

# How to Talk about Traumatic Events in the Workplace

Orlando. Dallas. Baton Rouge. There doesn't seem to be any end to the violence going on in today's world. Organizational psychologists, business professors, and corporate consultants offer some guidelines on how to address these terrible events in the workplace.

If you're a manager, be sensitive to the fact that many of your employees are likely distraught. Tell them that you sympathize with their concerns, and offer to set aside a time—whether it's a small group discussion or a larger forum—to talk through people's concerns.

If you're an employee whose company isn't acknowledging the tragedy, and you feel it should, bring your concerns to a trusted senior colleague or mentor in the office, suggests Kira Banks, an assistant psychology professor at Saint Louis University. Let that person know that employees are upset about what's happened, and ask whether it would be possible to organize a forum for any employees who wish to talk.

❖ **Be clear about your feelings and be compassionate.** Make sure you're being candid about your views, says New York University professor Erica Foldy. However, she adds, be prepared to acknowledge that other people may not feel the same way, and couch your statements with phrases like, "from my perspective" or, "This is a reaction I'm having."

Foldy recommends asking colleagues about their feelings and opinions. Even if you disagree, show them that you respect their views and sympathize with their distress by saying things like, "I can't imagine how you must be feeling right now." Acknowledging that most situations will have "multiple truths," Foldy says, makes it more likely that everyone will walk away ready to be productive.

❖ **Stay committed to the conversation, even if it becomes uncomfortable.** Chances are, you're not going to agree with all your co-workers over highly politicized issues like race and gun violence.

If the talk becomes too politically charged, use logic to

de-escalate the situation, advises Alison Davis-Blake, a business professor at the University of Michigan. Remember that people's reactions, especially in the immediate aftermath of a tragedy, are likely to be emotional.

❖ **Look into employer resources to help you and your co-workers cope.** Maybe you're not comfortable talking about potentially contentious events like the Dallas shootings with your co-workers, but you still need someone with whom to discuss your feelings. *Ask your employer if you can speak to someone with the company's employee assistance program.* ■

*Additional source: "Money" magazine.*

## Something We Should Know About?

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# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EAP professionals

Tips on Starting an EAP... pg 5

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## An Open Path to Access and Treatment

### How Online Wellness and Affordable Psychotherapy Can Aid Your Clients

By Lisa Isenhardt



*“Affordable psychotherapy can be a significant asset to any EAP as improved mental health can positively impact workplace satisfaction and performance. EA professionals can refer clients to Open Path when they need an avenue for accessing lower-cost therapy services.”*

The disparity of mental health care coverage and education for those of us who are either uninsured or underinsured is a well-known issue. According to *Consumer Reports*, 44 million Americans are suffering from a mental health problem. In one study, 90% of people with access to psychotherapeutic services and subsequent treatment reported significant long-term improvements.

Without treatment, however, mental health problems can persist and even worsen over time. Lack of insurance or limited funds to cover insurance co-pays and deductibles can prove to be significant barriers to access mental health care for lower and middle-income Americans.

Furthermore, a recent report from Conference Board, a non-profit think tank in New York, found that the majority of Americans continue to be dissatisfied with their work situations. The representative survey of 5,000 U.S. households found just

one-third (33%) of workers who were satisfied with their workload (Jayson 2012).

As we know, fatigue and feelings of being overwhelmed can cascade into other mental health concerns, acting-out behaviors, as well as substance use disorders. Consequences include poor work

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attendance, disruptions to workplace cohesion, and overwhelmed HR departments, to name just a few.

### Open Path Psychotherapy Collective

So the gist of the issue is this: When treatment is available, and employees can afford it, treatment for mental health concerns has been proven to work. However, while the majority of Americans are stressed mentally on their jobs, far too many simply cannot afford necessary treatment. How to address this gap?

Launched in spring 2013, the *Open Path Psychotherapy*

*Collective* is a nationwide network of mental health professionals dedicated to providing in-office mental health care — at a steeply reduced rate — to individuals, couples, children, and families in need. The Open Path model is simple: after the client pays Open Path a one-time, lifetime membership fee of \$49, we connect them to the therapist of their choice. After that, the client directly pays the therapist a negotiated rate that ranges between \$30-50 a session.

### Affordable Psychotherapy for All

According to a recent article in *Forbes*, “Resilience — the ability to cope and thrive in stressful situations — is associated with better attendance and job satisfaction. It’s also been shown to improve performance and reduce turnover. Resilient workers report less stress in their lives, are four times more likely to be satisfied on the job, and they’re 50% less likely to miss work in the first place” (Bruce 2016). One way that individuals can increase resilience in their lives is by working directly with a trained psychotherapist in one-on-one sessions.

Now that we’ve reiterated the need for psychotherapy, back to Open Path. The Collective serves

individuals, couples, children and families who are uninsured, underinsured, or unable to pay full market rates for therapy.

There are 2,100 therapists in the Collective to date, and the number is constantly increasing. All Open Path member therapists are licensed or provisionally licensed mental health care professionals with graduate degrees in psychotherapy, counseling, or a related field from an accredited institution. They have also passed our peer-reviewed online application process.

*Affordable psychotherapy can be a significant asset to any EAP as improved mental health can positively impact workplace satisfaction and performance.* EA professionals can refer clients to Open Path when they need an avenue for accessing lower-cost therapy services.

Open Path therapists offer a wide variety of specializations and modalities of treatment, including frequently sought options such as couples counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). *Our organization’s mission is to prioritize the accessibility and affordability of quality mental health care for all those who need it, regardless of health insurance or income level.* (Since its founding, Open Path has matched more than 3,500 clients across the country to affordable psychotherapeutic care. In addition, more than 9,000 students have taken one of the online mental health courses.)

### Online Wellness Solutions

Additionally, Open Path provides high quality, online, evidence-based mental health wellness courses designed to help working professionals develop greater psychological resiliency.

The online wellness courses offer employees the tools

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necessary to live more balanced lives, enjoy better relationships, and engage in healthier employment practices. Using evidence-based approaches and tested outcome measures, the coursework integrates educational and mindfulness-based principles to build psychological resilience. *The 18 courses are designed to complement the work of any company’s EAP services.*

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# What Employers Need to Know about Transgender Rights

A recent survey led by the DC Office of Human Rights found that nearly half (48%) of employers showed bias against hiring a transgender individual, even if the applicant was more highly qualified than others. And nearly 90% of transgender individuals reported experiencing workplace harassment.

As a result, HR and other professionals need to become educated and prepared when it comes to handling transgender issues, both as it relates to hiring and harassment and beyond.

Rob Wilson, human resources expert and President of Employco USA, says, “It is against the law to discriminate against applicants based on gender, race, or religion, and now the same holds true for transgender individuals as well. Thanks to *Macy vs. Department of Justice*, there is a legal precedent that prevents hiring staff from refusing or rescinding job offers upon finding out that a person is transgender.”

Wilson offers additional recommendations:

❖ **The legal documents might not match the preferred name/pronoun of the applicant or employee.** “On official legal forms, you must use the name and gender on the identification the employee gives you, regardless of how they present themselves in person. However, just because you

must do so on the legal forms, it does not mean you must do so on the company website or the person’s business cards, etc. Instead, use their preferred name.”

❖ **Engage in an interactive process.** “When it comes to issues of privacy, engage with the employee. Ask what pronoun they prefer. Ask if they want the other staff to know any details about their gender identity. Then, respect their choice.”

❖ **Allow them to use the bathroom of their choice.** “OSHA recommends that employers permit employees to use the bathroom of their choice, meaning that a transgender female should be permitted to use the female bathroom, or a transgender male should be permitted to use the male bathroom.”

❖ **Head problems off before they happen.** “Have an office-wide meeting with any managing personnel to let them know about how these issues will be handled. Update your handbooks to reflect that discrimination against transgender employees will not be tolerated. And, update your office dress code policy so that it is not gender-specific. In other words, instead of saying, ‘Men must wear slacks’ or ‘Women must wear skirts,’ say ‘Business casual’ or ‘No ripped clothing, logos, etc. allowed.’” ■

## Resources

📖 **Bud to Boss** workshop. Planning is work, but it doesn’t feel like progress, so we all want to “dive in,” “move forward” and “get started.” We are inclined to skip planning, and it’s a big mistake. Learn more at <http://www.budtoboss.com/coaching-feedback/are-you-prepared/>.

📖 **How to Matter: The Five Key Ways Companies Win**, by Peter Sheahan and Julie Williamson. In today’s wild, unpredictable economy, the authors explain how business success is not great products, it’s about offering value, becoming the obvious choice, and finding a way to *matter*.

📖 **Driven to Delight: Delivering World-Class Customer Experience the Mercedes-Benz Way**, by Joseph Michelli, (McGraw-Hill; December 2015; ISBN: 978-0-07-180630-5; \$27.00). “Humans don’t want to feel like a URL or a Twitter handle or even a consumer,” Michelli says. “We want to feel like we *matter*. We’ll always choose companies that give us that feeling.” The author explains how to do just for *your* clients. ■

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# Chestnut to Test Vital Critical Incident Tool

Chestnut Global Partners (CGP), a provider of culturally-aware employee assistance and wellness programs to companies worldwide, recently announced that it will be conducting a beta test of its new Critical Incident Tool (CIR), an instrument to measure the effectiveness of CIR, a worksite intervention frequently deployed by EAP providers in helping individual employees and organizations cope and recover from various catastrophes, disruptive events, and other forms of trauma.

The CIR tool was adapted from CGP's Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS), an industry-wide standard in tracking the effectiveness of EAP on employee readiness, performance and productivity. The study is designed to test the instrument's internal consistency and provide psychometric validation before putting the tool into production; participants are being actively recruited from a cross section of industries.

The ultimate goal is to bring to market a scientifically validated tool that establishes empirical benchmarks for critical incident response, enabling providers to better understand the nuances of the type of service needed for the specific crisis (such as robbery, death in the workplace, layoff, natural disaster), and thus establishing the CIR as the standard in assessing effectiveness and promoting resilience.

The test will be conducted in association with Patricia Herlihy Ph.D., RN, and owner of Rocky Mountain Research (RMR), a consulting practice that focuses on EAP, Work-Life and Wellness. RMR will be responsible for recruiting study

participants, administering the surveys, and collecting the data.

"While crisis intervention and CIR has evolved into a specialty mental health practice, the field has been lacking a standard instrument to gauge response outcomes," said Dr. Dave Sharar, a Research Scientist with CGP's Commercial Science Division. "The CIR finally gives providers of employee assistance programs a means of objectively measuring the impact their programs and interventions have in coping with and rebounding from a critical incident."

As mentioned, the CIR was

## Workplace Survey

### Is 9-to-5 a Thing of the Past?

A typical work day historically involved eight consecutive hours of effort for full-time workers, but today, most don't stop working when the clock hits 5 p.m. According to a new survey from CareerBuilder, nearly 3 in 5 workers (59%) believe the traditional 9-to-5 work day is a thing of the past. Forty-five percent of workers say they complete work outside of office hours; and 49% say they check or answer emails when they leave work.

The national survey was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder and included a representative sample of 3,244 full-time workers in the private sector across industries and company sizes.

"While smartphones and other technology allow us to remain connected to the office outside of normal

adapted from CGP's WOS, which is a psychometrically tested, validated, workplace-focused measurement tool that is easy to administer as well as being a free tool that currently over 600 organizations are using.

"It is wonderful news that CGP is stepping forward and developing an empirically sound measurement tool to guide the field in how best to evaluate the effectiveness of workplace intervention," said Dr. Herlihy. "Our plan is for this tool to better inform both practitioners and employers on the kinds of interventions that produce the greatest workplace impact." ■

business hours, it may not always be a good thing as workers are having trouble disconnecting from their jobs," said Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer for CareerBuilder. "Not surprisingly, younger workers 'attached to their mobile devices' are more likely to work and check emails past business hours, while older workers feel less pressure to check-in after they have put in a full day of work."

A higher proportion of workers in age groups 45 to 54 (65%) and 55 and older (61%), agreed that the typical eight-hour work day was a thing of the past than any other age group. By contrast, only 42% of workers aged 18 to 24 say the traditional 9-to-5 workday is outdated. ■

Source: CareerBuilder ([www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)).

An Open Path... cont'd from Page 2

Open Path is also pleased to report that an overwhelming 93% of students report that they would recommend the courses to friends, family, or colleagues. One student, Mark L. from Amherst, Mass., shared that, "Because of Open Path's Anger Management course I am handling myself better in stressful situations. My friends and family have seen a positive shift, and my life has actually become easier."

A student in the Los Angeles area reported that she and her partner, "both learned a lot about ourselves and each other from the online course. We are using the tools and applying them to our everyday lives, and now have a better understanding of how to conduct ourselves in different situations. We're working on building a stronger relationship."

The Open Path course catalogue includes: Burnout Prevention, Anger Management, Financial Wellness, and Communication Skills, to name just a few. The full list is available at <http://eap.wellness.openpathcollective.org/http://eap.wellness.openpathcollective.org/>.

## Benefits of EAP Wellness Solutions program

- ❖ Unlimited online access to all courses to participating EAP partners.
- ❖ Students can sign on and save their work online from any device connected to the Internet (iPhone and Android included).
- ❖ Self-directed, goal-driven learning pathways allow students to advance at their own pace.
- ❖ Successful student participation is confirmed instantly with a certificate of completion.

## Summary

It is very challenging for the average employee to handle all of the stressors of daily life on their own. By partnering with an organization



## Editor's Notebook

It's been my experience that networking always pays off: case in point, this month's cover story. Reeta Wolfsohn, author of last month's cover story and *Brown Bagger*, recently introduced me via email to Paul Fugelsang, Executive Director of the Open Path Psychotherapy Collective. EA professionals certainly understand the need for mental health services in the workplace, but this fact presumes that the employee client can afford treatment. What happens when this *isn't* the case?

That's where Open Path comes in. Open Path matches clients with a qualified mental health care clinician in their area at a reduced rate – between \$30 and \$50 per session. "The Collective serves individuals, couples, children and families who are uninsured, underinsured, or unable to pay full market rates for therapy."

The therapists in the Open Path network offer their services at a reduced rate to a small number of

clients in their caseload because they believe that lower-income clients should be able to access their services. Moreover, EAP partners participating in the Online Wellness Solutions program receive unlimited online access to all 18 of Open Path's courses.

In just three years since opening its doors, Open Path already has 2,100 therapists, 3,500 clients, and "more than 9,000 students have taken one of the online mental health courses." Impressive!

Finally, I wish to stress that the intent of this article is *only* to introduce readers to a model that's proven successful in helping clients who might not normally be able to afford, or have access to, mental health treatment. It is **not** to be construed as an actual endorsement of this organization or its services.

*Mike Jacquart*

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such as Open Path, companies can empower their employees to make mental health a priority in their lives. Whether they work directly with a trained professional in one-on-one therapy sessions or they learn new skills for more easily managing their relationships, work, and other responsibilities, clients can benefit deeply from improving their mental health. ■

*Lisa Isenhardt, MA, is the Program Director with Open Path. Lisa has a passion for bringing about a more just and healthier society through the field of non-profit advocacy. (Editor's note: The intent of this article is to introduce readers to a model that's proven successful in helping clients who might not normally be able to afford, or have access to, mental health*

*treatment. It is NOT to be construed as an actual endorsement of this organization or its services.)*

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## House Passes Mental Health Reform Bill

The House of Representatives recently passed one of the most significant bills targeting mental health reform in decades. The *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act* will address holes in the nation's mental health system by providing more hospital beds for people dealing with a mental illness who will need short-term hospitalization.

The bill will also require that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) establish an interagency committee to create evidence-based findings into systems of care.

HIPAA provisions may also be reinterpreted in the bill to further permit parents access to their seriously mentally ill child's medical information and treatment plan when their child is 18 or older.

Read more at <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/house-passes-most-significant-mental-health-reform-bill-decades-n611106>. ■

## Congress Passes Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, is excited and heartened by the news of the Senate's overwhelming vote to pass the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA). After also clearing the House, the bill now goes to President Obama for his signature.

This is the first time in decades that Congress has passed comprehensive addiction legislation and the first time Congress has ever supported long-term recovery. NAADAC views the passage of this act as a significant first step by Congress to fight the opioid epidemic and strengthen prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

NAADAC supports efforts to expand medication-assisted treatment availability, incorporate an evidence-based approach to treat-

ment, expanded education, SBIRT and support services, and create services focused on underserved populations.

However, while the act makes several significant changes and lays out a roadmap for addressing the opioid epidemic, NAADAC is disappointed by the lack of funding. The \$181 million authorized for this purpose pursuant to CARA is not sufficient to fund all of these efforts and falls short of funding the bold initiatives it is proposing.

NAADAC believes it is critically important that more funds be appropriated to ensure that CARA has a more meaningful impact on the daily struggles of those suffering from addictions and that addiction professionals face while working in addiction prevention, treatment, intervention and recovery support. ■

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## Managing a Negative Employee: Part I

No matter how carefully you pick the members on your team, you may still end up with a negative employee. These workers don't necessarily fall into the category of "toxic," but they're just kind of a drag with their cynical, pessimistic worldview.

Managing negative employees requires its own set of skills and approaches, according to David Lewis, president and CEO of human resources consultancy Operations Inc. And while the best course of action will vary depending on the situation's specifics, this dynamic shouldn't be ignored, because it can affect culture and the morale of other employees, he says.

If you're dealing with a negative employee, there are six steps to take. Two of them will be addressed here, with the remainder covered in the conclusion of this two-part article.

❖ **Look at the fallout.** If a person simply has a sour disposition but it's not preventing them or others from doing their job well, you probably don't need to address it, says David Dye, president of Trailblaze, Inc., a leadership training and consulting firm. However, if the person's negativity is compromising their strengths — for example, the brilliant data analyst's work goes unused because everyone avoids him — then it's important to address it, Dye says.

❖ **Find out why.** If you decide to proceed in addressing the behavior, think about whether there have been behavior changes recently, advises Kelly O'Connell, vice president in charge of hiring and retention at Irvine Technology Solutions. Is the negativity a constant or has the behavior escalated? If the latter, was there an event that led up to the change? "Individuals in the workplace live multi-dimensional lives, and other non-workplace stressors may impact work productivity and mood," she says. ■

Additional source: [www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com).

### Important EA News

## Training will Explain How to Start an EAP

There are currently no hands-on training programs for how to build or grow an employee assistance program. This means most small and medium-sized EAP providers enter the field with no knowledge of best practices, and little understanding of the nuts and bolts necessary to launch and successfully run an EAP.

In order to fill this gap in training, EAPA will, for the first time ever, offer a unique preconference all-day workshop, "Starting, Selling, and Growing an EAP" at the 2016 World EAP Conference

in Chicago. Experts Michael S. Klaybor, Ed.D., CEAP and Marina London, LCSW, CEAP plan on covering every aspect of that process including marketing, selling, implementing, and nurturing a fledgling EAP.

Attendees will be given dozens of customizable templates for every phase from a sample marketing PowerPoint to a sample statement of understanding, from a sample Employee Orientation to a list of lunch-and-learn presentation topics, and more.

They will use video, web-based examples of best practices, sample

presentations and paperwork and discussion to create an engaging teaching experience. Participants will be invited to ask questions throughout.

The course will take place on Monday, October 31, 2016. For more information, check out page 8 of the World EAP Conference brochure: [http://www.eapassn.org/Portals/11/Images/Conf-Ed/2016WEAPC/EAPA\\_2016\\_Preview\\_Book\\_h.pdf](http://www.eapassn.org/Portals/11/Images/Conf-Ed/2016WEAPC/EAPA_2016_Preview_Book_h.pdf)

For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.eapassn.org/2016Conf>. ■