



EMPLOYEE

ASSISTANCE NEWSLETTER

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PROVIDED BY SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SLEEP BETTER WITH THE 3-2-1 METHOD

In today's fast-paced world, quality sleep is often one of the first things we sacrifice.

Yet sleep is foundational for physical health, emotional well-being, concentration, productivity, and stress management. If you find yourself struggling to fall asleep, waking during the night, or feeling tired despite spending enough time in bed, improving your sleep hygiene may help. One simple and effective strategy is the 3-2-1 Method.

THE 3-2-1 METHOD PROVIDES THREE EASY GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW BEFORE BEDTIME:

3 Hours Before Bed: Stop Eating

Finish your last meal or snack at least three hours before bedtime. When you eat close to bedtime, your digestive system remains active while your body is trying to prepare for sleep. This can lead to discomfort, indigestion, heartburn, or acid reflux that may interfere with falling asleep and staying asleep.

Late-night eating may also affect blood sugar regulation and can signal the body to remain alert when it should be winding down. Allowing sufficient time between eating and sleeping gives your body a chance to complete much of the digestive process before bedtime.

2 Hours Before Bed: Stop Drinking Fluids

Hydration is important throughout the day, but consuming large amounts of fluids close to bedtime can increase the likelihood of waking during the night to use the restroom. These interruptions may seem minor, but they can fragment the sleep cycle and reduce the amount of restorative deep sleep your body receives.

By reducing fluid intake about two hours before bed, you can help minimize nighttime awakenings and improve sleep continuity. If you need a drink, take small sips rather than consuming a full glass of water.

1 Hour Before Bed: Stop Using Screens

The final step is often the most challenging. Put away phones, tablets, computers, and televisions at least one hour before bedtime. Electronic devices emit blue light, which can suppress the production of melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate the body's sleep-wake cycle.

In addition to light exposure, online activities can stimulate the brain when it should be relaxing. Work emails, social media, news feeds, and streaming content can increase mental activity and make it harder to transition into sleep mode.

Instead, use the final hour before bed for calming activities such as reading a book, stretching, journaling, listening to soothing music, or practicing relaxation techniques.

Small Changes, Big Results

Good sleep hygiene doesn't require a complete lifestyle overhaul. The 3-2-1 Method offers a simple framework that helps your body and mind prepare for rest. By stopping food three hours before bed, fluids two hours before bed, and screens one hour before bed, you can create healthier evening habits that support deeper, more restorative sleep.

Better sleep can improve mood, resilience, focus, and overall well-being, making it one of the most valuable investments you can make in your health.

REMINDER: Healthy sleep hygiene benefits many people, but individual needs vary. Employees should consult their healthcare provider before implementing significant changes to their eating, hydration, or sleep routines, particularly if they have a medical condition or are receiving treatment for health concerns.

PROMOTING OPTIMISM AND HOPE

For a lot of us, life has felt hard and heavy for quite some time. It can feel overwhelming to wake up each day and witness so much suffering and hardship, in addition to enduring one's own.

How do we honor what we are feeling and experiencing and not get lost in the dark heaviness of it? One way is to promote optimism and hope.

Before we get into how to promote optimism and hope, let's clarify a few things. The use of therapeutic terminology has exploded over the last several years, so for the purpose of this article optimism, toxic positivity, and hope will be defined as the following:

- **Optimism** is the mental attitude of expecting good things to happen and looking at the bright side of situations
- **Toxic positivity** is the act of rejecting, suppressing, or invalidating negative emotions and replacing them with a forced, overly positive outlook
- **Hope** is an optimistic state of mind, based on the desire for a positive outcome and a confident expectation that it is possible

If optimism is looking at what may be the harsh realities of what we are facing and asking, "what can I/we do about it," hope must be present. To seek solutions, we must maintain a sense of hope. WITH HOPE THERE IS A WAY THROUGH IT. Optimism may even look like a calm, spiritual acceptance of what may come, because in that there is still hope.

Hope is helpful and necessary to avoid moving into learned helplessness. What we don't realize sometimes is that we may be holding the keys required to unlock the door. This is hard to recognize through the lens of learned helplessness because we've been taught to look outside of ourselves for the answers for something to change.

Don't mistake optimism for toxic positivity. Optimism doesn't necessarily mean that you think everything will be ok. It's that you maintain hope



that somehow things will work out, even if it's not in the way you want or have envisioned. Optimism is having faith in yourself, that you will be ok in some shape or form, no matter what an outcome may be. It is trusting you have the inner strength and resilience to find a way through whatever obstacle may be present. It's having skills rooted in emotional intelligence and cognitive flexibility to navigate whatever life may throw at you. So how do we "do" it?

Some strategies listed below can help support the development and fostering of these concepts.

- Be mindful of what you are taking in online. Our minds are powerful and, because they are so powerful, it is important we find balance and that looks different for everyone. Try to be informed about the difficult and challenging aspects of what is happening in our country and the world at large AND about the amazing and beautiful differences being made in the world, in spite of all of the trials and difficulties. Seek out positive news sources and consider a social media fast of some kind
- Identify binary thinking patterns. These are the black/white or good/bad type of thinking patterns. Because our minds are so powerful, we need to be aware of what are called the "three Ps". These are attributions that are

personal, pervasive, and permanent. These thoughts may not be about yourself directly, they may be about humanity, the planet, work, anything that bothers you.

- **Personal:** Thoughts like "this always happens to me," "why me?," "I knew I'd screw [this] up"
- **Pervasive:** "Nothing ever goes right," "things are never going to improve"
- **Permanent:** "Things will never get better," "I'll always be like this." To challenge these thoughts, write down three statements you caught your brain thinking that are either personal, pervasive, or permanent. Next to those thoughts, write down all the evidence you have that verifies your initial thought. Finally, write down all the evidence you have that you know to be true that COUNTERS the initial statement and evidence.
- **Stress reduction.** Easier said than done! Optimism is actually one of the eight competencies of emotional intelligence, according to the Six Seconds Model of Emotional Intelligence. Rather than measuring positive thinking, they look at optimism in terms of

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CARING FOR AGING LOVED ONES: RESOURCES FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS



As we get older, so do our parents and other loved ones.

Over time, they may need more help with everyday activities, transportation, medical appointments, meals, finances, or other aspects of daily life. For family members stepping into a caregiving role, it can be difficult to know where to begin.

Caregiving can also feel daunting and overwhelming. In addition to the time and energy involved in caring for someone, families may also find themselves trying to navigate unfamiliar healthcare systems, community programs, insurance requirements, and senior services. Fortunately, there are a number of local and statewide organizations that can help. Some provide caregiver education and support, while others offer case management, transportation, meal programs, or assistance finding services. Learning about these resources and making use of the support available can make the caregiving role much easier to navigate.

It is also important for caregivers to pay attention to their own well-being. Caring for an aging loved one can be rewarding, but it can also take an emotional and physical toll. Caregivers often put their own needs aside while focusing on the person they are helping.

If you have connected with available caregiving resources and still feel overwhelmed, talking with a counselor may help. Counseling can provide a place to work through stress, establish healthy boundaries, and find ways to balance caring for a loved one with taking care of yourself. If you need additional support, the counselors at Saint Alphonsus EAP are available to help you navigate this transition for both you and your loved one.

Listed below are some organizations that can help caregivers access the help and information they need when caring for an aging loved one:

Idaho Commission on Aging

The Idaho Commission on Aging provides programs and resources designed to help older

adults remain independent and continue living in their homes and communities. It also offers information and assistance for families caring for individuals with dementia and other age-related needs.

<https://aging.idaho.gov/>

Idaho Caregiver Alliance

The Idaho Caregiver Alliance provides educational materials, caregiver support, and information about caregiving resources throughout Idaho. The organization also offers a free caregiver navigator service that can help caregivers develop an individualized care plan.

<https://idahocaregiveralliance.com/>

Southwest Idaho Area Agency on Aging

The Southwest Idaho Area Agency on Aging (SWIAAA) serves Boise and surrounding communities and offers a variety of programs for older adults and family caregivers. Services may include caregiver support, respite care, transportation assistance, meal programs, and connections to other community resources. SWIAAA also offers the Community Care Program, which provides free case-management services for caregivers of individuals experiencing memory concerns, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease.

<https://www.a3ssa.com/>

AARP Idaho Caregiver Resources

AARP Idaho provides information about local agencies, organizations, programs, and services available to family caregivers. Its caregiver resource guide can be a helpful starting point for families who are unsure where to turn for assistance.

<https://states.aarp.org/idaho/caregiver-resources>

Seniors Blue Book

Seniors Blue Book provides a free directory of senior services and caregiver resources in the Treasure Valley. The directory includes information about senior housing, home care, healthcare services, and other senior services and caregiving resources.

<https://seniorsbluebook.com/local/Idaho-Boise>

EAP COUNSELORS

SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Jared Belsher – Supervisor MA, LCPC, NCC

Jared is a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) and national certified counselor (NCC) who has worked in outpatient mental health clinics and in private

practice since 2007. He received a bachelor's Degree in Political Science and a master's Degree in Community Counseling from Northern Arizona University. His approach to counseling is strength-based, which means that rather than dwelling on

things that are wrong, he focuses on the strength individuals have, and how they can use those strengths to overcome their obstacles. He uses a person-centered approach and additional counseling techniques such as cognitive-behavioral

therapy (CBT) to help clients discover healthier ways to cope and think about a problem.

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one's ability to seek solutions to a problem. It's a measure of creative thinking, imagination, and resourcefulness. These skills are much harder to access when we are in the middle of a stress response (fight/flight/freeze). When we are experiencing a stress response, binary thinking is far more likely to occur, making it feel easier to give up when things don't go as planned. We reduce the likelihood of an intense or chronic stress response when we incorporate stress reduction practices into our daily lives. Meditation, a walk, time with someone you like, a nap, and getting out in nature are great places to start.

- Envision the life you'd like to have. This engages in active hope. Active hope does not mean that you are attached to a specific outcome, it asks of you, "what would you like to have happen." As you start to envision or dream and scheme about the kind of life you'd like to have, you tune into your hope. Granted, our inner critic may get really loud and argue with hope, but this provides us with the opportunity to shift our thinking patterns.

- Get a clear view of reality
- Identify what you hope for in terms of the direction you'd like things to move in
- Take steps to move in that specific direction, start with the first next step
- Take small steps toward the world and life you want. Sitting around wishing or wanting things to be different is not enough. It's a great start in recognizing what you do and don't want but the next piece is starting to DO something.
- Identify one small ACTIONABLE step you can take today.
- No one became an Olympian, bestselling author, or top surgeon overnight. It was a series of small everyday decisions. Most great things feel impossible until we start to break them down.
- Practice Gratitude. Not only does this improve our mental wellbeing and make us more pleasant to be around but it can also help shift a stuck mindset.

- Write down or share out loud with one person each day something you are grateful for. The harder the day the more important it is to practice gratitude.
- Prepare. Prepare not just for a scary or ugly outcome but one that works in your favor.
- What can you do if your dream doesn't come true or if something terrible happens to our society tomorrow?
- What can you do if the dream does work out but a little bit differently than expected or what can you do if you're pleasantly surprised about something wonderful that has occurred on a bigger scale for our communities?

Hope and optimism aren't things we either have or don't have. They are practices we can return to each day, especially when life feels hard, by reminding ourselves that even small steps can create meaningful change. When we stay connected to what matters, trust in our resilience, and keep moving forward one step at a time, we make room for hope to grow.

EAP COUNSELORS

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Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW

Jenny Lee has been practicing as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for nearly a decade. She has worked in the mental health field for more than 20 years in a variety of treatment settings including but not limited to schools, day treatment centers, hospitals, and local community agencies. Jenny Lee has provided treatment to children, pre-teens and teens, and adults in individual, group, and family settings.

Jenny Lee is skilled in working with complex family units, emotional and behavioral issues, trauma, depression, mood disorders, anxiety, co-occurring diagnosis, psychotic disorders, self-harm, suicidal ideation, gangs, and those involved with foster care and Child Protective Services. Jenny Lee practices from a strength-based approach to treatment, while using a combination of interventions tailored to meet each individual's needs.



Lisa Johnson, MA, LCPC

Lisa builds strong therapeutic alliances to help create meaningful change. She has provided therapeutic services for schools, hospitals, first responder agencies, military bases and EAPs.

She has been an EMDR practitioner for over 20 years and has advanced training in Accelerated Resolution Therapy, Internal Family Systems and DBT. She believes passionately in the transformative power of compassion and connection to increase resilience in individuals, couples, families and communities.

Saint Alphonsus Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Regular Appointment Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday
(special appointment hours by request)

Phone: (208) 367-3300

Locations:

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Jared Belsher, MA, LCPC, NCC
Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW
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