

## EAO Supervisor Newsletter--September 2020

### Employee Training for Professional/Personal Development and Troubling Times

Did you know that our partner, LifeMatters, provides free training and educational programs in a variety of different formats? Several UW-Madison employee groups have taken advantage of this service.

We recently spoke with Sarah Carroll, from HR CoP and Mandy Stib, from DoIT, about their recent experience working with LifeMatters to bring "Self Care During COVID-19" to UW-Madison HR professionals. They were particularly motivated to offer training to the HR community, as they have been working especially hard since March to handle the issues that have arisen due to the spread of COVID-19. Sarah explained, "Our work includes serving as a resource to others, and HR professionals reported difficulties in managing their own self-care." After consultation with the EAO, Sarah contacted LifeMatters directly to set up the training. The 1-hour training session was offered six subsequent times, providing ample opportunity for the large group to attend a session that would work with their schedules. Over 225 people in the HR community attended a session, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Sarah and Mandy encourage others to reach out to LifeMatters for their training needs, and they share that their experience working with LifeMatters demonstrates that our partners at LifeMatters are able to "do what it takes to support us in creating what we envisioned. In the end, we couldn't have been happier with our trainer and her approach."

### LifeMatters Training Options

- **Lunch and Learn:** Parenting, getting organized at work, managing life outside of work, stress, improving communication skills and managing wellbeing.
- **Workplace:** Developing interpersonal skills, defining organizational boundaries, empowering managers.
- **Orientation:** EAP overviews for employees and managers.
- **Webinars:** Monthly and archived webinars on a variety of life and workplace topics.

For more information and to request a full training catalogue:

[training@empathia.com](mailto:training@empathia.com) or  
Haleh at [hpals@empathia.com](mailto:hpals@empathia.com)

LifeMatters requests a 4 week lead time to coordinate and set up trainings.

### Responding to Hardship, Part 1 of 2

As many employees prepared for many on campus to return to work, EAO has received an increase in requests on how to respond to instances of stress in others. In response, we have conducted short training sessions on tips and strategies on responding to the hardship, stress, and loss of others, as well as engaging in managing our own reactions to the stress of others. This month, we have highlighted a couple strategies from a document created to support these efforts, and will continue to promote them in the coming months. If you would like to access the full two page document, reach out to EAO at [eao@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:eao@mailplus.wisc.edu).

**You don't have all the answers, and that's okay.** When faced with someone else's hardship or loss, you may not know the "right" thing to say or do. COVID-19 may be particularly challenging because it presents scenarios to which there are no ready answers. Rather than avoiding or trying to fix the situation, be honest about what you know and don't know.

*Tip:* Do not make promises you can't keep. Instead try "I don't know the answer. I'll see what I can find out and will follow up with you."

**Consider your response.** While it is a normal reaction to want to take away pain, it is not always possible. Additionally, COVID-19 is creating unique challenges without clear solutions. The virus may be new to us, but our experience of not knowing what to say when someone faces loss may be familiar.

In the coming months a family member, friend, co-worker, or community member may share news with you related to work or financial hardship, physical or mental illness, death of a loved one, or anger and confusion about the current crisis. It may be helpful to think now about how you might respond.

*Tip:* Notice the emotion the other person is feeling and use that as a point of connection. If someone has just lost a parent, for example, try to relate to their anger and confusion instead of sharing what your experience of losing your parent was. Direct comparisons can feel dismissive.

*Tip:* A component to any healing process is compassionately accepting the reality of the situation, and leaning into and acknowledging that discomfort, rather than avoiding it.

*Tip:* Offer people choices if possible. "I have information that might be helpful for you on x, y, and z. May I send it to you?" This allows the person to accept or decline your offer and helps them to feel control in an overwhelming situation.

Next month, we will discuss how to handle the reactions of others and offer practical information on what to say to others faced with hardship.

### **October 8<sup>th</sup> is National Depression Screening Day**

Change, transition, and experiencing periods of uncertainty, fear, and stress can cause people to develop symptoms of depression or other mental health conditions. For some people, mental health screenings can be a useful tool to think about symptoms of stress they may be experiencing, put a name to them, and guide next steps for seeking help and support. National Depression Screening day will be occurring this year on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Though a mental health screening does not diagnose a mental health issue, it can be helpful to validate experiences and help some people reach out to a qualified provider to address uncomfortable symptoms. If you are concerned about the mental health of yourself or a loved one, consider exploring a mental health screening from Mental Health America here: <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools>

### **LifeMatters Monthly Resources and Promotions**

[https://www.empathia.com/promos/current\\_wpo\\_complete.php](https://www.empathia.com/promos/current_wpo_complete.php)

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