



Mediation Service Now Available to Address Workplace Conflict

When dealing with unresolved workplace conflict, disputes or differences, do you feel as though you don't have any options? A new mediation program recently was launched to provide State of Ohio employees a voluntary conflict resolution process where parties have a choice and voice in addressing workplace issues.

The Employee Workplace Mediation Program, a program of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services' Ohio Employee Assistance Program, is available to all full- and part-time permanent state employees. Bargaining unit, exempt and management employees can participate in this confidential process.

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Improved Emotional Health from Exercise

Regular exercise has both psychological and physiological effects that can boost mood, relieve depression and stress and increase your self-esteem. When you exercise, you tend to feel better about yourself. But it doesn't end there. Intense exercise also triggers the release of brain hormones called endorphins (the stuff that causes the so-called "runner's high") that produce a sense of well-being or even euphoria and suppress sensations of pain. Endorphin production usually begins about 15 to 20 minutes into an exercise session, and tends to peak after about 45 minutes. Even moderate exercise has its benefits however, by reducing levels of stress hormones in the body (such as cortisol.) High levels of these hormones over the long term are thought to make us more vulnerable to anxiety and depression, and even more serious problems such as diabetes.

Depression

Daily exercise can be beneficial in preventing or battling depression. One research study found that an exercise program was as effective as an antidepressant medication in treating mild depression symptoms in a group of elderly individuals. Remember, it's because exercise decreases the stress hormones that are thought to play a role in triggering and sustaining depression. Exercise has purely psychological benefits as well, it increases your feelings of accomplishment and of being "in control," provides a healthy distraction from daily worries and stresses and interrupts the downward spiral of negative thoughts that is typical of depression.

If you have seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a depression experienced in the colder months that is thought to be caused by inadequate exposure to direct sunlight, exercising outdoors in sunlight may alleviate some of the SAD symptoms.

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Stress

Regular exercise offers a healthy outlet for tension and stress. Numerous studies have confirmed that exercise can combat stress. When you exercise, muscles become less tense and your heart rate increases, a combination that makes you both relaxed and alert and enables you to cope with your frustrations and problems. It takes about 30 minutes of intense aerobic exercise to reduce body tension, but even fun activities such as gardening and dancing can lower stress.

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Exercise Can Help Control Stress

People who exercise regularly will tell you they feel better. Some will say it's because chemicals called neurotransmitters, produced in the brain, are stimulated during exercise. Since it's believed that neurotransmitters mediate our moods and emotions, they can make us feel better and less stressed.

While there's no scientific evidence to conclusively support the neurotransmitter theory, there is plenty to show that exercise provides stress-relieving benefits.

Four ways exercise controls stress

1. Exercise can help you feel less anxious.

Exercise is being prescribed in clinical settings to help treat nervous tension. Following a session of exercise, clinicians have measured a decrease in electrical activity of tensed muscles. People have been less jittery and hyperactive after an exercise session.

2. Exercise can relax you.

One exercise session generates 90 to 120 minutes of relaxation response. Some people call this post-exercise euphoria or endorphin response. We now know that many neurotransmitters, not just endorphins, are involved. The important thing though is not what they're called, but what they do; they improve your mood and leave you relaxed.

3. Exercise can make you feel better about yourself.

Think about those times when you've been physically active. Haven't you felt better about yourself? That feeling of self-worth contributes to stress relief.

4. Exercise can make you eat better.

People who exercise regularly tend to eat more nutritious food. And it's no secret that good nutrition helps your body manage stress better.

It's time to get started

Now that you know exercise can make a big difference in controlling stress, make some time for regular physical activity. We'll help you get started by listing three activities you can choose from:

- **Aerobic activity** – All it takes is 20 minutes' worth, six to seven days a week. Twenty minutes won't carve a big chunk out of your day, but it will improve your ability to control stress significantly.
- **Yoga** – In yoga or yoga-type activities, your mind relaxes progressively as your body increases its amount of muscular work. Recent studies have shown that when large muscle groups repeatedly contract and relax, the brain receives a signal to release specific neurotransmitters, which in turn make you feel relaxed and more alert.
- **Recreational sports** – Play tennis, racquetball, volleyball or squash. These games require the kind of vigorous activity that rids your body of stress-causing adrenaline and other hormones.

Not just any exercise will do

Don't try exercising in your office. Outdoors or away from the office is the best place to find a stress-free environment. Even a corporate fitness center can have too many work-related thoughts for some people.

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Stay away from overcrowded classes. If you work surrounded by people, a big exercise class may be counterproductive. Solo exercise may be more relaxing for you. If, however, you work alone, you may enjoy the social benefit of exercising in a group. A lot depends on your personality and what causes stress for you.

Don't skip a chance to exercise. Take a break every 90 minutes and you'll be doing yourself a favor. Ninety-minute intervals are a natural work-break period. And four 10-minute exercise breaks at this time will burn about as many calories as a solid 40-minute session. Work-break exercises can be as simple as walking or climbing stairs, stretching or doing calisthenics.

Controlling stress comes down to making the time to exercise. You're worth it!

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Exercise: Good for the Body, Great for the Brain

Are you concerned that you forgot where you placed your keys too many times this week or that you couldn't recall your sister's-husband's-step-brother's name right after he told you? Have you made an appointment with your doctor to check your memory? Are you afraid you may be feeling the onset of dementia or possibly Alzheimer's disease (AD)?

If so, it's a very valid concern. Presently one in eight baby boomers in the U.S. suffer from AD and the statistics point to a huge increase in the years to come: nearly 16 million by 2050.¹ That's about one in five of your cohorts. Can anything be done?

Press the Pause Button

While there is no known cure at the moment, there is something you can do to enhance your memory and thinking abilities now and delay the onset of dementia or AD. Believe it or, it's not a pill. It's exercise.

Stop the Rust

As we age, some loss of memory and cognitive function is to be expected. Our brain, like a car that's been exposed to the elements for a long time, tends to rust from burning too much oxygen. With Alzheimer's, however, the oxidative damage increases beyond what we see in normal aging.²

Prescription Drug Abuse "Take Back by Example"

**May 1, 2015
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Please bring all unused pills and medications to the following locations:

State Office Tower, Rhodes Building
30 E. Broad St.
Or
Ohio Department of Public Safety
1970 W. Broad St.

This event for State of Ohio employees is sponsored by the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Team

We notice it first in the hippocampus, an area of the brain shaped like a seahorse that is vital to learning, memory and higher thinking. Loss of short-term memory and disorientation appear among the first symptoms. Unfortunately, by the time we notice these symptoms, 50 to 75 percent of the nerve cells that are important for memory may already be damaged or lost.³

Good for the Body – Great for the Brain

The good news is that recent studies using mice have shown that short exercise bursts enhanced the animals' thinking process so that those that exercised fared much better than the sedentary ones when tested for learning and recall. This is because — for humans as well as mice — aerobic exercise increases brain-derived neurotrophic factor or BDNF, a molecule that is key to maintaining not just memory, but the ability to plan and juggle several tasks at a time by causing nerve cells in the hippocampus to multiply.⁴

This finding is not to be taken lightly. By increasing BDNF, we're not just helping maintain the memories we already have (long- and short-term), but we're actually capable of making new ones and of learning new things. This is quite revolutionary. And while the body has always known this, neuroscientists are just finding out about it and spreading the word.

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Bust a Move – Boost the Mood

As if improving brain function and memory wasn't enough, BDNF has also been proven to play a role in regulating stress and improving mood disorders. It's actually the best natural antidepressant you can take and one of the best treatments available for most psychiatric problems.⁵

So instead of the medicine cabinet, open your closet, pull out your sneakers, pick up a friend or two and head out for your workout. When you get back with an endorphin-generated smile on your face, sit down to a bowl of berries, the bluer the better. Why? Because antioxidants have also been found to protect the brain from dementia or AD. These wonderful substances, appropriately named, are found in certain fruits and vegetables (berries, kale, chard, spinach, carrots) and protect the body from oxidation (rust) and free radicals that damage or kill cells.

Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks

A study out of the University of California, Irvine, has shed some light on the significant correlation between brain rejuvenation and antioxidants.

During a three-year period, a group of aged beagles were fed a diet rich in antioxidants. What scientists found was that these dogs not only performed their old tricks better, they actually learned new ones. Again, our friend, BDNF was a contributing factor, acting as a fertilizer to the neurons, helping to make new connections in the brain.⁶

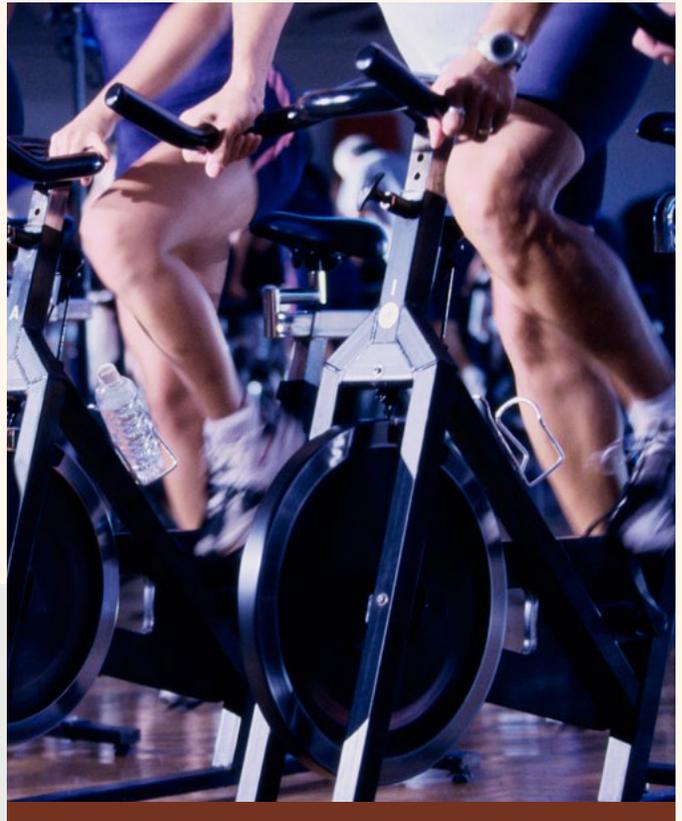
Wellness Habits that Protect Your Brain

Besides regular exercise and a healthy diet rich in antioxidants, here are other things you can do to feel better, look better and stay sharp in your later years.

- Keep learning (work with puzzles, learn a new language, use your opposite hand).
- Be social – stay in touch with friends, go out and do things.
- Don't smoke.
- Drink alcohol in moderation (1 oz. per day for women; 2 oz. per day for men).
- Manage stress.
- Get a good night's sleep.

You Can't Afford Not to Exercise

If you're thinking: This is all well and good but I'm too old, too out-of-shape, too busy or have too many maladies to start an exercise regime, remember that a healthy lifestyle can only enhance your life and that of your loved ones. By staying active and keeping fit you'll not only help prevent physical and mental decline; you will actually thrive well into your golden years.



Exercise Can Be Fun if You Love What You Do

Consider any type of exercise of low to moderate intensity that increases your heart rate and makes you break out in a sweat, such as:

Home or gym equipment

- Stair climber
- Elliptical trainer
- Treadmill
- Stationary bike

Playing outdoors

- Cycling
- Cross-country skiing
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Skating
- Jogging

Group fit classes or other activities

- Dance classes such as Zumba
- Kickboxing
- Step aerobics
- Swimming
- Working with a personal trainer

Once you find something you love to do, stick to it. Work out at least for 30 minutes every day. Of course, you should always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

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For Alzheimer's related information, visit the sites listed below.

- <http://www.alz.uci.edu/exercise-and-diet-in-alzheimers-disease/>
- <http://www.alz.org>

References

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5. Ratey, John J, MD, and Hagerman, Eric. Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain
6. <http://www.alz.uci.edu/exercise-and-diet-in-alzheimers-disease/>

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However, mediation will not solve the problem for the parties, but it will help them to start an open discussion. Mediators who are trained in Transformative Mediation will facilitate conversation between the parties to help them reach their own desired outcomes or solution.

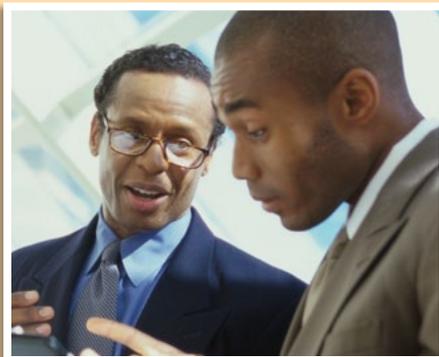
The bottom line: conflict can happen in the workplace — mediation can be the answer. Employees can now benefit from a program that was created to help cultivate a respectful and professional workplace environment through mediation when disagreement or conflict does occur.

To learn more about the Employee Workplace Mediation Program and other OEAP services, visit the OEAP website at: ohio.gov/eap, or contact the OEAP Office at: OEAP@das.ohio.gov or at: 800-221-6327.

Benefits of mediation include:

- Offering an option for individuals to address unresolved workplace conflict or issues;
- Giving parties a voice and an opportunity to be heard;
- Helping resolve problems before they escalate;
- Providing an opportunity for the parties to make their own decisions; and
- Reducing anger and hostility in the workplace, which improves workplace morale.

The program uses the Transformative Mediation approach, which is a recognized and effective model for workplace mediation because it encourages positive and open communication by trusting, respecting and valuing each other. Mediation is about transforming and rebuilding productive workplace relationships.



**OHIO EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won't get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don't know if it's burnout, loss of motivation, depression or all three? Late for work too often? Has the use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line, never wonder if your concern is appropriate to contact OEAP. So, if you've been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give OEAP a call today.

30 E. Broad St., 27th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

800-221-6327/614-644-8545
www.ohio.gov/eap

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