP professionals, Dr. Jude Miller-Burke listed common workplace “triggers” to be aware of:

- Tone of voice
- Touching
- Authority roles
- Arguments
- Neediness
- Weak boundaries
- Responses to deadlines
- Unhealthy competitiveness

Dr. Miller-Burke suggests understanding and managing our own triggers and working toward a “gentler and kinder workplace culture.” Managers can coach employees on communication skills and conflict resolution skills, practice “compassionate accountability,” and encourage employees to utilize their EAP.

To discuss how EAP can assist managers in facilitating a more resilient and trauma-responsive workplace, please contact your EAP Account Manager.
Several months ago I had a conversation with a concerned employer about one of his best employees, Laura*, who had come into work that morning and seemed to be “out of sorts—and really emotional.” When he asked her what was wrong, he noticed she looked like she had been crying. He also noticed she smelled like alcohol. Laura denied drinking at work, but admitted she’d gotten “pretty drunk” the night before. Regardless of when she drank, she was in no condition to work. A late night of heavy drinking can easily result in blood alcohol content over the legal limit; combined with lack of sleep, this can be deadly.

These stories are more common than many employers would like to admit. In fact, not a month goes by where I don’t have a conversation like the one above. We’ve known for a long time that it’s not safe to drink and drive, and the Drug Free Workplace Act has been in effect for over 25 years. Yet the evidence is clear:

• A recent federal survey indicated 24 percent of workers reported drinking during the workday at least once in the past year.

• Workers with alcohol problems are almost three times more likely than workers without drinking problems to be absent due to injuries.

• A 2007 study revealed one-third of workers reported having a hangover at work and 10 percent reported doing so at least once a month.

The good news is that employers have options. Motivated organizations can effectively address substance use and abuse in their employee population by:

• Implementing drug-free workplace and other written substance abuse policies;

• Offering health benefits that provide comprehensive coverage for substance use disorders, including after care and counseling;

• Reducing stigma in the workplace; and

• Educating employees about the health and productivity hazards of substance abuse through company wellness programs.

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According to the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, establishment of an effectual employee assistance program “is the most effective way to address alcohol and drug problems in the workplace.” FEI and other EAPs deal with all kinds of personal issues and provide short-term counseling, assessment, and referral of employees with alcohol and drug abuse problems, emotional and mental health problems, marital and family problems, financial problems, dependent care concerns, and other personal problems that can affect the employee’s work. Since family members of employees with alcohol or drug problems also suffer significant job performance issues—absenteeism, poor concentration, accidents and injuries—EAPs are in a great position to help them, too.

In Laura’s case, she was lucky. She didn’t get into an accident (or get arrested for operating while intoxicated) on the way to work, and her employer cared enough about her well-being to make it easy for her to get the help she needed. Because the company had effective substance abuse policies and trained employees on how to handle these situations, her manager knew what to do.

FEI was able to connect Laura with treatment resources that helped her learn about safer ways to drink alcohol, as well as helped her employer feel confident she was getting appropriate assistance. The last time I spoke with Laura, she reported choosing not to drink and her manager reported that her work had been better than ever.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*
Emotional Intelligence: Some Hard Ideas About Soft Skills
Randall Kratz, FEI Senior Account Manager
April 27, 2016

Believe it or not, emotions play a very important role in the workplace.

Emotional intelligence is the intentional and mindful use of emotions, and managers can use them as a guide for managing people. In the workplace, opportunities for utilizing emotional intelligence are everywhere, including:

• Conflict management and problem-solving
• Tension between co-workers
• Motivating and inspiring a subordinate
• Confronting inappropriate behaviors
• Dealing with power struggles
• Managing up the chain-of-command
• Encouraging healthy competition
• Facilitating resistance to change
• And so on

Have you noticed yourself or other employees losing their temper, saying inappropriate things or having trouble managing stress at work? People with highly developed emotional intelligence are consistently and actively learning how to manage these situations in ways that maintain their own personal health while also respecting others. The key word here is “learning.” Unlike our intelligence quotient (IQ), which is considered to be permanently formed by late adolescence, emotional intelligence can be an ongoing and lifelong endeavor.

There are two basic parts to understanding emotional intelligence:

• Intra-personal, or how one develops and uses his or her own emotional intelligence. This includes such things as self-awareness or modulation and control of emotions in the workplace.
• Inter-personal, or how one goes about improving her or his relationships with others through such endeavors as developing more effective interpersonal communications skills and people awareness.

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As managers, we can continue to improve our leadership skills through intentionally working to develop our emotional intelligence—no matter our attitudes, how proficient we think we already are, our age or supervisory tenure. Often those of us who assume we have no need for these skills can benefit the most by improving them.

Self-awareness is a fundamental building block of emotional intelligence. Not recognizing our anger at a customer, colleague or subordinate may cause us to raise our tone and/or make inappropriate comments we cannot take back. What is the outcome? Possibly ruining those relationships and maybe jeopardizing our employment. Managing our emotions can be complex, but a high sense of self-awareness enables us to monitor and observe ourselves in action. Self-awareness helps us stay centered and alerts us to move in the proper direction. Emotional intelligence correlates with effective leadership and can be a crucial benefit to better management practices. For more information about this topic, please contact a member of the FEI account management team.
Many know Robert Louis Stevenson’s famous story The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In sum, Dr. Henry Jekyll is a prominent, handsome and good-natured doctor who recognizes the simultaneous existence of good and evil within him. This recognition leads him to concoct a potion that transforms him into a toxic, malevolent creature who commits terrible acts: Mr. Edward Hyde.

While most of us thankfully won’t be in the extreme situation of working with or managing a Mr. Hyde, many can relate to the unpredictability of working with someone who possesses and exhibits the inappropriate characteristics of our otherwise “hidden” natures. While working with Dr. Jekyll may be a rewarding, positive and productive experience, working with Mr. Hyde (or Ms. Hyde) can be the opposite and foster a toxic workplace environment.

Besides Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, there are many other types of employees that can be considered toxic. According to Van Moody, a relationship expert and author, a toxic worker is one that:

- Hinders others and manipulates situations to their personal benefit.
- Bullies and discourages co-workers for their mistakes, rather than helps or offers guidance.
- Is solely focused on self at the expense of the organization—even going as far as to take credit for others’ ideas or hard work.
- Has little to no respect for the professional or personal needs of co-workers.

A 2015 Harvard Business School study on toxic workers found that these kinds of employees cost companies a lot of money due to the high turnover of those they bully and alienate at work. Morality and productivity of staff decreases, good workers leave and training new hires costs money. Employing a toxic worker can cost a company almost three times as much as it gains from its top performer.

The study defines a toxic worker as selfish, overconfident, apathetic towards others and someone who believes the rules should never be broken. Interestingly, toxic workers are usually high performers—or are at least perceived to be high performers, which is part of the reason they’re able to get hired in the first place.

Dylan Minor, a co-author of the study, recommends that “managers and human resource staffers should take a more holistic, multidimensional hiring approach, one that values productivity and corporate citizenship . . . for as the study makes clear, having good people working for you who care about others, and keeping the bad ones out, is not just a nice thing to do, it’s good for business.”

Dr. Jekyll’s alter ego Mr. Hyde would most certainly be considered a toxic worker. Hopefully no one will ever have to deal with this type of individual, but in the event that you do, an account manager at FEI can provide a management consultation on possible actions to take with such workers and the challenges they present.
The passing of singer Prince is a stark reminder of the growing number of individuals who have experienced, or are experiencing, a battle with opiate use. We at FEI have detailed the reality of the opiate epidemic before, but would now like to explore the nature of opiates and their presence in the workplace.

Opiates are a class of drug derived from the poppy plant and used to treat pain. There are three kinds of opiate drugs: synthetic, semi-synthetic and natural. Common natural opiates include opium, morphine and codeine. Semi-synthetic opiates include heroin and oxycodone, and synthetic opiates include fentanyl and methadone. Because of the way opiates affect brain chemistry, these drugs have a high addictive potential.

Pain in the body can be the result of any number of factors including normal aging, injuries on or off the job, cancer, arthritis or congenital conditions. Minor pain can be treated using homeopathic remedies or over-the-counter medicine. However, if pain is severe enough that an individual is unable to function, physicians may prescribe some type of opiate to help alleviate the pain.

There are plenty of people who use opiates—legally, that is. They have a valid prescription from the doctor and a small orange bottle with a label identifying what the drug is, who it’s prescribed for and the pharmacy that filled it. Regardless, any kind of opiate—whether natural or synthetic—can be used illegally as well. How can managers and supervisors discern whether or not an employee is just under the weather, or if there’s something more going on than meets the eye?

Many common signs of opiate abuse mirror those of other addictions, but paired with a knowledge of an employee’s character and their history with injury or possible prescription medications, the following signs can indicate the need for mediation:

- Noticeable elation or euphoria
- Marked sedation or drowsiness
- Confusion
- Sudden financial problems
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Shifting or dramatically changing moods

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If managers/supervisors suspect or know an employee is using opiates illegally, what can they do to assist the employee in getting help?

Here are some suggestions:

• Promote the availability of your employee assistance program!

• Encourage a safe, secure and supportive workplace environment where employees can feel as comfortable as possible if they need to address issues.

• Become familiar with local and national resources for those dealing with drug or alcohol use, like the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, and this national and local guide to resources addressing drug and alcohol use.

Opiate abuse has been an advancing problem for years, but is now being targeted for intervention as overdose deaths increase and dependency grows. For more information on best practices when tackling opiate dependency in the workplace, please read our white paper The Invisible Drug: Combating Opiate Dependency in the Workplace or contact an FEI account manager.
Despite an increase in behavioral health issues in the workplace and the availability of employee assistance program services at no cost to employees, the national average for EAP use within an organization continues to be 3 to 4 percent. Although studies show use of EAP services has a positive impact on these health issues as well as productivity and absenteeism, it remains challenging to get both organizations and their employees to use the services.

At the same time, a recent report from Aon Hewitt reveals that more than half of Millennials (52 percent), the largest generational group currently in the workplace, said they believe the health and wellness programs offered by their employer make them feel better about their company, as compared to only 39 percent of other generations. It’s also one of the reasons Millennials stay at their jobs.

So what’s stopping employees from accessing services? FEI experts have discussed possible reasons such as the stigma of seeking behavioral health services, wariness about confidentiality and lack of awareness. But what if behavioral health services could be reframed as wellness services—where there is no stigma for taking care of yourself and achieving well-being?

EAP services easily link to components of wellness—emotional and mental health, financial health, family health. In fact, emotional well-being and resiliency can be used interchangeably. Emphasizing how EAP can be used to enhance interpersonal relationships, address parenting and family challenges, build on personal strengths, manage strong feelings and navigate through life’s transitions puts a more positive spin on what EAP has to offer. Even one of the most common reason for accessing services—stress—can be reframed to show how “good stress” can be optimized to enhance performance.

We at FEI are designing our literature to reflect this concept and reinforce the idea that seeking help is a positive choice, and investing in your psychological/emotional fitness, financial fitness and social well-being will lead to positive outcomes. We want to help our customers create a culture where caregiving and seeking help is encouraged and accepted.

The result? A multitude of studies have shown companies characterized by a positive work culture lead to improved employee loyalty, engagement, performance, creativity and productivity. Who wouldn’t want that?
Recently I took some time away from work to be with my grandmother in her final moments. As usual, one of the first things she asked me was, “Are you being nice to others?” My “grammy” grew up on a small dairy farm in rural Pennsylvania. Some of her greatest gifts were preparing food out of love for us and being genuinely kind and considerate to others. She knew that people who practice acts of kindness create happiness, and those that experience kindness feel more connected to themselves and others.

My grandmother passed away on her 102nd birthday. When I returned to work, my colleagues provided much needed support as I transitioned back into my role. Many of my work family were not only sorry for my loss, but also asked how I was doing, what my grandmother was like and shared their own personal stories of loss. When I went to our CEO to thank him for his kind words to me while away, he responded with, “You’re a friend. Why wouldn’t I do that?”

So where do these basic human needs fit into a productive work environment? Can leaders and managers do more to foster and encourage kindness and meaningful connection?

Being kind is an innate ability we all possess. It requires us to open up, to show our softer side. It means taking risks in a world where performance, productivity and competition are sometimes more highly valued. Is there room for this type of vulnerability in the workplace? In short, yes!

Brené Brown, author and professor, studies human connection. Her 2010 TED Talk, “The Power of Vulnerability,” has been watched more than 26 million times, the highest number of TED Talk views ever. Obviously this concept resonates with many of us.

When you share a personal experience or a story, you make yourself vulnerable. Stories tend to reveal our flaws and mistakes, as well as the challenges that need to be or have been overcome. It shows our humanity despite our differences.

Many leaders are careful about sharing personal information or revealing their struggles at work for fear of judgment or criticism. However, many of us are drawn to the transformative power of vulnerability that sharing personal stories creates. This can help us connect with each other in ways not otherwise possible. It can also improve leadership ratings by increasing the happiness levels of employees throughout the organization.

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When we consistently promote values like trust, respect and acceptance, we create a safe place for people to grow and feel fulfilled. People who feel safe are, in turn, more apt to reach out to others in a connected and harmonious way. This human connection improves the social bonds that encourage us to cooperate, rather than compete, with each other. My grandmother understood that such cooperation was critical for farmers living off the land, for example, because those who were kind and worked alongside one another were more likely to survive than those who struggled in conflict and isolation.

As an employee assistance program account manager and consultant, I regularly talk with managers about improving the people-management side of the workplace. They often ask for ideas on how to deal with a challenging employee or supervisor. It’s very hard, if not impossible, to change certain difficult behaviors, and in the end the only thing we can change is ourselves and how we respond. If we want to see a more respectful, kinder, more connected and happier workplace, we need to be these things ourselves. We need to lead through example.

And let’s face it: happy and motivated staff members are at the heart of every well-functioning and successful business.
Uncivilized: Tips for Managing Disrespectful Behavior
Sumaya Kroger, FEI EAP Counselor
November 9, 2016

People-watching is very interesting. We quickly notice behavioral patterns and, after a while, pinpoint those individuals we might characterize as “uncivilized”: Someone yelling into their cellphone; a couple arguing in the distance; disparaging remarks made by someone who thinks they won’t be overheard.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines uncivilized, in part, as “not polite, reasonable or respectful; showing no concern for the well-being of people or for the proper way to behave towards people.”

Uncivilized behaviors can be seen everywhere, and the workplace is no exception. Most of us, if not everyone, has experienced some form of rude or disrespectful behavior at work. It may be as simple as failing to return emails or phone calls promptly, or consistently placing blame on a person or group of people for anything that goes wrong—regardless of context.

How do you navigate these behaviors in a professional environment? Here are some tips to assist managers, supervisors and even employees in creating a more civilized workplace:

• Create an inclusive work environment by recognizing and respecting individual differences and qualities.
• Self-monitor the respect you display in all areas of communication.
• Understand that not everyone responds the same way as you do to different topics or ideas. Knowing what makes people frustrated and/or upset enables you to manage your reactions and respond in an appropriate manner.
• Adopt a positive and solution-driven approach to resolving conflict.
• Address issues with a supervisor by using “I statements” in a calm manner.
• Gather relevant facts, especially before acting on assumptions that can damage relationships.
• Remember the golden rule: Do or say unto others as you would have them do or say unto you!

Individuals in the workplace may not always see eye to eye on all things, but it’s important to respect and acknowledge that everyone has their own unique ideas, values, beliefs and perspectives—even if you don’t agree with them.

If your company has an employee assistance program (EAP), consider ways to promote use to your employees. The EAP can be a valuable resource for employees wishing to discuss topics ranging from mental health and AODA issues, to challenges relating to work.
“Our Crisis Management blogs are intended to prompt movements. Spark conversation. Move people from the mindset that a crisis can’t happen, to it can happen—and at any time. We want to shift crisis and business continuity planning from prevention and infrastructure recovery to individual and organizational resilience, with a focus on the human element.”

~ Michael Bugenhagen, Business & Crisis Management Solutions
How is Moving Like a Crisis?
Ted Uczen, FEI President & CEO
June 14, 2016

We recently moved our FEI offices from an almost-suburban, somewhat disconnected locale to downtown Milwaukee. This was a process that started well over a year ago and, as you can imagine, took hundreds upon hundreds of hours of planning. As I sat in my new office surrounded by crates needing unpacking, I began thinking about how a move and a move plan is a lot like a crisis and a crisis plan.

First, you don’t ever just get up and move—you need a plan and a lot of coordination. Likewise, you never want to be confronted with a crisis without having a plan for dealing with crisis. As we have talked about before, the absolute worst time to try and build a plan is during a crisis. Too much is going on and too much decision-making needs to happen in real time. Having your plan built, communicated and practiced beforehand allows you to react immediately and make better decisions based on previous work.

Key Takeaway: Just like in a move, there are bound to be issues and challenges that pop up. Having a plan with contingencies and a lot of preparation helps you efficiently move through these challenges.

Second, if you only think about the physical and operational aspects of the move without thinking about the people involved, you will have a major challenge. Prepare everyone for their role in the move: packing, cleaning, sorting, designing, etc. They need to be trained, prepared and communicated to regularly. The same holds true for a crisis; all too often we see tremendous amounts of time and effort put into crisis plans and, in the end, they cover tons of information about facilities, computer systems or operations and very little about people. Understanding how best to get your team ready, trained and prepared for their roles or knowing what to do during a crisis should be a key element of every plan.

Key Takeaway: People preparation is just as important as operational preparation. (By the way, if you are planning a move, make sure your checklist includes editing and adapting previous crisis plans before you go. Waiting until after could be far too late—get folks ready ahead of time.)

Third, a move doesn’t end on moving day. Sure, you’re out of the old place and into the new, but anyone who has ever moved before knows much more needs to happen. The after-move can need as much work and planning as the move itself. The same holds true for a crisis; it’s never over after the event ends. Operationally, time and effort is necessary to get everything working as before and people will need help adjusting to the “after crisis”—they too need the support and tools to adapt, learn, cope and be resilient.

Key Takeaway: Make sure your crisis plans include the before, during and after perspective. A resilient business and workforce doesn’t just happen after a crisis. As with a move, there is a lot of planning and preparation that must be coupled with a good execution and post-plan.

Now . . . can someone help me please unpack these boxes?
Good Days and Bad Days: Holistic Use of The Mandt System
Raquelle Solon, FEI Business Solutions Engineer
July 27, 2016

My son Austin has special needs. He has multiple diagnoses that boil down to either underdeveloped areas of his brain, or injured parts of his brain due to more than a dozen shunt surgeries. While the executive functioning part of my brain understands this and can rationalize some of the behaviors I see him exhibit, the emotional part of my brain can sometimes become overwhelmed and screams ENOUGH ALREADY!

However, by understanding there is probably something else going on, I remind myself to take a step back, breathe, bite my tongue—give my son some time, as well—and then re-engage. My goal is to maintain a healthy relationship with him. Through my training in The Mandt System, I can understand that he probably has some unmet need going on. This time it was his safety and security.

When those of us with Mandt training speak about safety and security, we’re also talking about the emotional and psychological. Austin is getting ready to make a huge transition from living at home to living off-site at a vocational rehab facility, then hopefully moving out on his own. I remember how scary it was for me to move out when I was young and I don’t have half as many challenges as Austin does.

He is paralyzed from the waist down, so he will have to navigate a strange place in his wheelchair. He’ll have to figure out self-care that is unique to him. He’ll have to go to a different building for food, instead of rolling out of bed and up to the fridge like he does now. All very scary things to someone who has had a fairly consistent environment most of his life.

I’ve had to dig deep into my Mandt training the past few months in order to respond to Austin in ways that maintain his dignity and respect. While I’ve done crisis intervention training for over a decade, my prior training focused on setting limits. I’m so thankful I have Mandt, because it goes beyond recognizing and responding to behavior and instead focuses on understanding what the behavior is communicating.

While I’m a mom, my relationship with Austin is also that of caregiver. Like many staff in your organizations, I have to pull from the skills and training I’ve received in order to process and understand what I’m seeing before choosing a response that will hopefully de-escalate the situation and get everyone back to baseline. I can now pull those skills from training that has a proven track record of reducing incidents early instead of focusing on physical interventions. Mandt spends only 19 percent of training time on the physicals and the rest on building skills, options and the understanding of how to maintain a healthy relationship with the person you’re serving while managing safety for everyone involved.

Once I give myself and my son some cooling off time, we are able to communicate better and everyone can de-escalate and return to our own versions of normal. I wish I would have had this training 15 years ago, early in Austin’s school career and as we were developing behavior, but I can make a difference now. So can you.
Much national press has been given to law enforcement and the growing scrutiny they are under. Whether the stories are positive or negative, it is undeniable that a career in policing is extremely stressful.

Many officers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide rates are said to be one and a half times greater than for the general population. Some research indicates one-third of active duty and retired law enforcement officers have PTSD; however, officers often do not realize they have PTSD or it goes unreported. Badge of Life, a nonprofit organization working with stress and trauma in police officers, released a study stating there were approximately 102 deaths by suicide of law enforcement officers in 2015. This was a decrease from the same study in 2012, which totaled 126 suicides.

The study was broken down further to show 91 percent were male; 83 percent exhibited prevalent personal problems prior to suicide; 15 to 18 percent suffered from PTSD; and the average age was 42 with approximately 16 years on the job. Unfortunately, police culture often makes it difficult for officers to get the assistance they need.

While law enforcement officers need help, there is another group that goes unnoticed: the families. Spouses and children have unique stressors put upon them as a result of their loved ones’ chosen profession.

Some notable stressors that law enforcement spouses have reported include:

• Challenges of rotating shifts and being on opposite schedules. Such shifts force the family to keep the house dark and quiet while trying to get through daily routines.
• Officers becoming too cynical, which makes meaningful conversation difficult.
• Children being teased or bullied because they have a law enforcement parent.
• Officers never relaxing and/or unwinding between shifts.
• Officers drinking excessively when off duty.
• Spouses having to make many of the family decisions alone.
• Easing children’s fears regarding the safety of their law enforcement parent.
• Experiencing a law enforcement death (knowing the officer, their spouse and children, etc.).
• Spending too much off time with other officers rather than with the spouse and children.
• Too much shop talk or, in some cases, too little talk and shutting the spouse out.

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Studies have also found at least 40 percent of law enforcement families experience domestic abuse, as compared to 10 percent in the general population. Victims of police violence are particularly vulnerable since the officer has a gun, knows the location of battered women's shelters and understands how to manipulate the system to avoid consequences. Victims frequently fear calling the police because they know it will be the officer’s colleagues and/or friends handling the case.

The National Center for Women and Policing reports on these realities and has even found that those guilty of domestic abuse are given exceedingly light discipline. Women in these situations should seek help from an experienced domestic abuse advocate. An excellent online resource can be found by a pioneer in the field of officer-involved domestic violence, Diane Wetendorf.

Law enforcement departments, officers and their family members can contact their EAP at any time to discuss the challenges they may be facing and get the help they need.
Protecting Yourself During a Riot

Katie Moser, FEI Network Operations Specialist
September 20, 2016

According to the First Amendment of the Constitution, we as Americans have the right to conduct peaceful, public assemblies. However, what happens when these assemblies are no longer peaceful? Civil unrest.

In recent years, there have been riots in countless cities across the U.S. This prompted me to start thinking, “What would I do if I found myself caught in a riot?”

Due to rising tensions throughout the country—and even the world—riots can break out anytime, anywhere. Yet, there are some events with higher potential. Controversial legal decisions and high-profile political appearances, to name a couple, might spark civil unrest. Avoiding these kinds of gatherings is one way to guarantee safety.

If you do find yourself caught in an area where a riot is beginning to break out, try to assess the situation as quickly as you can. Are you in any immediate danger? Where are your escape routes? One of the most critical tips for protecting yourself in a riot situation is to be situationally aware. Additional steps to consider for safely and quickly removing yourself from a riot can include the following:

- If you have a route out of the area, take it immediately. Walk quickly, but do not run.
- Blend in with the crowd—you don’t want to draw attention to yourself. Stay calm and quiet.
- Be aware of your surroundings and find the best escape route. Move to the sides of the crowd if possible, as this will decrease your chance of being knocked down and trampled.
- Don’t get caught up in the chaos. It’s natural to want to see what’s happening, but standing around can get you hurt. Get home safely and turn on your local news for information.
- Due to the chaotic nature of rioting, law enforcement has no way of distinguishing between innocent bystander and threat. Use caution if approaching law enforcement.

The world is in the midst of worrying times and it’s possible that peaceful protests might erupt into civil unrest, causing devastation and loss of innocent lives. Knowing these awareness tips to keep yourself safe could help save your life.
In my opinion, the epitome of leadership during a crisis is former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani. His calm and calming presence in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack on his city led not only New York, but the entire nation. In his book, Leadership, Giuliani identifies four specific characteristics to embrace when leading during a crisis.

The first, he says, is to **be visible**. Day after day we saw Mayor Giuliani walking on the streets of New York with his contingent of staff and department heads while being interviewed by the media. There was no doubt about his identity as a leader.

Giuliani’s second tip is to **be composed**. He writes in his book, “Leaders have to control their emotions under pressure. Much of your ability to get people to do what they have to do is going to depend on what they perceive when they look at you and listen to you. They need to see someone who is stronger than they are, but human, too.”

Number three is to **be vocal**. He writes, “I had to communicate with the public to do whatever I could to calm people down and contribute to an orderly and safe evacuation [of lower Manhattan].”

The fourth tip in leadership during a crisis is to **be resilient**. Giuliani describes himself as an optimist. His words during the immediate aftermath of 9/11 gave Americans hope and belief that they would meet this challenge and overcome it.

Mayor Giuliani’s leadership was demonstrated during a massive crisis affecting millions of people, but his four tips for leading are just as applicable in crises of much smaller scale. Some crises are personal. Individuals turn to other individuals for help. Whether the helper is a friend, family member, clergy or professional counselor, Mayor Giuliani’s four crisis leadership traits are important:

**Be visible. Be composed. Be vocal. Be resilient.**
Civility at Work: When Politics Collide
Vivian Marinelli, Psy.D., FEI Senior Director Crisis Management Services
October 18, 2016

Our organizations thrive due to the diversity of our employees. The new ideas and varying viewpoints from this multi-generational workforce result in a continuing evolution of the organization that keeps it current and hopefully leads to success.

These same variances can also lead to workplace challenges when emotionally charged events occur in the community. These can be positive or negative in nature and, due to differences in opinion, can result in workplace discussions bordering on confrontation—especially if the events directly or indirectly impact individuals in the organization.

We’ve recently been experiencing more political demonstrations and protests in the U.S. First observed in response to police-involved shootings in Ferguson, Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Milwaukee and Charlotte, media coverage of these events (including through social media) has encouraged discussions in both communities and the workplace.

Politics in general have always been a point for discussion. This being an election year, we’ve been barraged by the 24-hour news cycle regarding our presidential candidates. This year has been especially contentious as a result of the nominees for both parties and the issues at hand.

Either of these events can have a polarizing effect on a community, and it doesn’t always stop outside the company door. So how do you maintain civility within the workplace and still allow for disparate opinions?

Establish an accepting company culture. Encourage open dialogue within the workplace that is respectful of differing opinions, ideas and cultures.

Increase awareness. We know topics such as religion, politics, race, gender and sexual orientation have the potential to result in friction. When events are occurring that give rise to workplace discussions, a reminder of the company culture can help keep these interactions from becoming confrontational.

Identify how a political event is impacting the community. Some events, if they have resulted in demonstrations, protests and possibly even riots, have the potential to be extremely divisive, both within the community and in organizations within the community.

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Assess how the political event might affect interactions in the workplace. Are there members of your staff—or members of their families—who have been directly impacted by an event? If this is the case, discussions may be more subjective and personal in nature. As a manager or supervisor of someone personally affected by an event, it’s important to monitor the need to involve HR if necessary.

Assess how such events might impact the workplace. Some protests have turned to riots, potentially impacting community businesses. Keeping your staff informed about events and the organization’s emergency planning and response is critical for their safety. This awareness may also increase discussion on the issues being raised by protests.

Freedom of speech is one of our protected constitutional rights. However, in order for organizations to function, the best course of action is to have a recognized company culture that is grounded in mutual respect.

Read more about civility and the workplace in our white paper, Civil Unrest and Employees: When Community Concerns Become Workplace Challenges.
In the immediate aftermath of a terrifying event, we often experience what’s known as the fight or flight response. It is a primitive reaction within all of us for the purpose of preservation. Whether facing a physical threat or a psychological one, we’re wired to either take control of a situation and fight—or make a split second decision to run away from harm (flight).

It’s important to understand that there is no right or wrong way to respond to a terrifying event. People process and react to events differently, and these reactions depend on past experiences or traumas, expectations of the present, and future concerns of a traumatic event potentially happening again.

In the immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, volunteers trained to assist runners after crossing the finish line were exposed to the most horrific and frightening experiences. While some stayed to assist the injured, others feared for their own lives and fled the scene. No one was prepared to witness the destruction of human life in such a terrible way.

There’s no doubt that all the volunteers experienced some degree of trauma. In addition to the immediate, intense feelings of fear after the explosion, there were additional aspects of trauma yet to be felt. On the one hand, those who stayed to assist were exposed to the mutilated bodies of the injured; on the other, those who fled suffered intense feelings of guilt after second-guessing their own actions.

While some volunteers did not have lasting problems, many others struggled with anxiety. Others still developed serious emotional distress. Mild anxious feelings over time escalated to extreme anxiety, fear, and despair. They relived the event in the form of flashbacks, difficulty concentrating and an increase in health problems.

These are all warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Other signs and symptoms most commonly experienced by people with PTSD include:

- Re-experiencing the trauma through vivid and distressing memories or dreams.
- Avoiding situations that remind them of the traumatic event.
- Feeling numb, as though they don't have the same range of feelings they once did.
- Being in a state of “alertness” and watching out for danger.

If you or someone you know has experienced similar trauma, family and friends can help see you through this difficult chapter. Many people find that the feelings they experience after a traumatic event gradually reduce over time. However, you may need to see a professional if your feelings are too much for you, or go on for too long.

Your company’s EAP benefit can be an excellent resource to start you on a path to restoring emotional and psychological health.
mental health awareness series
Using Outside Partnerships to Offset the Effects of Trauma

Michael Bugenhagen, FEI Business Development Manager

May 2, 2016

An article on campus safety I recently read discussed the effects of trauma on the mental health of campus first responders and staff. It prompted me to think about individuals who may be overlooked with regard to their “involvement” with tragedy. While this instance applies to a campus setting, it can impact organizations across the globe.

As an example, I recall a story about the emotional and traumatic impact on workers at a local department store during the major Colorado fires a couple years ago. They were not directly impacted by the events, but many of the customers purchasing items had lost everything. Employees were gradually affected by the stories of loss and despair, and struggled with feelings of guilt since they and their possessions were safe.

This kind of secondary trauma can also apply to campuses and business organizations that rely on groups of volunteers or customer service departments to answer calls from upset and traumatized callers related to crisis events—health outbreaks, campus or workplace shootings, natural disasters, cyber-hacks and other potential traumatic events. These crises bring varying levels of secondary trauma exposure to those receiving the calls.

One university recognized a number of reasons why it made sense to scale back their volunteer emergency call center on campus and partner with an external expert, including the potential psychological impact on the volunteer team. The experience the outside provider would bring to the process was also important, as they typically staff mental health professionals who hold master’s degrees or higher and have the training to communicate effectively with people impacted by disaster.

Similarly, a hospitality organization saw the value of outside partnership after a health outbreak. They had both a human and economic impact for their decision. First, having their representatives field calls would mean they would be unable to fulfill the normal responsibilities associated with customer service and reservations. Second, and more importantly, they were not specifically trained to manage the emotional impact of calls, such as those from mothers asking about their child’s exposure to a serious health issue.

Whether it’s a university, a hospitality business or a department store in Colorado, every organization should consider the advantages of outside partnership and the importance of training both volunteers and employees to be psychologically resilient when responding to crisis events.

If you would like more information on outside partnership or strengthening the training of your own teams, please let FEI know by contacting us directly.
Mental Health Awareness and the Workplace: Supporting Employees
Emily Merritt, Director of Intergenerational Initiatives for the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
May 11, 2016

May is Mental Health Awareness Month! This is an important time for businesses and organizations, as one in five Americans will be affected by a mental health condition during their lifetime, and nearly every American is impacted by mental health challenges faced by friends and/or family. As managers, let’s ask ourselves:

• Do our actions and words reflect openness and a desire to break down stigmas related to mental health conditions?

• How do we support employees potentially facing—or those already living with—a mental illness?

• How do we regularly promote a healthy work environment and healthy habits?

We can help break down the discrimination and stigma surrounding mental health conditions by having a strong awareness of mental health and encouraging employees to seek early intervention and open dialogue with health care professionals. As managers, we are well positioned to directly support our employees in managing their mental health. If you observe an employee talking about loss of sleep, feeling tired for no reason, feeling low, feeling anxious or hearing voices, you should act.

In these cases, you’ll want employees to be aware of the variety of free screening tools online. By encouraging individuals to act early, further life disruptions can be avoided. Studies show it is not uncommon for 10 years to pass from the time symptoms are first experienced to the time people are diagnosed, a delay which can create challenges for effective symptom management.

There are a variety of resources available to employees including clinical services, medications, peer supports, counseling, family supports and other therapies. You can sometimes find these resources in an employee assistance program; FEI’s EAP in particular provides management consultation, trainings, critical incident response, 24/7 availability and other assistive services offering the most support to employees.

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Beyond supporting individual employees, we can build and encourage a healthy work environment. Mental Health America has created this survey to help us reflect on opportunities to promote a nurturing workplace. Additionally, there are lots of ways we can encourage employees to boost their own mental health. Think about having your team generate their own list of ideas and post them in a public place at work.

Incidentally, May is also Older Americans Month. It’s a great time for us to recognize and acknowledge the contributions of older people in our lives and communities. We can reflect on those in our organizations who have been leaders, trailblazers or quiet pioneers who have made a difference.

While we might not naturally link Mental Health Awareness Month and Older Americans Month, these causes are closely aligned: those with mental health conditions, as well as older adults, want inclusion and wellness in their lives. We should remember that when everyone in an organization is valued, cared about, treated as a unique individual and given access to the resources they need, we all succeed.

During May, please take a moment to reflect: what could you do to better ensure employee inclusion and wellness prevail in your workplace?
Crisis, Trauma and the Importance of Connection
Terri Howard, FEI Senior Director
May 18, 2016

Any crisis event, whether manmade or natural, can have a traumatic impact on the human psyche. This impact tests the resilience of those who experience it. How people react to crises and traumatic events, along with the factors that promote resilience or increase the risk for problems following trauma, plays a major part in their ability to heal.

People respond to crisis events in different ways. Most survivors have intense feelings after a traumatic experience but quickly recover; others have more difficulty, especially those who have had previous traumatic experiences, who are faced with ongoing stress, or who lack support from friends and family and will need additional help.

According to experts in the field, people are usually surprised that their reactions to trauma last longer than expected. It may take weeks, months or even years to fully integrate into a new normal. Those affected by traumatic events often become resilient by establishing a support network and reaching out to others with whom they can talk and share their experiences.

Many will get through this period of traumatic reaction with the help and support of family and friends, but sometimes family and friends may push people to “get over it” before they’re ready (if this is the case, it’s important to let them know such responses are not helpful right now, though their attempts to help are appreciated). Others find individual, group or family counseling helpful, and in particular Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a phenomenally rapid and wonderful therapeutic method for healing.

The key concept to remember is connection—ask for help, support, understanding and opportunities to talk whenever ready and possible.

The Chinese character for crisis is a combination of two words: danger and opportunity. People who fully engage in recovery from trauma discover unexpected benefits. As they gradually heal their wounds, survivors find they are also developing inner strength, compassion for others, increased self-awareness and—often the most surprising—a greater ability to experience joy and serenity than ever before.
The Need for Workplace Mental Health Accommodations

Holly Wasechek, FEI Employee Assistance Representative
May 25, 2016

According to the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), mental illness leads to more lost workdays than some physical ailments, but is not warranted similar accommodations by employers. Why is this? Mental health awareness is more prevalent today than ever before and human resources professionals recognize the need for accommodation plans for employees with mental health challenges, but further action is needed.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) reports that one in seventeen individuals live with a serious mental health impairment such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects those who disclose a mental health diagnosis to management, yet lingering stigmas associated with mental health conditions often dissuades employees from divulging such information in their places of work—and thus are never accommodated accordingly.

In many cases, an employer will discipline (or fire) an employee exhibiting mental health challenges without first trying to accommodate. Roughly 50 percent of managers won’t move forward with potential hires who have disclosed a mental health condition. This is in direct opposition to ADA stipulations that require most employers to provide necessary accommodations for employees with mental health challenges, should those challenges limit day-to-day activity.

In reality, employees with mental health challenges are very capable of doing their jobs with reasonable accommodations (which, if disclosed, an employer is required by law to provide). Such accommodations can include:

• A reduction in work hours for mental health-related transitions between treatment and work.
• Permission to work remotely or from home, should that be the healthier and more productive alternative.
• A re-evaluation of daily job responsibilities.

In fairness to the organization, an employee’s accommodations must be deemed “reasonable” in that they don’t impact the organization’s financial integrity. Adjusting an employee’s work schedule serves as an apt example: medications taken to treat mental health conditions can sometimes have adverse effects—drowsiness, for instance—and while this could cause problems in the workplace, adjusting the employee’s work schedule to facilitate proper usage of medication with limited impact on performance is both ideal and a legal solution.

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Creating and promoting a culture of inclusion is tantamount to a resilient workplace. Mental health conditions are just as important as physical ailments, and an employer’s policies and procedures should reflect as much. Organizations don’t want to alienate untapped talent potential or miss an opportunity to promote wellness in the workplace. Remember, employees with mental health conditions only want to do their jobs, and there are plenty of resources available to help accommodate their needs.

FEI is leading the way and making a difference for thousands of employees and their families. Ask to talk to an account manager about accommodating employees with mental health challenges in the workforce. For further information on how to accommodate someone with mental health concerns, visit Job Accommodating Network.
Too Scared to Seek Help: Stigma and Mental Health

Daniel J. Potterton, FEI Chief Operating Officer

May 31, 2016

Last week I learned from my 18-year-old daughter about a classmate who committed suicide just days before his high school graduation. The young man was well liked and known for the care of his assorted pets. A month earlier, a local newspaper published a featured article about him and the award he’d received for compassion. After a 20-year decline in suicides among 15 to 24-year-olds, that number is now sadly on the rise.

I consulted recently on a call with a colleague who reported that an anxious manager and supervisor had a young employee in their office pained by commanding suicidal thoughts. When advised of the need to get the employee immediate medical intervention, the supervisor hesitated and said she did not want to “embarrass her.” Understandable concern, I thought to myself—but then again, when someone is having a heart attack or is in danger of losing their life, do we hesitate to immediately call 911? Do we worry the victim will be embarrassed?

When people suffer the distress of a brain illness exhibited in depression, anxiety, confusion, out of control rage, disorientation, substance abuse, etc., all too often it is coupled with the notion that something is wrong with them; hence the stigma of a mental illness. That same blame is not affixed to those who present with a physical condition that is clearly preventable but persists due to poor life choices.

Mental health can affect all of us. During any kind of a man-made or natural disaster, there is often collateral damage to those suddenly assaulted with the psychological pain and grief of having lost a loved one. These are not times for victims to suffer the intrusive secondary thoughts that something is wrong with them. Human reactions to mental assault come with a variety of potentially disturbing emotions. In caring for these victims, we advise and educate that these strong emotions are normal responses to abnormal events.

Our culture’s fear of having a social stigma because of mental health challenges is a public health issue. Each year, millions of Americans face the reality of having and living with a mental health condition. FEI joins with the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), among many other organizations, to bring awareness to mental health conditions and fight the devastating effects of stigma. It can be life-saving.
Interested in learning more about these topics?

Please contact us at:
800.987.4368
www.feinet.com
info@feinet.com

FEI Behavioral Health offers flexible solutions for the full spectrum of workforce resilience goals, from EAP and wellness to crisis preparedness and management. Partnering with a wide range of corporations, government entities and non-profits, FEI is a social enterprise wholly owned by the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, a national network of more than 450 human-serving organizations.