

CONNECTIONS

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WHAT'S NEW IN EAP

FEI, our partner for external EAP services, has a new name- they are now AllOne Health. It is only a name change, nothing else is changing, same phone number and website, same login process and providers. Please see the following information.

City of Madison Announcement to Staff and Employees – Outreach Message

Your mental health and well-being matters. That is why we at the city provide both internal and external Employee Assistance Program services as one of our benefits, providing mental health counseling, legal, financial, and work-life support services for all associates and family members.

Our EAP partner, FEI Behavioral Health (FEI) recently announced that they will now be doing business as AllOne Health. This is primarily a name change that went into effect on January 1, 2025. Access to your EAP benefits will continue without interruption.

Learn more about what is included in your Employee Assistance Program and how to access your benefits by reviewing the attached promotional flyer.

If you're interested in learning more about AllOne Health, you can visit AllOneHealth.com or follow them on [LinkedIn](#).

For any questions about this update or your EAP benefits, please reach out to eap@cityofmadison.com and we will point you in the right direction.



As the snow melts and we welcome the renewal of spring, it's a time for reflection, growth, and self-care—especially as we continue to navigate through uncertain times. Spring invites us to embrace change, to shed what no longer serves us, and to cultivate new habits that nurture our mental health. In the face of shifting challenges, it's essential to remember that taking care of ourselves is not just a personal priority, but a collective one. This season, let's focus on creating balance, finding resilience, and supporting one another as we move forward together. Your well-being is a cornerstone of our success, and we are here to help you thrive. Watch for the trainings that we will be offering in the next couple months through Organizational Development:

- Suicide Prevention: March 18, 2025 and September 10, 2025
- Highs and Lows of Substance Abuse: April 17, 2025
- Calm in the Chaos: May 6, 2025
- Leading with Compassion: June 11, 2025
- Conflict Management: July 9, 2025

And AllOne Health (formerly FEI) has many webinars that you have access to as a City of Madison employee. You can access them on their [website](#).

~ The EAP Team



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Life comes with challenges. Your Assistance Program is here to help.

Your Assistance Program can help you reduce stress, improve mental health, and make life easier by connecting you to the right information, resources, and referrals.

All services are free, confidential, and available to you and your family members. This includes access to short-term counseling and the wide range of services listed below:

Mental Health Sessions

Manage stress, anxiety, and depression, resolve conflict, improve relationships, and address any personal issues. Choose from in-person sessions, video counseling, or telephonic counseling.

Life Coaching

Reach personal and professional goals, manage life transitions, overcome obstacles, strengthen relationships, and achieve greater balance.

Financial Consultation

Build financial wellness related to budgeting, buying a home, paying off debt, resolving general tax questions, preventing identity theft, and saving for retirement or tuition.

Legal Referrals

Receive referrals for personal legal matters including estate planning, wills, real estate, bankruptcy, divorce, custody, and more.

Work-Life Resources and Referrals

Obtain information and referrals when seeking childcare, adoption, special needs support, eldercare, housing, transportation, education, and pet care.

Personal Assistant

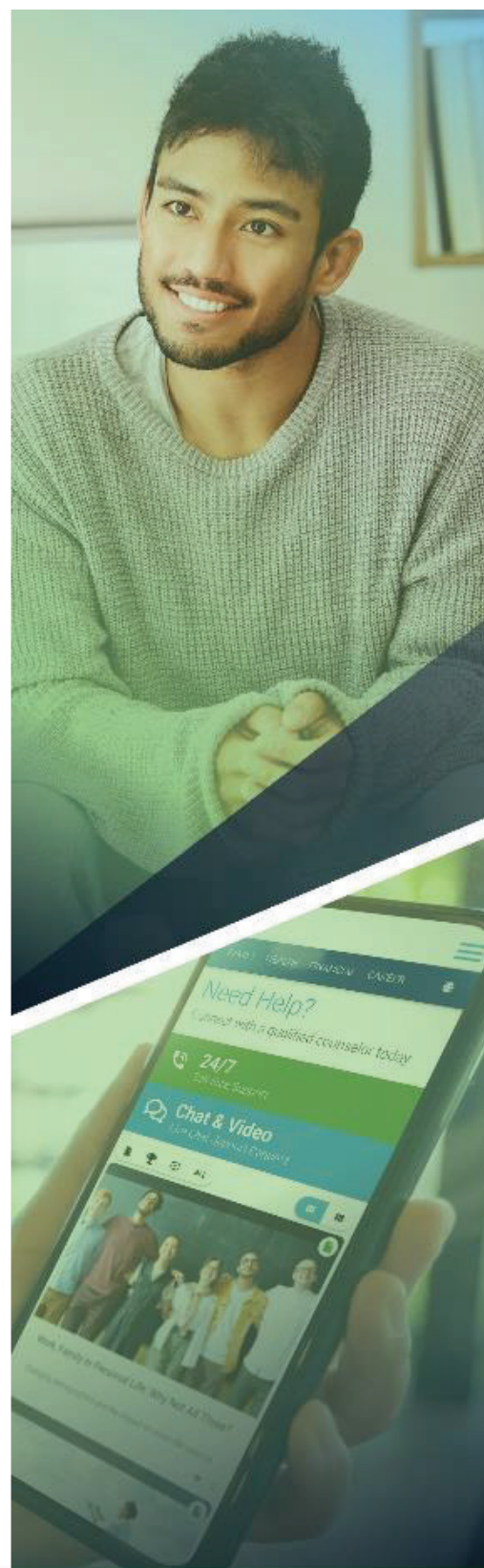
Save time with referrals for travel and entertainment, seeking professional services, cleaning services, home food delivery, and managing everyday tasks.

Medical Advocacy

Get help navigating insurance, obtaining doctor referrals, securing medical equipment, and planning for transitional care and discharge.

Member Portal

Access your benefits 24/7/365 through your member portal with online requests and chat options. Explore thousands of self-help tools and resources including articles, assessments, podcasts, and resource locators.



Contact AllOne Health
Call: 800-236-7905
Visit: fei.mylifeexpert.com
Code: madison

ALLONE[®]
HEALTH

LEADERSHIP Matters

How to Use Conflict to Drive Positive Change

AllOneHealth.com

Conflict is a natural part of life, whether in personal relationships, at work, or even within ourselves. But not all conflicts are created equal. Amanda Ripley, journalist and author of *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out*, distinguishes between two types of conflict: **high conflict** and **good conflict**. Understanding the difference can transform how we approach disagreements and help us move beyond entrenched positions.

High Conflict vs. Good Conflict

In Ripley's framework, **high conflict** is the kind of disagreement that escalates quickly and becomes all-consuming. It involves intense emotions, demonization of the other side, and a sense that there's no way out. High conflict often traps people in a cycle of escalation, making it hard to think clearly or find common ground.

In contrast, **good conflict** is constructive. It's the kind of disagreement where both sides feel heard, and there's room for understanding. Good conflict encourages curiosity, problem-solving, and finding solutions that satisfy everyone's needs without shutting down the other person or resorting to personal attacks.

Ripley's insights show that it's not about avoiding conflict entirely; it's about fostering the right kind of conflict—the kind that leads to growth, insight, and stronger relationships.

Managing Conflict: Understanding Over Resolution

Rather than rushing to resolve a conflict immediately, Ripley suggests that a better approach is to focus on understanding the root causes of the disagreement. When considering the 'understory' of any conflict, there are four primary categories: care and concern; respect and recognition; power and control; and stress and overwhelm. For each of these types of conflicts, here are three strategies to help manage conflict in a way that prioritizes understanding:

1. **Practice Active Listening:** Instead of preparing your counterargument or waiting for your turn to speak, listen to understand. This means acknowledging the other person's perspective, even if you don't agree. By validating their feelings or concerns, you create a space for dialogue that is less about winning and more about mutual understanding.
2. **Avoid Tripwires:** Ripley highlights that certain topics or phrases can act as emotional "tripwires" that immediately escalate a conflict. For example, phrases like "you always" or "you never" often trigger defensiveness. By being aware of these tripwires, you can choose more neutral or open-ended language that keeps the conversation productive and reduces the chances of escalating the conflict.
3. **Use "Looping" to Reflect and Clarify:** One of Ripley's most effective tools for managing conflict is "looping," which involves repeating back what the other person is saying in your own words. This technique shows that you are actively listening and gives the other person a chance to correct any misinterpretations. For example, you might say, "It sounds like you're saying that you feel overlooked in meetings, is that right?" Looping helps de-escalate emotional tension and fosters a deeper understanding of the other person's perspective.

By focusing on understanding rather than jumping straight to resolution, we can shift from high conflict to good conflict, creating healthier and more productive conversations. The goal isn't necessarily to "win" the conflict but to navigate it with empathy, respect, and a deeper understanding of the needs at play.

There may be times when it's helpful to seek guidance from a mental health professional. To learn more, contact your Assistance Program. Services are free, confidential, and available to you and your family members. You can access them 24/7 by visiting **Member Support**.





IT TAKES A VILLAGE

How to Navigate Culture and Values in Parenting

By Iman Iskander, **The Gottman Institute**

Parenting is an exciting time, but it comes with its unique set of challenges. When you're a part of a cross-cultural couple raising children, these challenges can take on a whole new dimension.

Cultural and religious differences can add an extra layer of complexity to this parenting challenge. You can navigate this complexity with effective communication skills and empathy. Adding an attitude of compromise, together with skills in compromise, you can create a harmonious parenting journey.

Here are 5 questions to think about when you meet cross-cultural parenting challenges:

1. How do the cultural and religious differences play out in your relationship?

Imagine one parent comes from a culture where extended family involvement is the norm, while the other values more independence. Understanding these differences is the first step. This dynamic might play out in everyday situations, like deciding on the level of involvement grandparents should have in childcare or deciding on the role of religion in your family.

2. How do your cultural norms conflict with your parenting values?

You may face a dilemma where your cultural norms clash with your shared parenting values. It's crucial to recognize the area of disagreement and potential conflict early on.

Cultural norms are often deeply ingrained, and you may not immediately question the values or beliefs underlying them. A clash presents an opportunity for you to delve into and understand the hidden areas of disagreement so you can address it constructively.

The Gottman Method of therapy offers an exercise designed to assist couples in revealing the hidden dreams within their conflict. By understanding these underlying dreams, you can approach the issue constructively and work towards a resolution.

Seek Harmony Through Empathy Exercise:

- Put yourself in your partner's shoes. If your partner values communal support due to their cultural background, empathizing with their perspective fosters understanding and builds connection.
- Recognize that there are not necessarily right and wrong perspectives but rather two valid truths.
- Acknowledge that your partner's viewpoint is their reality, shaped by their cultural background and personal experiences.

3. Where is the Intersection of Culture and Parenting Styles?

Your partner might have grown up in a culture where discipline is more authoritarian, while you lean towards a nurturing approach. Finding common ground where your parenting styles intersect is key. For instance, explore how you can blend these approaches to create a strategy that is age appropriate for your child. It must feel supportive yet set clear boundaries for your child.



Compromise is key. Embrace compromise as a dynamic process of integration of culture and beliefs. It's not about sacrificing one culture for another but finding a blend that honors both backgrounds.

Compromise doesn't mean giving up your perspective or values either. Instead, it involves finding a middle ground that respects both cultural beliefs and perspectives.

Imagine a scenario where you want your child to participate in traditional cultural events, but your partner is concerned about the child feeling overwhelmed. Through the Art of Compromise, you might decide to attend the events but introduce them gradually, ensuring your child's comfort.

Rooted in the principles of Gottman Therapy, crafting a compromise becomes a cornerstone for couples seeking harmony. Couples work together to weave elements of each

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partner's culture into a parenting approach that reflects shared values. The key is finding common ground that respects cultural heritage while staying true to cherished core values.

4. Do You Need Consistent Parenting Guidelines?

Yes. Now that you have compromised, sit down together and create a set of parenting guidelines that blend both your cultural influences. Consistency is reassuring for both parents and children. Commit to your common goals for parenting, focusing on consistency as a key element. By agreeing on what you have in common and your shared goals, you have created your own relationship culture compass which can serve you in navigating the path forward with parenting. The compass honors the richness of each person's cultural background. Use your relationship culture compass often to ward off conflict.

5. Is it Time to Seek External Support?

Sometimes, it helps to seek external support. Consider engaging in the Gottman Art of Compromise exercise with a trained therapist. This exercise helps couples navigate their differences and find solutions that honor both perspectives.

Remember, you're a team, and navigating these cultural and values differences together strengthens your bond. Your children can benefit from the richness of both your backgrounds, creating a diverse and inclusive environment.

In essence, by embracing empathy, establishing consistent guidelines, and crafting compromises inspired by the Gottman method, you're not just navigating culture and values in parenting — you're creating a unique tapestry that weaves together the best of both worlds.

Your journey might have its twists and turns, but with love, understanding, and the Gottman approach, you're well-equipped to face it all and raise thriving, culturally enriched children.

Author Iman Iskander's Bio

Iman Iskander is a Certified Gottman Therapist and Discernment Counselor with over 20 years of experience. She is the founder of Culture of Care, a boutique practice in the heart of Sydney, Australia. Her passion is helping couples find a way out of their ongoing struggle.

Laughing is good for your mind and your body – here's what the research shows

By Janet M. Gibson, **The Conversation**

Amusement and pleasant surprises – and the laughter they can trigger – add texture to the fabric of daily life.

Those giggles and guffaws can seem like just silly throwaways. But laughter, in response to funny events, actually takes a lot of work, because it activates many areas of the brain: areas that control motor, emotional, cognitive and social processing.

As I found when writing "An Introduction to the Psychology of Humor," researchers now appreciate laughter's power to enhance physical and mental well-being.

Laughter's physical power

People begin laughing in infancy, when it helps develop muscles and upper body strength. Laughter is not just breathing. It relies on complex combinations of facial muscles, often involving movement of the eyes, head and shoulders.

Laughter – doing it or observing it – activates multiple regions of the brain: the motor cortex, which controls muscles; the frontal lobe, which helps you understand context; and the limbic system, which modulates positive emotions. Turning all these circuits on strengthens neural connections and helps a healthy brain coordinate its activity.

By activating the neural pathways of emotions like joy and mirth, laughter can improve your mood and make your physical and emotional response to stress less intense. For example, laughing may help control brain levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, similar to what antidepressants do. By minimizing your brain's responses to threats, it limits the release of neurotransmitters and hormones like cortisol that can wear down your cardiovascular, metabolic and immune systems over time. Laughter's kind of like an antidote to stress, which weakens these systems and increases vulnerability to diseases.



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Laughter's cognitive power

A good sense of humor and the laughter that follows depend on an ample measure of social intelligence and working memory resources.

Laughter, like humor, typically sparks from recognizing the incongruities or absurdities of a situation. You need to mentally resolve the surprising behavior or event – otherwise you won't laugh; you might just be confused instead. Inferring the intentions of others and taking their perspective can enhance the intensity of the laughter and amusement you feel.

To “get” a joke or humorous situation, you need to be able to see the lighter side of things. You must believe that other possibilities besides the literal exist – think about being amused by comic strips with talking animals, like those found in “The Far Side.”

Laughter's social power

Many cognitive and social skills work together to help you monitor when and why laughter occurs during conversations. You don't even need to hear a laugh to be able to laugh. Deaf signers punctuate their signed sentences with laughter, much like emoticons in written text.

Laughter creates bonds and increases intimacy with others. Linguist Don Nilsen points out that chuckles and belly laughs seldom happen when alone, supporting their strong social role. Beginning early in life, infants' laughter is an external sign of pleasure that helps strengthen bonds with caregivers.

Later, it's an external sign of sharing an appreciation of the situation. For example, public speakers and comedians try to get a laugh to make audiences feel psychologically closer to them, to create intimacy.

By practicing a little laughter each day, you can enhance social skills that may not come naturally to you. When you laugh in response to humor, you share your feelings with others and learn from risks that your response will be accepted/shared/enjoyed by others and not be rejected/ignored/disliked.

In studies, psychologists have found that men with Type A personality characteristics, including competitiveness and time urgency, tend to laugh more, while women with those traits laugh less. Both sexes laugh more with others than when alone.

Laughter's mental power

Positive psychology researchers study how people can live meaningful lives and thrive. Laughter produces positive emotions that lead to this kind of flourishing. These feelings – like amusement, happiness, mirth and joy – build resiliency and increase creative thinking. They increase subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Researchers find that these positive emotions experienced with humor and laughter correlate with appreciating the meaning of life and help older adults hold a benign view of difficulties they've faced over a lifetime.



Laughter in response to amusement is a healthy coping mechanism. When you laugh, you take yourself or the situation less seriously and may feel empowered to problem-solve. For example, psychologists measured the frequency and intensity of 41 people's laughter over two weeks, along with their ratings of physical and mental stress. They found that the more laughter experienced, the lower the reported stress. Whether the instances of laughter were strong, medium or weak in intensity didn't matter.

Maybe you want to grab some of these benefits for yourself – can you force laughter to work for you?

A growing number of therapists advocate using humor and laughter to help clients build trust and improve work environments; a review of five different studies found that measures of well-being did increase after laughter interventions. Sometimes called homeplay instead of homework, these interventions take the form of daily humor activities – surrounding yourself with funny people, watching a comedy that makes you laugh or writing down three funny things that happened today.

You can practice laughing even when alone. Intentionally take a perspective that appreciates the funny side of events. Laughing yoga is a technique of using breathing muscles to achieve the positive physical responses of natural laughing with forced laughter (ha ha hee hee ho ho).

Some tips on how to get started with laughing yoga.

Researchers today certainly aren't laughing off its value, but a good deal of the research on laughter's influence on mental and physical health is based on self-report measures. More psychological experimentation around laughter or the contexts in which it occurs will likely support the importance of laughing throughout your day, and maybe even suggest more ways to intentionally harness its benefits.

Author Janet M. Gibson's Bio

- APRIL
- BLOSSOM
- BREEZE
- BUD
- BULBS
- BUNNY
- BUTTERFLY
- CHICK
- DAFFODIL
- EASTER
- EGGS
- GRASS
- GREEN
- HATCH
- JUNE
- MARCH
- MAY
- NEST
- PUDDLE
- RAINBOW
- ROBIN
- SEASON
- SHOWERS
- SUNSHINE
- THAW
- TULIP
- UMBRELLA



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

**You can reach any of us by calling the
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**External Available 24/7:
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To learn more about your external EAP services, please contact AllOne Health at 1-800-236-7905 or sign in to **AllOne Health member portal** (for instructions on how to create your account, please visit the **EAP website**).