

## EAP Matters

### *5 Reasons Why Negative Emotions Are So Hard To Manage*

Why is it that more than 21 million children and adults are diagnosed with depression each year and that depression is the leading cause of disability for adults aged 15-44? Why do forty million adults in the United States suffer from an anxiety disorder? Why can't we "just get over it" when we feel sad or worried?

It can be a struggle to combat negative emotions because they are there for a reason—to warn us of danger and gear up our minds and bodies for escape or self-protection, or to help us withdraw and conserve energy when we face a loss. But sometimes these reactions are unwarranted, too intense, or interfere with effective coping and problem-solving. Below are five reasons why negative emotions can be hard to manage.

1. Your brain is wired for survival, not happiness. That is why it keeps bringing up negative emotions, past mistakes and worries about the future. Because of this wiring, you can get stuck in repetitive cycles of self-criticism, worry and fear that interfere with your ability to enjoy the present moment.
2. It doesn't work to just shove negative emotions down or pretend they don't exist. Your mind will keep bringing them up again as a reminder that you have an ongoing problem that needs to be handled (even when there is nothing you can actually do to change things). Research suggests that suppressing thoughts while in a negative mood makes it more likely that both the thoughts and the negative mood will reoccur.
3. Your body and mind react to mental images and events as if they are events happening in the real world. You can get just as stressed by thoughts about an event as by the event itself. When negative feelings become chronic, they wear out your mind and body, causing inflammation, hormonal imbalance, or impaired immunity.
4. Negative thoughts feed on each other. Rumination can turn a controllable problem into a set of insurmountable difficulties.
5. The things you do to avoid or try to cope with feeling negative emotions may be more counterproductive than the emotions themselves. You may turn to alcohol or drugs (prescription or otherwise), which can have long-term negative effects on mood and motivation and have addictive properties. Getting angry and blaming others for your negative emotions can strain relationships. Retail therapy can lead to debt.

Your Employee Assistance Program is here for you! Contact EAP at 320.484.4555 for confidential support.