

CONNECTIONS

JUNE 2024

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1

The Recipe for Being Happy at Work

6 key ingredients for work satisfaction.

By Michael Wiederman, Ph.D., **Psychology Today**

- Research has identified the key ingredients for work satisfaction, including purpose, respect, and autonomy.
- The recipe for work satisfaction can serve as a standard for evaluating your experience and making decisions.
- No single workplace likely contains all six ingredients, but the recipe serves as an aspirational blueprint.

Research in psychology has identified several core needs that pertain to humans generally, and how these needs can be satisfied or thwarted in the workplace. Unfortunately, simply identifying what people want and need at work doesn't automatically translate into a healthy work setting, for several reasons. Sometimes an individual's attempts to meet their unique needs are disruptive to the group. Many times the structure, history, and goals of the organization are at odds with providing an ideal context in which people can work. And any time people come together on a regular basis, group dynamics can get in the way of optimal work conditions. So what is the value in articulating a recipe for work satisfaction? Well, without such a recipe the likelihood of making progress toward the ideal is much less likely. Also, the recipe can serve as a guide for evaluating a work setting, and deciding whether you want to join (or stay). Last, knowing the recipe empowers you to possibly create ways to meet at least some of the core needs for yourself, and perhaps even your coworkers.

1. Meaning and Purpose

Satisfying work is purposeful; it makes a difference. It doesn't have to be world-changing in impact, but it's necessary and contributes to some larger goal. Ideally, your work clearly makes a difference to someone somewhere. However, many of us work in specialized areas within large organizations. In those cases, it is important to be able to identify how what you do at work fits within the larger context, and the value of what you do as a contribution to the end goals that are meaningful.

2. Respect and Fairness

In a satisfying work setting, everyone feels respected as an individual and believes that everyone is treated fairly. That doesn't mean that everyone has to like each other, or even get along, but there isn't the perception that some people are put down or treated unequally. As a result, people feel safe being themselves. A key ingredient of an unhealthy workplace is the experience of a blame culture, which I wrote about here, or the perception that some people are treated differently because they are either scapegoats or "favorites" of management, or the group as a whole.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Welcome to our summer edition of the EAP Newsletter. As the days grow longer and the sun shines brighter, it is the perfect time to focus on your wellbeing. We understand that sometimes the hustle and bustle of work and personal commitments can be overwhelming, but getting outside to enjoy some sun and a warm breeze can be just what you need to center yourself. We encourage you to enjoy the outdoors whether it is solo, or with friends or family. This newsletter contains tips and resources that may help to promote a balanced and healthy mindset.

Included in this newsletter:

- The recipe for being happy at work
- 25 ways EAP can help, how EAP works and how to contact EAP
- Better mental health in the workplace begins with honesty and leadership
- Quick Take: Building First Responder Resilience
- 24 wellness tips for law enforcement officers in 2024
- How to help your teen through a breakup
- 30 Fun (free or low cost) things to do in Madison this summer

Thank you for reading and being a part of Team City! Let's make this summer one of growth, positivity and most importantly, mental well-being. We are here if you need us - your mental health matters!

~ The EAP Team



CITY OF MADISON EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
2300 S. Park St., Suite 111
Madison, WI 53703

Arlyn Gonzalez, EAP Manager: (608) 266-6561
Provides bilingual EAP services in English and Spanish

Tineisha Scott, EAP Specialist: (608) 266-6561

Tara Armstrong, Confidential Program Support: (608) 266-6561



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

3. Autonomy and Choice

Generally we prefer more rather than less choice and control over what we do and how we do it. In fact, humans tend to actively resist encroachment on their autonomy. So, a great way to discourage people is to insist that they have to do something, specifying when and how it has to be done in a rigid, limited way. Depending on the work, such specification may be necessary. In that case, it's important to emphasize that the rigidity is necessary because of the nature of the work or final product, and not simply because of a supervisor's needs for power or control. Ideally, workers are given as much latitude as possible as to when and how their work is done.

4. Camaraderie and Teamwork

Humans are social creatures, and working in a socially supportive setting is important for work satisfaction. Ideally you like the people with whom you work, share some degree of affinity or fellowship, and the group functions well as a cohesive team with a shared identity and mission. The antithesis of camaraderie and teamwork is the formation of cliques and widespread gossip, which I wrote about here.

5. Improvement Focus

People performing meaningful work want to do a good job. So, a satisfying work setting includes a shared focus on excellence and continued improvement. Ideally, everyone on the team is invested in doing their best, and helping each other develop professionally. So, candid constructive feedback is the norm, and is provided and received comfortably and appreciated.

6. Recognition

We need to be "seen" as individuals, and in a satisfying work environment, people feel valued as individuals. Each person's contributions are recognized by management and the group as a whole. In a healthy work culture, excellence and successes are openly celebrated and rewarded.

In Closing

It's easy to see how particular aspects of the most satisfying work settings are dependent on each other, and synergistically result in a happy, healthy workplace. For example, respect and fairness are prerequisites for camaraderie and teamwork. And an improvement focus and recognition are ingredients that enhance each other.

How might you use this six-ingredient recipe in your work? How might you share it with coworkers to assess the extent to which your work entails these six ingredients, and what might be done to improve in these areas?

The recipe describes an ideal, so it's unlikely that any particular workplace excels in all six areas. Still, the closer to the ideal, the greater the job satisfaction, employee retention, and overall productivity and success.



How does EAP work?

If you, your immediate family, or significant other experience a problem, you may contact EAP. The use of EAP is always confidential and voluntary. You may call and schedule an appointment virtually or in person. If you want to meet with EAP during work time, you can be allowed a reasonable amount of time to do so. In a visit with EAP, you can expect that the professional you see will provide you with support and help you explore ways to solve the problem.



Sometimes EAP will refer you to other resources, e.g., health care provider, other agencies in the community. EAP may be able to get you connected with the resource faster than you would on your own. In any case, you choose whether to go to the resource. Contacts with other resources would be done on approved leave in accordance with your department's policies and procedures. EAP (our internal specialists) and FEI (our external partner) are not meant to be long term therapy solutions, but we can help you get connected to long term resources. EAP is currently accepting appointments over zoom, phone or in person.

How do I contact EAP?

Internal Program Staff (608) 266-6561 or email us at eap@cityofmadison.com

FEI Behavioral Health (800) 236-7905

Available 24/7 at no charge.

FEI Behavioral Health is an EAP firm that the City contracts with for employees and families who wish to be assisted by a service "outside" the organization.



The EAP can help employees in various ways, and here are some ideas as to how!

Personal

1. Assess a personal problem or concern, and assist you in locating appropriate resources to help.
2. Provide short-term support and problem solving for a mental health concern until you get connected to a mental health provider through your insurance plan.
3. Support you in identifying mental health clinics that have reduced waitlist times so that your needs can be met more promptly.
4. Help you decide what type of mental health professional and counseling approach will work best for you, based on your needs, goals, and ability to pay.
5. Provide support and guidance for difficult, long-term decisions for you, your family, or others (e.g., divorce, retirement, or resignation, or choosing to accept a transfer, promotion, or life change).
6. Help you resolve conflicts or confusion associated with your mental health benefits or relationship with a provider.
7. Meet with your family and conduct an assessment of personal problems in your relationships, and then find resources to provide support and empower change.
8. Provide post-discharge support after a hospital stay or treatment program to help you stay motivated and involved in your self-help, recovery, or treatment recommendations.
9. With your written permission, communicate with people of your choice information about your care and wellbeing, if desired.

Professional

10. Discuss difficult challenges on the job related to relationships with peers or managers, and help you decide on effective ways to improve and build on them.
11. Provide guidance for improving your relationship with your supervisor.
12. Serve as a link between you and the workplace while you are a patient in a hospital being treated for a disease or severe illness, so you feel supported and less isolated until you are discharged.
13. Support you as you plan to return to work following sick leave.
14. Facilitate a back-to-work conference between you and your employer (supervisor, human resources representative, etc.) to discuss job expectations, accommodations necessary to support ongoing treatment or self-care, and to gain clarification on matters concerning employment benefits.
15. Offer counseling and support following a critical incident involving death, injury, or an event that could have led to death or injury, and help with resolving difficult emotions so memories of these events do not linger or interfere with your life.
16. Help with conflicts between you and a coworker with the goal of resolving it and improving productivity and job satisfaction.
17. Offer support and problem solving to address your concerns about administrative or disciplinary actions, and find ways to reestablish a good relationship with your employer.

Organizational

18. Provide employees with a variety of health, wellness, productivity, and life improvement information and materials about issues related to your concerns.
19. Provide pre-incident education to build resiliency and prepare before a critical incident occurs.
20. Help with improving communication and morale among work teams by skill-building and other training.
21. Work confidentially to survey and interview individual team members or work unit staff in order to gain insight into the sources of conflict, morale deterioration, or other group problems, and then suggest solutions based upon the findings.
22. Provide support and intervention to decrease absence due to mental health or family issues. Communicate information between a work unit and a person who is on leave.
23. Provide training or instruction on specialized topics related to workplace productivity like soft skills for improving communication, goal attainment, or managing stress.
24. Provide guidance and support in preventing burnout from workload and the negative effects of customer service stress.
25. (For supervisors) Assist you in understanding how to work effectively with employees and improve their productivity, and how to respond to employees in helpful ways, including EAP support, when personal issues interfere with performance.

If none of these ways are exactly what you were looking for, please reach out because we might still be able to help and/or identify the appropriate resources to get your needs met!



City of Madison Employee Assistance Program

2300 S. Park St., Suite 111. Madison, WI 53713

www.cityofmadison.com/employee-assistance-program

(608) 266-6561

For assistance 24/7, contact FEI (external EAP provider) at 1-800-236-7905

LEADERSHIP Matters

Better Mental Health In The Workplace Begins With Honesty And Leadership

By Kyle Samuels, **Forbes**

*Kyle Samuels is the founder & CEO of **Creative Talent Endeavors (CTE)** and an iconoclast in the world of executive search and HR consulting.*

The year 2023 is firmly in the rearview mirror, meaning business leaders have turned their eyes toward the road ahead, and while the new beginnings may seem exciting, the economic picture is still opaque and the global outlook is uncertain. Following a year shaped largely by waves of layoffs, concerns of a recession and increasing international turmoil, 2024 could prove to be just as difficult and unpredictable.

That atmosphere of chaos can easily translate to higher levels of anxiety, depression and distress—which are not only a drain on workers' mental health and well-being but problems that companies must anticipate because they can have an outsized impact on their bottom lines.

Per a 2022 Gallup poll, workers with fair or poor mental health were “estimated to have nearly 12 days of unplanned absences annually compared with 2.5 days for all other workers.” Generalized across the U.S. workforce, that missed work was estimated to cost the economy \$47.6 billion annually in lost productivity.

Meanwhile, prioritizing mental well-being has become increasingly important to working Americans. More than three-quarters of U.S. workers say they're looking for workplaces that support mental health, according to the United States Surgeon General's **Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being**.

But as with most components of a company's culture, addressing employees' mental health and well-being demands deliberate and bold leadership. To create lasting impacts and positive outcomes, managers will need to start at the top and lead by example. Whether or not you're cognizant of it, your team is looking to you to model healthy behaviors and self-care.

Prioritizing mental health will look different depending on the individual, but there is plenty of low-hanging fruit to use as a starting point. One place to begin is with work-life balance and boundaries. Managers, how often do you work through the lunch hour instead of taking a break? Consider taking time away from your desk to eat, and don't be afraid to invite your teammates to join you. When you leave the office, set clear “off hours”—times when you are not available to respond to work correspondence—and encourage your employees to do the same.

According to the American Psychological Association, only one-third of workers say “their employer offers a culture where breaks are encouraged,” and only two-fifths say “their employer offers a culture where time off is respected.” That's why it's critical for managers to model this behavior on a consistent basis. It reminds employees that it is acceptable for them to do the same.

Setting a solid example of self-care builds trust and can foster an atmosphere of psychological safety where employees feel valued, respected and cared for. It also breaks down the barriers to vulnerability, which will be key in creating an environment of open, honest communication—something managers will also need to pay close attention to.

When it comes to maintaining good mental health, eliminating stigma is half the battle. Talking openly with your team is one way to help erase the feelings of shame that often accompany mental health difficulties. One-on-one check-ins are an excellent avenue for conversations about mental health and psychological well-being, and when appropriate, consider sharing your personal experiences. This proved to be beneficial for Microsoft, where individuals began sharing their own experiences with their mental health.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

“We didn’t ask, but it has happened that many of our leaders stepped up and started telling their stories, their personal struggles or ones they’ve witnessed,” one senior director told Reuters. “And it has naturally become pervasive in the culture.”

Practice empathy when someone shares something with you. It’s important to keep in mind that employees will have different communication needs and styles, so try to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. This is especially important for neurodivergent employees, meaning those who live with a mental illness or those who experience varying levels of social or learning aptitudes.

Workers may feel nervous about asking for assistance or opening up. Be patient, as it will take time to build this new routine of checking in—and most importantly, remind your teammates that they will not be ostracized, penalized or otherwise punished for taking care of their health.

As you make these conversations a staple of your leadership style, remind your team regularly about the resources available to them. Consider meeting with a human resources representative to gain a comprehensive understanding of helpful benefits like an employee assistance program, or EAP. Request additional training or workshops to expand your company’s knowledge of and tools for mental health, like Fortune 500 company Unilever did.

Although there is no perfect formula or easy recipe for improving employees’ mental health, leading by example and opening lines of communication can help reduce the stigma that often prevents people from seeking help. Changing the way your workplace addresses mental health and well-being is a true win-win: You’ll be making a positive impact in the lives of employees, and you’ll help set up the company for better financial success.

FIRST RESPONDER FOCUS

Quick Take: Building First Responder Resilience

A Pinnacle precursor webinar from the 911 Training Institute’s Jim Marshall offers strategies for preventing PTSD, decreasing suicides and increasing happiness in first responders

By Kerri Hatt, **EMS1**

More and more first responders are lost to suicide, leaving public safety professionals searching for ways to help their colleagues before it’s too late. One promising approach is focused on increasing resilience, defined as the ability to advance despite adversity.

First responders handle an accumulation of daily stressors, traumatic events and major disasters. Resilient first responders are relaxed, engaged, flexible and happy, and able to tackle these stressors without suffering serious psychological damage.

As a precursor to the Pinnacle leadership conference, Jim Marshall, MA, the director of the 911 Training Institute; and Mike Taigman, improvement guide for FirstWatch, presented a webinar titled “Building Resilience to Prevent PTSD, Decrease Suicides, and Increase Happiness.”

Marshall and Taigman offered specific leadership strategies to build a resilient team of first responders.

Top quotes on building resilience to prevent PTSD

Here are some of the quotes that resonated from Taigman and Marshall’s presentation on mental health resilience.

“When leaders don’t acknowledge these events and they only delegate, that’s going to be a miss at the end of the day.” — Jim Marshall

“Post-event management strategy is a huge missing link in our professional industry.” — Mike Taigman

“Post-traumatic stress injury is what we need to see this as, as leaders and as front-line people, and embrace and provide support for it.” — Jim Marshall

Top Takeaways on how to build a resilient EMS team

People who suffer PTSD – which is likely underdiagnosed in first responders – have a significantly higher (six times higher) risk of suicide than the general population, according to the presenters. They shared how to prevent PTSD, treat PTSD and provide long-term support to first responders. Here are three takeaways from the webinar.

1. Why resilience helps prevent PTSD in first responders

Marshall uses the analogy of a battery to explain resilience. Think about your cell phone. That cell phone will hold a charge for only so long. The longer you use it, the weaker the capacity of the battery. “Each of us has mojo inside of us that is our battery to

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

handle life, to weather adversity,” Marshall said. “We need to have the energy to face and manage, travel through and repair from difficult experiences.”

“What we have is a lot of medics and first responders who are living on caffeine and willpower and not enough sleep,” so their resilience is compromised. “We have to stay charged; we need to stay in the green as much as possible, because the less resilience we have, the more impacted we are psychologically by events and the more it plays out over the quality of our life,” he noted.

The idea is to prevent the most serious fallout from traumatic events. “We are far more likely to prevent PTSD and suicidality, depression, people bailing from their careers if we are building resilience strategically,” Marshall said.

2. How do you build resilience in first responders?

While some first responders come on the job day one more equipped than others, we can strategically build up the resilience of all our employees by teaching resilience skills that they can use in the moment the traumatic stress occurs, Marshall advised. “Cortisol is not our enemy and stress doesn’t kill us, it’s what we do or don’t do with the stress and how we manage the cortisol.”

He explained first responders have trained themselves to disregard their stress cues, their doubts and fears, because in the moment, their No. 1 job is to take care of others. Newer research, however, teaches us that stuffing these emotions down is not effective. While repressing emotions may help the responder to function in the moment, the cumulative impact of the stress will be greater.

Instead, Marshall advises recognizing choice points; those intersections in time when responders can choose how to react in the present to impact their futures.

Notice the cues instead of disregarding them – anger, a tightening in the chest or stomach, fear – and through heart-focused breathing, down-regulate, acknowledge what’s happening and travel through it. Manage the stress in the moment, before, during and after, to recharge the resilience battery.

Intervention after a traumatic event is just as important. Taigman shared research that the earlier and faster intervention is provided after a traumatic event, it decreases the first responder will experience PTSD, as well as the severity.

3. PTSD is like any other injury in the line of duty; it can be healed

The concept of resilience is framed by building yourself up; building strength. Just as EMS providers need to stay fit to handle the physical stressors of the job, building mental strength will allow them to take the hits and be less likely to experience the symptoms of PTSD.

“Post-traumatic stress disorder is also post-traumatic stress injury,” Marshall said. “The stigma for responders to call something a disorder is deep and fixed, and we need to recognize; look, what we’re talking about is an injury in the line of duty.”

Just as medics need to be conditioned for lifting patients, they need to be conditioned psychologically to handle the mental lift. “What happens when a medic puts their back out? They’ve got a work-related injury and now they’re out,” Marshall compared. “What happens when someone lifts psychologically, and they strain the brain?”

Another important clarification in using injury, rather than disorder; you can heal PTSD. “Injury is usually something people think they can heal from, where a disorder is something they’re stuck with forever,” Taigman added.

“Most of your medics out there, 90% of your medics – this is my estimate – don’t believe you can heal PTSD. They believe you can only learn to manage the symptoms and therapy will help them cope with the symptoms,” Marshall noted. “This is not accurate. If people get help with EMDR or other evidence-based treatments, they can heal this.”

4. Traumatic events warrant a long-term continuum of care

PTSD, like a physical injury, can be healed. But like a deep tissue injury or sprain, it takes time and reconditioning. One problem common even in agencies that recognize the need for peer support, is that the response to a traumatic incident is immediate, but short lived.

“We have an incident, we bring in peer support and therapy dogs and psychologists and we do debriefings, and pay a lot of attention for a couple weeks, maybe three weeks, and then it’s back to business as usual,” Taigman summarized. But “the people most effected may not have completed their healing journey.”

In the first responder day-to-day world, you move on from these traumatic events because they are followed by another one, and another one, and you have to keep staying present, Marshall explained. “The problem is, the accumulation is not recognized with follow through.”

It’s important to recognize these high-impact events, whether it’s the death of a child, or the suicide of a fellow responder, and put in place a framework for managing things in the long term, Marshall advised. “There’s insidious, invisible pileup accumulation within our medics, within our other responders, that ends up taking this toll that we’re recognizing: increased suicidality, increased depression, increased self-medicating and relationship failures. So we need a systematic approach to be able to tend to and provide the care our responders need so that full continuum of care even beyond that first year.”

Marshall suggests a grid to manage how the person impacted is doing, not just that week, but the next week, the next month, the next 3 months, the next 6 months – a post-event personal care planner, which tracks the incident, and the resources being offered to the person in need, “whether it’s obvious people are struggling or whether they bury the struggle as we typically do, we want to lean into this.”

Strategically planning support elements and then reviewing the plan each week makes sure the ball doesn’t get dropped. “Somebody’s got to keep the pulse and let them know that it’s not forgotten,” Marshall said.

POLICE 1

24 WELLNESS TIPS FOR 2024

Family & Home

Skip the gym. Exercise with your family instead.

Spend time in nature.

Practice daily meditation.

Start journaling.

Connect with your spouse, children or family members.

Self-Care

Plan and book a vacation.

Schedule a massage.

Try acupuncture.

Unplug from social media.

Take care of your body by eating nourishing foods.

Physical Activity

Start a workout routine.

Get involved in Jiu-Jitsu.

Try yoga.

Focus on functional fitness training.

Communication

Talk about your day, your stresses and your feelings.

Listen to a friend.

Check-in on your strong friends.

Ditch the texts and make a phone call.

Create and maintain healthy boundaries.

Hobbies & Interests

Pick one day each month to reconnect with your family or friends. And make sure you don't miss it.

Pursue a hobby outside of LE, such as hunting, fishing, knitting, painting or dancing.

Read a book.

Dance like nobody is watching.

Learn a new language.





IT TAKES A VILLAGE

How to Help Your Teen Through a Breakup

Powerful emotions plus social media make teen breakups messier than ever.

By **Karen Cicero**, this article was originally published in the **Family Resource Center at childmind.org**, the website of the Child Mind Institute.

A former editor at Parents magazine, Karen Cicero is a seasoned freelance journalist specializing in parenting, travel, and children's book coverage. She lives in Bethlehem, PA, with her husband and daughter.

You probably remember all too well the heartache of a teen breakup — especially a person you dated for a while and maybe even thought was going to be “the one.” But when your own teen is going through a similar experience, it doesn’t mean words of wisdom automatically come to you. “It was rough for a couple of weeks,” one friend, whose daughter’s boyfriend broke up with her by text, told me. “While I could relate to how she felt losing someone who was important to her, I never had to do it under social media scrutiny.”

For sure, the digital age makes teen breakups more traumatic and dramatic. “Teen couples are often in touch with one another all day through text and Facetime,” says Lisa Damour, PhD, author of *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers*. “Some even do homework with Facetime open. The teens in my care who have romantic relationships are much more in contact with their partners than I am with my spouse. So, when those relationships go away, there’s the pain of the loss and there’s also an enormous hole left in that young person’s day.”

With social media, news of the breakup also travels fast in friend circles. “My son’s friends were texting him less than an hour after his girlfriend broke up with him because she posted about it on Snapchat!” said another mom friend. “He didn’t even have time to process it before his texts started blowing up.”

Social media pressure, more free time, and the fact that teens feel everything more deeply — highs and lows — conspire to make a breakup the not-so-perfect storm. “The emotional intensity during adolescence is higher than other stages of life,” notes Dave Anderson, PhD, senior clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute.

“We can’t prevent emotional distress in our kids, nor can we make it go away as quickly as we want to, but there are some things we can absolutely do and say to help,” says Dr. Damour.

How to handle the first few days

Shock, sadness, anger — your teen is feeling all kinds of intense emotions in the early days of a breakup. Even if they initiated the split or it was a mutual decision, they may still be having a tough time. “As parents we can fall into the trap of trying to help put it in perspective and rush in with stories about our own breakups,” says Dr. Anderson. “But that’s an instinct that we should try to quiet at least for a little while.”

Lead with empathy. Try to resist asking your teen for more details than they want to share, says Dr. Anderson. Instead, give them options, saying something like, “I know this must be incredibly hard for you. If you want to talk about it, great. If you just want someone to be around you when you’re doing your homework or watching TV, I’m also here.” If your teen responds that “I’m fine” but you can clearly see that they’re not, give it a day and follow up with, “Honey, I want you to know, I’m worried about you, and I want you to know that I’m here for support.”

Welcome their friends. Encourage your teen to invite a couple of pals over for a movie night and supply the ice cream. In fact, their friends might have already suggested it. “I’m moved by how naturally and creatively friends help one another,” says Dr. Damour. “The support of friends (and the comfort of ice cream) is more than just a happy distraction. It helps your teen realize that people still want to hang out with them.”



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Keep your opinion about the ex to yourself. Perhaps you never thought they were right for each other and are happy that the relationship ended. Or you may have considered the ex a “bonus kid” and will miss having them around. Either way, this isn’t the time to share your feelings with your teen. You can vent to a partner, friend, or therapist.

But speak up about the friend zone. If your teen tells you that they’re going to try to be friends with their ex, gently discourage it at least in the short term. “It’s very hard to go straight from romance to friendship,” says Dr. Damour. “There are still a lot of tender feelings and it’s easy to get hurt.” Instead, she suggests saying something like, “You may be friends down the line, but it’s hard to move such intense feelings right into the friendship.”

Alert their therapist. If your teen is already being treated for depression, anxiety, or another mental health challenge, fill in their therapist so they have another trusted adult to talk to about what happened and help them get over the hump.

How to Handle the Next Phase

After a few days in a funk, it’s time to ease back into routines. Here’s how to help your teen get in the swing of things again:

Tell them they’re not alone. Teen still hunkered down in their room with the door closed? Empathize with what they’ve been through — but also help them look to the future. Dr. Anderson suggests starting out with, “I’m really sorry to watch what you’re going through. I’ve been through it, everybody I know has been through it, and you’re not alone in this.” At this point, you might want to share a breakup story from when you were their age. Then work how to move forward into the conversation. You might say, “I’m not asking for you to be better or recovered or over this person. But there’s a balance between feeling your feelings and getting back to your routines, which will help you feel better.”

Help them reflect. Chances are, some things have made your teen feel better over the last few days and some have made them feel worse, says Dr. Damour. Guide your teen to tease out what’s helped and what hasn’t — and to be totally honest with themselves. “Lots of teens will say, ‘It’s good for me to still be following my ex on social media because it helps me feel still connected,’” says Dr. Anderson. Ask your teen “How does it help?” if they see their ex out having fun with friends. If they’re not willing to sever social media ties entirely, suggest that they temporarily mute them, so their ex’s posts don’t pop up in their feed. On the flip side, urge them to lean more into strategies that have been helpful, whether it’s cuddling with the dog, baking, watching beloved reruns, or going for a run.

Keep them busy. While routines are important, distractions are valuable too. Offer to take them somewhere fun. Opt for hands-on places (like an escape room, bowling, or pottery class) rather than passive options where it’s easy to zone out. Of course, avoid places that may remind your teen of their ex.

Watch for overanalyzing. Sure, it’s a good sign overall if your teen talks about the breakup with their besties. But hashing it out with various friend groups over and over again for days may make things worse. If you notice that happening, it’s even more important to provide one of the distractions above. You can also enforce your regular screen-time rules.

Seek professional support. It’s normal and even healthy to be upset by a breakup. But there are a few red flags that parents should keep in mind. “If your teen is being terrible to themselves and others after a few days, they may need professional support to develop coping mechanisms,” says Dr. Damour. Dr. Anderson adds that it takes most teens about two weeks to start feeling the breakup less acutely and be on their way to returning to normal. If you don’t see signs of that, set up an appointment with a mental health professional. Breakups can be a trigger for a teen’s depressive episode.

Embrace the silver lining. Although it’s difficult to watch your teen be so upset and not be able to “fix” it, “keep in mind that for teens, there’s tremendous value in well-handled psychological distress,” says Dr. Damour. “It shows them that they have the ability to handle painful emotions and find a way through.” She adds that the experience will also foster empathy: “When one of their dear friends gets their heart broken, someone who has been there will be able to offer far better support than a teen who hasn’t walked in those shoes.”



30 Free to Low-Cost Things to do This Summer

Allen Centennial Garden - Free and open to the public dawn to dusk. Activities and events are also held at the gardens.

Bike Rides - Rent bikes in Madison

Chazen Museum of Art - Free

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - Trails that explore restored prairie, oak savanna, and woodland. Boardwalks with observation decks offer views of the upper Yahara River, deep marsh, and sedge meadow. A pier provides canoe/kayak access.

Cooking Campfire - Cook a meal on a solo stove or firepit in your backyard or at a nearby park.

Governor Nelson State Park - Sand beach, boat launch, fish cleaning facility, picnic areas and playground equipment, prairie restorations and over 8 miles of trails. Native American effigy mounds can be seen on the Woodland Trail. \$8 Daily Parking fee.

Henry Vilas Zoo - Free. Offers activities/events. View website for more information.

Hiking - The City of Madison Parks Division has a list of hiking options throughout the city.

Hopscotch - It is a children's game that can be played with several players or alone. Hopscotch is a physical and cognitive workout.

Kids Bowl Free - Registered kids receive 2 free games of bowling each day of the kids bowl free program all summer long. Ages 2-15.

Kids Fishing Day - The first 300 kids receive a free fishing rod and bait. The day normally coincides with the Wisconsin "free fishing weekend", so adults can fish without a license. A free lunch of hot dogs, chips, and soft drink will be provided after the fishing. June 1st, 2024 9 AM- 12 PM at Warner Park Lagoon (2930 N. Sherman Ave).

Kids in the Rotunda - Packed with family-friendly entertainment and boundless opportunities for laughter and learning, this series promises six unforgettable events that are free and open to all. Summer sessions run May 4th - August 10th.

Lower Yahara River Trail - 2.5-mile trail provides an off-road trail connection between the City of Madison and the Village of McFarland.

Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) - Art Cart, Art Cart EXTRA! For Kids 3 and above. Free outdoor art programs travel to parks, playgrounds, beaches, and outdoor festivals throughout Dane County. Begins on June 8th and ends on August 18th. No pre-registration required. Contact: 608-257-0158

Madison Public libraries - Free planned events and activities

Marcus Theaters Value Tuesdays - non-members pay \$7, members pay \$6 for movie tickets. Deals on concessions and drinks for members.

Olbrich Gardens - Explore 16 acres of outdoor gardens. Look inside the conservatory. View their website for listing of free events.

Park Picnic - Find fun ideas on Pinterest.

Playgrounds - The City of Madison Parks Division has a list of playgrounds around the city.

Prairie Kids Club (Sun Prairie) - There is a wide variety of equipment for children to enjoy (trampolines, bounce castles, mats, toys. Slides, climbers, games, and balls). Parents free. Children 1 year and up between \$8-\$12

Rock Painting - Collect rocks, purchase cheap paint, and paint the rocks. You can put words on them and leave one on neighbors doorstep (peace, shine, sunshine).

Scavenger hunt - A scavenger hunt is a game in which the organizers prepare a list defining specific items, which the participants seek to gather or complete all items on the list. Pinterest has hunt pages that can be printed off for free.

Splash Parks - The City of Madison Parks Division has a list of splash pads around the city.

Sun Prairie Explore Children's Museum - \$8 per person age 1 and up. Contact: 608-478-5456

The Lakeshore Path - Viewing the lake, glimpsing the wild creatures who live along its margins, meditating on the beauty of nature, and sharing the company of friends.

UW Geology Museum - Free. Take a peek into Wisconsin's deep history.



Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

UW Space Place - All events are free. Visit their website for list of events.

Vitense Golfland – Indoor/Outdoor themed miniature golf (\$5-\$22 per person).

Wisconsin Historical Society - Explore the Wisconsin Historical Society’s collections, research your family history, teach and learn Wisconsin history, and more.

Wisconsin Veteran’s Museum – View military history exhibits. Attend free events.



Warner Park Accessible Playground

*Thanks for reading,
we hope you found the information useful!*

**You can reach any of us by calling the
EAP Office at (608) 266-6561**

Arlyn Gonzalez, agonzalez@cityofmadison.com
Provides bilingual EAP services in English and Spanish

Tineisha Scott, trscott@cityofmadison.com

**External Available 24/7:
FEI Workforce Resilience (800) 236-7905**

Tara Armstrong, tarmstrong@cityofmadison.com

To learn more about your external EAP services, please contact FEI at 1-800-236-7905 or sign in to **FEI/AllOneHealth member portal** (for instructions on how to create your account, please visit the **EAP website**).