



MIA Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

A Confidential Counseling and Referral Service

800.451.1834

Couples Counseling: When Only One Will Go

In marriage, it takes two to tango, but when problems within the relationship require professional counseling, don't be afraid to go solo if your spouse chooses to sit out. Attending marital counseling alone doesn't mean admitting that you're "the problem." Even without your spouse, a professional counselor can provide tools and strategies that you can use within your relationship. It's also a good way to discover your own inner workings and learn to be happier. Just because your partner balks at counseling today doesn't mean he or she won't join you in the future. In the meantime, why not take some positive steps right now?

Negotiation Skills for Everyone

The ability to negotiate is an important life skill, but you may be surprised to learn that you don't have to be aggressive or pushy to be good at it. Effective negotiation leaves both parties feeling satisfied with the result. Try your hand at negotiating with a simple technique called "reframing." Reframing involves two people placing their focus on what they are *trying to accomplish* (the need) rather than their "positions" (the demand). For example, let's say that a wife wants her husband to stay home for the evening, but her husband wants to spend time playing cards with his friends. These positions tell you nothing about the true source of the conflict between the husband and wife. Reframing the issue may reveal that the wife needs companionship because she's felt unusually lonely that week, while the husband may be looking for some downtime to blow off steam accumulated from a stressful work project (or vice versa). By addressing *the needs* instead of the positions, a new range of solutions becomes possible. When you are faced with conflict, try zeroing in on the other person's needs by asking effective questions. Listen carefully without interruption, and follow up by restating the answer back to the other person to make sure that you understood correctly. By reframing, you have shifted from being combatants to partners in finding a solution that satisfies both parties' needs.



Squeezing Work Time: Parkinson's Law

If you took too long to do an unpleasant work task you knew was not time-consuming, you were probably a victim of something called Parkinson's Law. Parkinson's Law states, "Work expands to fill the time available to do it." The phenomenon combines procrastination and busywork (or distractions) to avoid an unpleasant task until a deadline forces you to finally complete it. The more time you have, the more likely it is that you will substitute unimportant and sometimes unnecessary tasks for those that are undesirable.

Here's how to conquer this:

- 1) Tackle unpleasant work first.
- 2) Compress time by promising completion of tasks to others sooner.
- 3) Try using a kitchen timer and break tasks down into 45-minute segments. Work intensely without distraction. Then break for 15 minutes. Repeat with 45-minute work segments and breaks until finished.



Less Stress for Customer Service



Good customer service is about putting your customers first, but it is also about reducing your stress. These two goals are mutually compatible. When things go well with customers, you experience less stress. You can influence positive customer behavior more frequently than you may realize, rather than be subject to its accidental occurrence. Try influencing customers by:

- 1) Detaching from the emotional reaction of customers and never arguing with them.
- 2) Understanding that being successful with a customer is more important than being “right.”
- 3) Using “active listening skills” which demonstrates that you truly heard the customer. Active listening involves using your voice, your personal energy, nonverbal communication, and empathy to have customers walk away with a positive “Wow!” experience—even if they did not get what they wanted.

Follow the Two-Minute Rule

Can a task you have to do be done in two minutes or less? If so, do it immediately rather than postpone it because you don't feel like doing it now. Live by this rule and you'll accomplish more and procrastinate less—and your productivity will soar. All of us face many tasks, and life is a never-ending parade of them. Postponement is often the easy, but temporary, crisis-building fix for this stress. Can a task be done in less than two minutes? If so, act on it. Test this tactic for personal productivity, keep track of your outcomes, and discover how much you get done.

Building Workplace Trust

How would you rate your ability to trust others at work? The ability to trust others is a powerful asset for relationship-building and productivity. If you struggle with trusting others, you might trust coworkers who—over time—have proven they won't let you down. But can you trust others without this trial period? Harmful life experiences in our past can make it hard to risk trusting others, but a world of opportunity can open to you if you can surmount this obstacle. Your employee assistance provider or a professional counselor can help you discover ways to overcome these trust-related challenges, including feeling unable to rely on others or feel close to your team, feeling unsafe with others without good cause, questioning others' competence without reason, resisting taking safe risks, and finding it hard to believe what others say.

