

# Mindful Living: Your EAP Guide to Wellness

FALL 2023

## EXAMINING THE ROLE OF VALUES IN OUR LIVES

While our thoughts and feelings are constantly changing, our values tend to be more stable over time. Values provide us with direction as we go about our lives. Some ways to think about your values are by asking yourself questions such as:

- 1) How do I want to treat myself and others?
- 2) What is most important to me whether I am having a really great day or a really bad day?

Values play a central role in our decision-making process. They are the principles, beliefs, and ideals that hold significance in our lives. Living in accordance with our values allows us to live more intentionally and provides us with some direction on how to manage challenging situations with integrity. Personal values can differ significantly from one individual to another, and can be influenced by cultural, religious, familial, and experiential factors. While some values are more universal, such as honesty, respect, and compassion, others are more context-specific like work, environmental, or social values. Recognizing and appreciating the diversity of values within our community is crucial for fostering compassion and connection.

There are many ways to clarify your values. A simple internet search will provide you with values lists, exercises, and self-assessments to assist, if needed.

### Examples:

<https://brenebrown.com/resources/living-into-our-values/>

<https://www.div12.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Valued-Living-Questionnaire.pdf>

Once you have identified your most important values, try and narrow down the list to 3-5 of your most important values. At times in life when you are faced with difficult decisions, you may have to choose between two important values. During these times, it is important to have a clear understanding of what is most important to you. For instance, a challenging situation might lead you to have to choose between values, such as loyalty or honesty, or between adventure versus stability.



## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:



List your top 3 values:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Towards Moves:** List ways in which I am behaving according to my top values.

**Away Moves:** What are the things I do that push me further away from my values?

What are my thoughts/internal self-talk that gets in the way of living my values?

What are some other obstacles that get in the way when trying to live a values based life?

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## COUPLES COUNSELING AND YOUR EAP

Even the strongest partnerships face challenges at times. Communication breakdowns, broken trust, external stressors, health issues, caretaking responsibilities, life transitions, and financial strain are just some of the many difficulties couples face on a regular basis.

Couples counseling, also referred to as marriage counseling or relationship counseling, is a form of therapy designed to help partners address and resolve conflicts, improve communication, and deepen emotional intimacy. A trained counselor can provide you with emotional support, unbiased feedback, and help you navigate a plan moving forward. Couples counseling provides a safe, supportive space for both partners to express their feelings, fears, and aspirations.

Many insurance companies do not cover the cost of couples counseling, as marital discord itself is not a diagnosable issue. Your Employee Assistance Program offers you access to no-cost, barrier free counseling sessions, including couples and family counseling.



### Are you on a waiting list?

Your EAP can schedule you with a licensed professional within 1-3 days. We have day and evening hours available to accommodate your schedule and are available to answer any questions or concerns.

**Call (419) 475-5338 and book your appointment today!**

## Relationship Refreshers

There may be days when it is important to take personal time to “decompress” after work, rather than immediately engaging with your significant other. This helps to stop “carry over stress” from a difficult day from negatively impacting your relationship.

You are free to use your EAP benefits for any needs. Wellness visits or check ins can be an excellent way to maintain and continue mental wellness.

Your EAP benefit is not billed to your insurance.

1. Communication is key: Open and honest communication is the foundation of a healthy relationship. Make an effort to express your feelings, needs, and concerns to your partner, and also be an active and empathetic listener.
2. Spend quality time together: In our busy lives, it's easy to overlook the importance of spending quality time with your partner. Plan activities that both of you enjoy and make time for regular date nights.
3. Show appreciation and gratitude: Regularly express your appreciation for your partner's efforts and qualities. Small gestures of gratitude can go a long way in strengthening your bond.
4. Resolve conflicts constructively: Conflicts are a natural part of any relationship. When disagreements arise, focus on finding solutions together instead of trying to prove who's right or wrong.
5. Foster intimacy: Physical and emotional intimacy are crucial in a relationship. Make time for affectionate gestures, and don't forget the importance of non-sexual touch, such as hugging and holding hands.
6. Practice forgiveness: Holding onto grudges and past mistakes can poison a relationship. Learn to forgive each other and move forward with a positive outlook.
7. Seek professional help, if needed: If you're facing significant challenges or communication breakdowns, consider seeking the guidance of a couples therapist. A neutral third party can help you navigate through difficult issues and provide valuable insights.

Remember that relationships require effort and continuous nurturing. By applying these tips and being committed to each other's well-being, you can build a stronger and more fulfilling partnership.

As we embark on this new season together, let us remember that your EAP is always here to support you and your loved ones. Whether you need assistance with personal challenges, relationship concerns, stress management, or any other aspect of your well-being, your EAP is just a phone call away.

## MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:

Take a walk around your neighborhood or a local park and seek out things that bring you joy in the environment. Pay attention to various sights, sounds, and sensations, such as the color of the sky, the feeling of the breeze, the sound of rustling trees, and smell of fall leaves.

This activity can help increase the focus on positive and pleasurable external surroundings, which can be helpful in reducing internal distress.

# BENEFITS OF LESS "SCROLLING TIME"

The average person spends just under seven hours every day looking at a screen<sup>1</sup>, with a global average of 4.8 hours spent visiting mobile social media apps.<sup>2</sup> Reducing time spent consuming social media could have amazing benefits, such as the following:

- **Improved relationships and reduced feelings of loneliness** – With the accessibility of connecting with many people all at once via social media, on the surface you may feel like you are surrounded by social connections – but are those connections real and meaningful? Reducing your social media intake could help you to nurture your perhaps-neglected offline relationships.
- **Improved self-esteem** – Social media can cause people to draw comparisons between themselves and others, comparing things such as appearance, achievements, or financial or marital status.
- **More Zzz's and an increase in quality sleep** – Not only would you probably manage to go to bed a little earlier if you were less attached to your phone, but less blue-light exposure would mean reduced disruption to your body's production of melatonin, the hormone responsible for helping you to sleep.<sup>3</sup>
- **Enhanced productivity at work** – Less social media interruption could increase your focus and attention and help you to overcome creative blocks.

You don't need to quit social media fully to experience these benefits. In fact, quitting social media suddenly could heighten anxiety and feelings of FOMO (fear of missing out) in the short term. Reducing your app time to 30 minutes per day or unplugging from social media for a week can really boost your overall wellbeing and give you a chance to reset.<sup>4,5</sup>

## SO, HOW DO I UNPLUG AND RECHARGE?

- Gradually reduce your screentime weekly.
- Make plans to spend time away from the screen.
- Turn off notifications for social media apps.
- Stop scrolling and start strolling! Increase your physical activity and connectedness with nature.
- Commit to a digital detox.
- Have technology-free hours in your day or technology-free zones in your home.

## ARE YOU FEELING UP FOR A CHALLENGE?

A month away from your favorite social media apps could help to promote healthier social media habits in the long term and provide noticeable improvements to your physical and mental health. Perhaps you could pledge to be scroll free for 30 days with the upcoming "Scroll-Free September" initiative.

1. Moody, R. (Revised 2022, March 21). Screen time statistics: Average screen time in US vs. the rest of the world. Retrieved June 10, 2022, from <https://www.comparitech.com>

2. Chadwick, J. (2022, 12 January). Time to put down the smartphone? People spend nearly a THIRD of their waking hours on mobiles by averaging 4.8 hours a day on apps, research shows. Daily Mail. Retrieved 10 June 2022 from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk>

3. National Sleep Foundation. (Revised 2022, 12 April). How blue light affects sleep. Retrieved 10 June 2022 from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org>

4. Hunt, M. G., Marx, R., Lipson, C., & Young, J. (2018). No more FOMO: Limiting social media decreases loneliness and depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 37(10), 751–768.

5. Lambert, J., Barnstable, G., Minter, E., Cooper, J., & McEwan, D. (2022). Taking a one-week break from social media improves well-being, depression, and anxiety: a randomized controlled trial. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 25(5), 287–293.

**Your EAP team is here for you any time you need us. There is no issue too big or too small to talk to a professional about. All information is kept private and confidential including from your employer. Please contact **419-475-5338** to schedule an appointment.**



**Remember to ask us about the myStrength app, which is a behavioral health app that can assist you in meeting your health and wellness goals.**

