

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EA professionals

Bonus! Are YOU suffering from compassion fatigue? See page 7.

Volume 23, No. 9
September 2020

23 years of service!

Adding Life Coaching to the EAP

By Debbie Jongkind

Over the past thirty years, life coaching has developed into a respected profession, but only recently has the life coach partnered with the EA professional. Historically, working with a personal life coach was limited to top-level executives or those who could afford to privately hire a coach. Adding coaching to the array of services offered by the EAP introduced the wider employee population to the support and benefits provided by a coach.

This service at Workplace Options began when corporate clients started specifically requesting a life coaching component as part of their EAP. In the early days the requests were sporadic, and support was delivered by a licensed clinician on staff.

Seeing a growing demand and looking to serve our customers in additional ways (and increase EAP utilization), we developed a formal coaching program, which allowed us to expand our services to support more employees. Since that time, life coaching has been provided by professional coaches, rather than counselors, and has become part of our holistic well-being approach.

Defining Life Coaching

Coaches and counselors are similar in that they both provide one-on-one support to people seeking change in their lives. They differ in the type of support they offer and the needs of the people they serve.

In counseling, certified clinicians highly trained in psychotherapy use their skills to treat individuals who are struggling emotionally. Their goal is to help people feel and function better.

While counselors are primarily focused on emotional health, coaches partner with individuals who are interested in reaching their maximum potential. A

coach's sole objective is to help clients identify and employ their own strengths and resources to achieve their personal and professional goals.

There is overlap between the two professions, as counselors are also qualified to offer support with goals. *Coaches, however, are not qualified to assess a client's mental health or provide treatment.*

During sessions, coaches rely heavily on methods that draw upon an individual's intrinsic motivation to change. As a result, coaching sessions are very client-driven, meaning the client is considered the

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expert on themselves, while the coach acts as a guide. While counselors may also have a person-centered approach to service delivery, the counselors are the experts and take the lead in planning treatment and case management.

A Flexible Delivery Model

At Workplace Options, we mostly deliver life coaching telephonically, with coaches sometimes using email or text messaging to share resources or offer post-session support. Our program typically follows a six-session model, but the actual number of sessions available to employees is determined by their employer as part of the EAP contract.

Follow-up sessions are scheduled at intervals that best support the client and can be held weekly, biweekly, or monthly. This differs from counseling, in which sessions are typically scheduled weekly. Flexibility in follow-up sessions for coaching gives clients time to implement action steps discussed during previous sessions.

Life Coaching Example

Yvonne* called Workplace Options to take advantage of her EAP benefit and connect with a life coach. During the first session, the coach learned that Yvonne had a very busy professional and personal life and was motivated to improve her time management skills. Yvonne wanted to develop a plan that would help her accomplish her tasks at work and allow time for her outside responsibilities and leisure activities.

She said she felt like she was always trying to play catch-up with her work projects as well as her personal ones. Instead, she wanted to see herself as competent, relaxed, and ahead of the curve. Yvonne decided that she would evaluate how she spent her time over the next few weeks and bring those observations to her follow-up session.

During the second session, Yvonne relayed her observations to the coach and discussed how she seemed to be more productive in the morning. Working with the coach, she brainstormed ways to rearrange her schedule to accomplish some of her more important tasks in the morning. She began experimenting with this schedule change in the weeks that followed.

Knowing she would be talking with her coach kept Yvonne motivated to implement change. Subsequent follow-up sessions gave her a chance to discuss new ideas for improving her daily schedule and time to examine the obstacles that seemed to derail her best made plans.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

Editor/Publisher - Mike Jacquart

Designer - Laura J. Miller

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Yvonne had her sixth and final session with the coach about three months after she had started the program. She shared that she felt better about how she was spending her time; she felt more productive at work and had even started going back to the gym two nights per week, which gave her increased energy.

She was also setting aside about 30 minutes each evening to reassess her day and organize her priorities. Yvonne had designed a system that was working for her during this busy phase of her life and was feeling more competent and relaxed.

I reached out to our Vice President of Clinical Crisis and Specialty Services, Kennette Thigpen, PhD, MSW, LCSW-S, for perspective on how a counselor may have handled the situation differently. *Dr. Thigpen explained that a counselor might have assessed if there were cognitive distortions impacting Yvonne's feelings of wanting to feel competent, relaxed, and ahead of the curve or probe to understand if there were other risk factors or past traumas that could be playing a role.*

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Like the coach, the counselor could have also provided support with managing schedules, ensuring to practice self-care, and setting boundaries to balance her personal and professional life. However, the counselor may have taken a more direct approach, where a coach is trained to rely on the client's own self-discovery process.

Offering a life coaching component as part of the EAP benefit gives employees like Yvonne the opportunity to select which approach best supports a given situation. Employees who are looking for guidance with life changes but do not need or want counseling, can still be served by their EAP when life coaching is available.

**Case studies in this article are based on actual situations, but the names and other details have been changed or omitted to protect the anonymity of the individual receiving support.*

Value Within EAP

In this respect, life coaching may provide a lower barrier to entry for EAP support, allowing the EAP to serve a greater percentage of employees. *This could, in turn, serve as a bridge for employees to access other services provided by their EAP.* For example, when a coach recognizes a client needs clinical support, the coach can facilitate the transition to a counselor.

Providing life coaching also benefits EAPs by allowing counselors to operate at the top of their skill set. Utilizing coaches to help individuals work on reaching their personal and professional goals frees up clinicians to use their specialized skills and training to assist individuals who are struggling emotionally or are in a crisis.

The Importance of Training

Ensuring coaches are trained at the highest level was a critical factor for Workplace Options in integrating life coaching into its EAP services. While there are currently no licensing requirements for life coaching, the International Coach Federation (ICF) has set industry standards for the coaching profession.

Not only did we commit to having employees trained to ICF standards, we developed our own comprehensive coach training program that is approved by both the ICF and the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC). The curriculum includes an emphasis on vision setting, goal setting, relapse prevention, empathy, improving self-efficacy, building support, and the power of reflection. This differs from the training and continuing education that counselors are required to

complete to maintain licensure, which includes human development, family systems, ethics, and counseling strategies.

As part of the ethics and standards of the coaching profession, coaches are trained to remain focused on their area of expertise and notice when a client may need additional support beyond their scope, such as counseling. Because of the integrated nature of an EAP, referral to clinical support is immediate and an easy transition for the client.

How Coaching, Counseling Work Together

Janet* called her EAP and requested to engage in life coaching. During the initial telephonic coaching session, Janet described herself as disorganized, talked about a desire for career change and possibly starting her own business. She also mentioned that since she was recently divorced, and in a new relationship, she was experiencing anxiety in determining how she should consider these factors in her decision-making process.

Although Janet was emotionally stable and did not exhibit any risk of harm, she did bring up her relationship concerns numerous times. *This prompted the coach to share with Janet that she also had a counseling benefit*, which could assist her with the emotions of her recent divorce and new relationship concerns. With Janet's permission, the coach had a counselor join in on the call.

Life coaching was put on hold so Janet could fully engage in her counseling sessions, with the understanding she could return to coaching later if she was still interested in the service.

In the event a coach finds a client to be in crisis, coaches are trained to follow a crisis protocol where a counselor joins the call immediately for in-the-moment support.

Summary

For Workplace Options, life coaching has been a positive addition and a natural fit. In addition to expanding the resources we offer; it is also attracting participants who might not otherwise utilize their EAP. Most importantly, it is helping many individuals tap into their full potential. ■

Debbie Jongkind, RD, LDN, PCC, NBC-HWC, is Workplace Options' Vice President of Global Coaching Services. She helped develop Workplace Options' Live Well Wellness Global Coach Training Program. The author may be reached at debbie.jongkind@workplaceoptions.com. This article originally appeared in the 4th quarter 2019 "Journal of Employee Assistance" and is republished with permission of the author and the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA).

Digital Health Access Alone isn't Enough

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, increase in digital mental health services has *exploded*. That's the good news. The bad part is that an increase in access alone isn't sufficient. There is growing concern that many digital mental health firms are marketing products that lack clinical pilots to demonstrate that their solutions actually work, as reported in an online article "The hazards of digital mental health." Additionally, many of these same companies may claim they are evidence-based when they are based off of vague translations of existing clinical models.

There are numerous reasons why these hazards are prevalent – suffice it to say that academic medicine would clearly benefit from partnering with digital

health companies either to assist with clinical research or help develop new research frameworks specifically for digital health.

Slowly but surely, progress is being made. The American Psychiatric Association recently launched an app advisor to help psychiatrists navigate the digital world. Public-private partnerships to spur evidence-based digital healthcare are emerging, such as the Hope Lab and Stanford Brainstorm consulting groups.

But many more efforts like these are needed to address the disconnect between mental healthcare and technology. Read more here <https://www.mobihealthnews.com/news/hazards-digital-mental-health> ■

In 2020, EAR Needs Your Help!

No one is made of money, and so *Employee Assistance Report (EAR)* has always strived to keep subscription costs as inexpensive as possible. As a result, three years ago we dropped our print version, which cost \$229.00, joining a lot of publications in going digital only.

More recently, in recognizing that nearly all businesses have been negatively impacted by the unprecedented circumstances of 2020, we reduced our annual subscription by \$10 to **\$89.00**. That breaks down into just under \$7.50 a month!

But industries like digital publishing remain challenged. We only have two opportunities to earn the money that sustains our operations: 1. Subscriber renewals. 2. Money from NEW subscribers. Both revenue sources are down, which has made publishing this newsletter very difficult.

If you are a paid subscriber, I encourage you to check your email inbox to see if you have received a notice about your subscription coming due. Could it have gone into a spam folder?

If you are unsure about the status of your subscription, email or call me and I'll check on it for you!

NEW readers are also welcome. If you enjoy reading EAR, help us spread the word about its usefulness to your peers in EA and also HR who aren't currently receiving it.

Please consider supporting *EAR* in whatever way you can. We want to continue in 2021, but we need your assistance.

Sincerely,

Mike Jacquart, Editor and Publisher
715-445-4386 or mjacquart@writeitrightllc.com



Remote Work: All is not Rosy

Remote work in the time of pandemic is having unexpected effects across America — and is having different impacts for each generation. A national study by global research firm, The Center for Generational Kinetics (CGK), reveals that trust, expectations of leaders, and future employment expectations have been deeply affected in this time of remote work.

The discoveries from The 2020 Study on Leading Multiple Generations Remotely are both compelling and concerning:

Most shockingly, a majority (53 percent) of Americans *do not* want to work remotely *even part-time* after the pandemic ends.

42 percent of Americans do not have the tools they need to successfully work remotely.

Less than half of Americans (48 percent) believe their manager is acting with integrity during these tough times.

The top three things that Americans want from their managers right now: being honest and candid,

communicating clearly, and being caring and empathetic. What they wanted least: showing strength and resilience. In other words, candor and honesty mean much more than bravado and bluster.

“Each generation is having a different experience during the pandemic. This is important to understand, as organizations must remotely lead four or five generations simultaneously. Gen Z’s emergence could herald in a new era of hybrid work that is normal to them and for the youngest members of Gen Z, all they’ve ever known,” says Denise Villa, CEO of CGK.

Villa adds the following recommendations:

- ❖ Reinforce the organization’s guiding principles and mission in creative ways that connect with individual employees in a remote work world.
- ❖ Offer communication options aligned with each generation’s primary preferences.
- ❖ Increase the frequency of information that is shared by leadership to keep employees engaged and aligned. ■

Employee Productivity the Same or Better

Working from home is no longer the strange new phenomenon that stirred up national attention several months ago. For many Americans, it’s now reasonably routine. We understand Zoom better, we’re getting along better at home with loved ones, we’ve scheduled that antibody test, and “we’re getting stuff done.”

JDP recently surveyed more than 2,000 Americans who typically work in offices who are now working from home full-time to try and learn more about this pandemic-spurred era of remote work.

Here’s what they found:

❖ 77% of those surveyed said they are working different hours from home than they would at the office while 66% said they are more likely to work nights and weekends than before.

❖ 67% of Americans surveyed said their productivity

is the same or better when working from home, although 54% reported more distractions working from home.

❖ 42% said they are working less than usual from home. 33% reported working more. 25% reported working the same.

❖ Those who are working more said it was hard to maintain boundaries between work and home life as the main reason why. Those working less reported having less work to do.

❖ A whopping 92% of respondents said they believe their boss trusts them working from home... and 86% say they’ve taken advantage of their freedom while working remotely.

The complete report can be found at <https://www.jdp.com/blog/work-from-home-statistics/> ■

Sources: JDP, Digital Third Coast.

Become a More Engaging Speaker

In light of the pandemic, today's speaking engagements are much more likely to be done virtually rather than in person. Still, the basic premises from two leading authors remain the same. Read more below.

❖ **Focus on a single idea.** Many speakers make the mistake of overwhelming their audiences with too much information. Nick Morgan, author of "Targeted Leadership – Building a Team that Hits the Mark" recommends focusing a presentation on a *single* idea. "Write that one idea down in one sentence, and paste it up on your computer," Morgan

suggests. "Then eliminate everything else, no matter how beautiful a PowerPoint slide it's on, that doesn't support that idea."

❖ **Look at the big-picture rather than nitpicking over the small stuff.** "Ask yourself honestly, if YOU were attending the training session, would the information interest you, or bore you?" asks Jim Hopkins, author of "The Training Physical." "At a previous training, were participants listening intently – or half-heartedly while multi-tasking on other things at the same time?" Hopkins adds. "If the latter is the case, obviously you have some improving to do." ■

Quick Ideas

Embracing Resilience During Tough Times

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting each of us differently, some more than others. For those already suffering from a mental illness, the pandemic may be enough to push you "over the edge" – and assistance from a mental health professional, *such as your EAP practitioner*, may be in order.

For a lot of people, following some common-sense guidelines may be sufficient to enhance resilience during tough times. While NOT to be construed as a substitute for mental health diagnosis or treatment, the following strategies may help.

❖ **It won't last forever.** Remember your present situation is only temporary.

❖ **Reach out to friends and family.** Lean on supportive friends for assistance – especially positive, impactful people. Stay away from negative folks as much as possible.

❖ **Limit the news.** It's good to be informed, but scrolling through pandemic post after pandemic post

online, and/or leaving CNN on 24/7 is likely to make you feel worse! Turn on the evening news, then focus your attention elsewhere!

❖ **Keep in mind tough times you've gotten through before.** Death of a parent? Divorce? A job loss? Remember times in your past when you've gotten through difficulties and that you'll get through this, too!

❖ **Use humor.** What makes you laugh? Don't be afraid to binge watch some favorite TV shows (or movie) that really leave you laughing. Sometimes humor really is the best medicine.

❖ **Embrace your spiritual side.** Regardless of your religion, denomination, etc., embracing faith and hope has gotten many a person through a rough patch in life. Talk to a counselor, pastor, and/or take advantage of this time to really look within. ■

Source: Brad Hoefs, founder of Fresh Hope (<https://freshhope.us>)

Could you be Suffering from Compassion Fatigue or Burnout?

The following self-test may help determine if an individual is suffering, in particular from compassion fatigue, but also burnout. However, it is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or diagnosis. (Write in the number of the best response to each of the following questions using one of the following answers: 1 – rarely or never; 2 – at times; 3 – not sure; 4 – often; 5 – very often.)

1. I force myself to avoid certain thoughts or feelings that remind me of a frightening experience.
2. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of a frightening experience.
3. I have gaps in my memory about frightening events.
4. I feel isolated from others.
5. I have difficulty falling or staying asleep.
6. I have outbursts of anger or irritability with little provocation.
7. I startle easily.
8. While working with a victim I thought about violence against the person(s) who victimized.
9. I am a sensitive person.
10. I've had flashbacks connected to clients and families.
11. I've had first-hand experiences with traumatic events in my adult life.
12. I've had first-hand experiences with traumatic events in my childhood.
13. I've thought that I need to "work through" a traumatic experience in my life.
14. I've thought that I need more close friends.
15. I've thought that there is no one to talk with about highly stressful experiences.
16. I've concluded that I work too hard for my own good.

Items about clients and their families:

17. I'm frightened about things traumatized people and their family have said or done to me.
18. I experience troubling dreams similar to a client of mine and their family.
19. I've experienced intrusive thoughts about sessions with especially difficult clients and their families.
20. I've suddenly recalled a frightening experience while working with a client or their family.
21. I'm preoccupied with more than one client and their family.
22. I'm losing sleep over a client and their family's traumatic experiences.
23. I've thought that I might have been "infected" by the trauma of my clients and their families.
24. I remind myself to be less concerned about the well-being of my clients and their families.
25. I've felt trapped by my work as a helper.
26. I've felt a sense of hopelessness associated with working with clients and their families.
27. I've felt "on edge" about things that I attribute to working with certain clients and their families.
28. I've wished that I could avoid working with some clients and their families.
29. I've been in danger working with some clients and their families.
30. I've felt that some of my clients and their families dislike me personally.

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Items about being a helper and your work environment:

31. I've felt weak, tired, and run down as a result of my work as a helper.
32. I've felt depressed as a result of my work as a helper.
33. I am unsuccessful at separating work from personal life.
34. I feel little compassion toward most of my co-workers.
35. I feel I am working more for the money than for personal fulfillment.
36. I find it difficult separating my personal life from my work life.
37. I have a sense of worthlessness, disillusionment, resentment associated with my work.
38. I have thoughts that I'm a "failure" as a helper.
39. I have thoughts that I am not succeeding at achieving my life goals.
40. I have to deal with bureaucratic, unimportant tasks in my work life.

Scoring Instructions:

Make sure you responded to ALL questions. Next, circle the following 23 items: 1-8, 10-13, 17-26 and number 29. Now, ADD the numbers you wrote next to items circled. Note your risk of compassion fatigue:

- 26 or less – Extremely low risk
- 27 to 30 – Low risk
- 31 to 35 – Moderate risk
- 36 to 40 – High risk

To determine the risk of burnout, add the numbers you wrote next to the items NOT circled.

Note your risk of burnout:

- 19 or less – Extremely low risk
- 20 to 24 – Low risk
- 25 to 29 – Moderate risk
- 30 to 42 – High risk ■

Sources: Gary Yeast, BA, MS, LMFT, Fellow AAMFT; Ace Network; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; and Florida State University Psychosocial Stress Research Program.

Quick Ideas

Improving EAP Utilization

Despite their low or no cost, only an estimated 7-to-10% of employees take advantage of EAP services. Why is that? Here are a few of the leading reasons.

❖ **Employees are concerned about divulging personal information.** Even though EAP services are confidential, many employees are worried that the information may be leaked to management. In fact, EAP participation rates are usually better in companies where the management is considered trustworthy. In any case, employees should know that information revealed to an EA professional will only be released to their supervisor with the employee's permission.

❖ **Some employees consider their problem too small to be addressed.** EAPs are not only for people dealing with substance abuse or mental illness. They can also help employees needing assistance with eldercare concerns or stress stemming from financial worries or other problems. As one EA professional puts it, "Any problem worth losing sleep over is worth seeing the EAP about." HR can help increase EAP utilization rates by reminding employees these services exist and are free to use. Not every EAP service will have the same offerings so check with your provider or HR department. ■