



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

February  
2024

## EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

*The New Jersey Civil Service Commission's Employee Advisory Service (EAS) Newsletter contains useful articles and information for managing various well-being and work-life issues in order to create a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace. EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance.*



### UPCOMING WEBINAR

#### MANAGING THE STRESS OF RELATIONSHIPS

 **REGISTER NOW**

Date: February 22, 2024  
Time: 2:00-3:00 PM

#### About the Webinar:

This session will discuss the stress caused by the relationship challenges in our lives and suggest several strategies for improving the quality of our relationships to reduce both stress and conflict.



### WHAT'S INSIDE

- Page 2: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
- Page 4: February is American Heart Month
- Page 6: Improving Your Memory: An Overview
- Page 7: EAS In Action
- Page 8: Upcoming Webinars

# MAINTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Having supportive people in your life, whether they are friends, family, a spouse, or a significant other, can be a lifeline during challenging times. Recognizing their value may leave some to wonder how to maintain those relationships. Below are a few tips that can aid in maintaining healthy relationships.

## Benefits of Maintaining Healthy Relationships

First, identify the benefits of maintaining healthy relationships. Healthy, long-term relationships can help create the foundation for a solid emotional base. Often, people can be hard on themselves and forget to give themselves the grace they give others. Partners and loved ones can, a lot of times, have a more positive image of you than you have of yourself. This is known as the Michelangelo phenomenon, in which loved ones believe in your ability to be your ideal self, thus providing positive messages and encouragement to get you to that ideal self. Your loved ones can push you to be the best that you can be, because they see and believe you can achieve your goals.

Committed, healthy relationships allow you to bounce back from stress and trauma, be more enthusiastic about life, and be comfortable trying new things. Those with whom you have healthy, committed relationships can continue to push you to achieve your goals and ambitions, even when you stumble.



## Tips on Maintaining Healthy Relationships

Whether you are looking at healthy relationships with family members or friends, the following tips can help lead to committed, long-term, healthy relationships with those in your life:

- Be realistic about expectations in the relationship.
- Improve trust by showing that you can be a reliable friend, family member, and so forth.
- Find time to be present (without distraction), and spend time with those you want to foster and maintain healthy relationships with.
- According to John Gottman, a relationship researcher, happy couples have 5:1 ratio of positive interactions to negative interactions. It helps to find moments to encourage your partner by affirming the relationships and your partner's efforts.
- Find ways to be interdependent of one another. Relationships in which the individuals solely rely on one another can become overwhelming and unhealthy, as it is unrealistic that one person can meet all your needs. It is important to have shared interests but also engage in enjoyed activities outside of that relationship.

- Be aware of how your partner or loved one feels loved or supported. People can give and feel love and support differently, and it can be helpful to know how that important person in your life likes to receive love or support. For romantic relationships, knowing your partner's love language can help you figure this out. You can find out your love language here: <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes>.
- Apply effective communication techniques to increase understanding:
  - Use active listening skills, such as listening to understand instead of listening to reply. Try reflecting back what you believe the other person was trying to convey.
  - Ask questions instead of making assumptions about the other person's intentions or if you're unsure of what someone is saying.
  - Use I-statements to express your thoughts and concerns in a way that decreases blame or defensiveness in the other individual. For more information on I-statements, click here: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/i-message>.
- Learn and use conflict resolution techniques during disagreements. Here are a few:
  - Make sure you're in the headspace to have a calm, respectful discussion. If not, come back to the topic when you can be calm and respectful.
  - Be clear and specific about your needs and concerns. "Attack the problem, not the person."
  - Stick to the topic at hand. Avoid "always" and "never" statements. These statements are rarely factual.
  - Hold yourself accountable for your mistakes.
  - Identify if you can agree to disagree. Because you will not agree on everything, it can be more helpful to identify if you can accept that you disagree on the topic. If not, can the relationship still be a healthy one?



## References

1. Psychology Today. (2021). [Maintaining a relationship](https://www.psychologytoday.com). Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com>
2. Robinson, L., Smith, M., & Segal, J. (Updated 2021, January). [Tips for building a healthy relationship](https://www.helpguide.org). Retrieved October 15, 2021, from HelpGuide: <https://www.helpguide.org>
3. Amherst College. (n.d.). [10 tips for healthy relationships](https://www.amherst.edu). Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://www.amherst.edu>
4. The 5 Love Languages. (2021). Chicago: Northfield Publishing. Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes>
5. Good Therapy. (Updated 2018, February 14). ["I" message](https://www.goodtherapy.org). Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://www.goodtherapy.org>



# FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH

February is **American Heart Month**, a time to take stock of your lifestyle habits and consider how those may be affecting your health, especially your heart health. Heart disease and stroke are among the leading causes of death in the U.S., and older adults aren't the only ones at risk. When was the last time you took your blood pressure or had your cholesterol levels checked? These simple tests are key to monitoring heart health, and free blood pressure readers are available at many pharmacies. Whether you're at high, moderate, or low risk for heart disease and stroke, regular medical checkups and healthy lifestyle choices could extend your life and help prevent debilitating health problems. Learn how to improve your everyday health and living habits for a longer and more fulfilling life.

## PREVENT HEART DISEASE

By living a healthy lifestyle, you can help keep your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels normal and lower your risk for heart disease and heart attack.

### Choose healthy habits.

You can choose healthy habits to help prevent heart disease.

### Choose healthy food and drinks.

Choose healthy meals and snacks to help prevent heart disease and its complications. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods:

- Eating lots of foods high in saturated fat and trans fat may contribute to heart disease.
- Eating foods high in fiber and low in saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol can help prevent high cholesterol:
  - Limiting salt (sodium) in your diet can also lower your blood pressure.
  - Limiting sugar in your diet can lower your blood sugar level to prevent or help control diabetes.



- Do not drink too much alcohol, which can raise your blood pressure. Men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women should have no more than one drink per day.

Find healthy, seasonal recipes on the Million Hearts® Recipes for a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle page: <https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn-prevent/recipes.html>.

### Keep a healthy weight.

People who are overweight or have obesity have a higher risk for heart disease. Carrying extra weight can put extra stress on the heart and blood vessels. To find out if your weight is in a healthy range, you can calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Assessing Your Weight website: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html>.

### Get regular physical activity.

Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower your blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. For adults, the Surgeon General recommends two hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, like brisk walking or bicycling, every week. Children and adolescents should get one hour of physical activity every day.

### **Don't smoke.**

Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for heart disease. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

### **Take charge of your medical conditions.**

If you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, you can take steps to lower your risk for heart disease.

### **Check your cholesterol.**

Your health care team should test your blood levels of cholesterol at least once every four to six years. If you have already been diagnosed with high cholesterol or have a family history of the condition, you may need to have your cholesterol checked more often. Talk with your health care team about this simple blood test. If you have high cholesterol, medicines and lifestyle changes can help reduce your risk for heart disease.

### **Control your blood pressure.**

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, so have it checked on a regular basis. Your health care team should measure your blood pressure at least once every two years if you have never had high blood pressure or other risk factors for heart disease.

### **Manage your diabetes.**

If you have diabetes, monitor your blood sugar levels carefully. Talk with your health care team about treatment options. Your doctor may recommend certain lifestyle changes to help keep your blood sugar under control, such as eating nutritious food, doing regular exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight. These actions will help reduce your risk for heart disease.

### **Take your medicines as directed.**

If you take medicine to treat high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Always ask questions if you don't understand something. Never stop taking your medicine without first talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.



### **Work with your health care team.**

You and your health care team can work together to prevent or treat the medical conditions that lead to heart disease. Discuss your treatment plan regularly, and bring a list of questions to your appointments. Talk with your health care team about how heart disease and mental health disorders are related.

If you've already had a heart attack, your health care team will work with you to prevent another one. Your treatment plan may include medicines or surgery and lifestyle changes to reduce your risk. Be sure to take your medicines as directed and follow your doctor's instructions.



# IMPROVING YOUR MEMORY: AN OVERVIEW

So many ways to forget! You forget names and faces; appointments and anniversaries; where you left the car keys; what you read; what you said; what you were doing before you were interrupted. Not to mention all the numbers you have to memorize nowadays: telephone and cell numbers, new area codes, PINs, password and user IDs, Social Security numbers, which five of those 500 cable channels you actually use.

How does your memory handle it all? And how can you get it to be more reliable?

Your memory's like a computer. Material has to be inputted properly, saved in storage, and retrieved efficiently. How effectively your brain performs each of these steps depends on three things:

- How recently the remembered event took place
- How vivid, spectacular, or striking an impression it made
- How frequently the event recurs

In addition to these factors, attention, concentration, imagery, organization and mood all play key roles in what could be called the chain of memory: Need or interest motivates the brain to remember; motivation generates attention; attention demands concentration; concentration permits organization; and organization allows for the efficient processing of information.

There are ways you can strengthen the process. One is rote memorization, which involves going over a list of items over and over again until you can remember the whole thing.

Another, more efficient way, is to use mnemonic devices. These techniques strengthen the connections between various pieces of information by using the most under-exercised portion of the brain—the imagination. Using a mnemonic device is as simple as exaggerating the features of what you want to remember until it's as silly as a cartoon. The ridiculous image you construct, and your participation in its creation, combine to make mnemonics surprisingly effective.



6

Source: Schinhofen, L., Trier, N., & Searleman, A. (Reviewed 2023). *Improving your memory: An overview*. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

## Key Tips

### Key Tip 1

Mnemonic devices are systems that use images and associations to aid your memory. Your mind grasps the new image and association easily, and then remembers the information that it represents. You probably learned a few mnemonic devices in grade school—the rhyme of I before E except after C.

### Key Tip 2

The key to every mnemonic system is association. You create an image that connects you to the information you want to remember. The more vivid, involved and outlandish the image, the better. If you wanted to remember to pay your credit card bill first thing tomorrow morning, you might imagine yourself opening your eyes at dawn to find a duck-billed workman standing in the middle of your bedroom, cutting up your credit cards. The patch on his worksuit would read "Bill" (of course).

### Key Tip 3

The essential first step in improving your memory is analyzing how you learn. There are three types of learners:

- *Visual learners* do best by mentally picturing what they want to remember. A visual learner would picture Bill, the duck-billed workman in specific detail, down to the buttons on his clothes.
- *Auditory learners* are most comfortable hearing information. He might imagine the sound of scissors slicing through credit cards while Bill sings a song about paying bills.
- *Kinesthetic learners remember by doing*. The kinesthetic learner might imagine himself or herself getting out of bed in the morning and following Bill as he dances him or her over to his or her checkbook.

### Key Tip 4

When you forget, it's usually not your brain's fault. It's more likely due to outside factors that prevent you from recalling the information as quickly or with as much detail as you'd like. These distractions usually come from three sources:

- Your environment (distractions or being rushed)
- Your body (fatigue or anxiety)
- Medications or other conditions that interfere with your normal functions



# Employee Advisory Service

Support - Empowerment - Growth

## EAS IN ACTION!

New Jersey Motor Vehicles Commission, Trenton NJ



### DID YOU KNOW?

If you are interested in EAS visiting your agency to inform your team on what EAS offers, please email us at the email address below. We will be more than happy to speak to your team in-person. The Outreach Program is designed to build a healthier workplace by informing employees that help is at their fingertips 365 days a year.

**NUMBER:**  
1-866-327-9133

**EMAIL:**  
[EAS\\_HELP@CSC.NJ.GOV](mailto:EAS_HELP@CSC.NJ.GOV)

**24 HOURS A DAY  
7 DAYS A WEEK  
(EMERGENCY  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES)**

How Can  
We Help  
You?

On Wednesday, February 7, 2024, Mien P. Mombo and Tamara Samuel visited Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) in Trenton, NJ to inform employees of the wellness services that Employee Advisory Service {EAS} offers employees and members of their household. There were over 40 employees in attendance. They enjoyed learning that EAS provides assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, resources, supervisor and manager consultations, as well as coaching and mediation services, to name a few.

We offered a morning session and an afternoon session to the MVC group, informing managers and supervisors on the process of referring employees, utilizing EAS resources, and enjoying the monthly webinars and newsletter. Our goal was accomplished! The interactive dialogue shed light to employees who never utilized EAS services and gave employees a voice to ask questions and speak on hypothetical situations within their department.

EAS would like to send a special thank you to Karl Miller and Darrell Waytes for inviting the EAS Duo to speak to their staff.

The EAS Outreach Program is designed to inform Supervisors, Managers, and Human Resources staff of the mental health support that our EAS program offers.



# Employee Advisory Service

## UPCOMING WEBINARS EMPLOYEES

### Employees

#### Managing the Stress of Relationships

**Register Today!**



**Date / Time**

- February 22, 2024
- 2:00 - 3:00 PM

**About this webinar:**

This session will discuss the stress caused by the relationship challenges in our lives, and suggest several strategies for improving the quality of our relationships to reduce both stress and conflict

### Employees

#### 4 Steps to Maximizing Your Potential

**Register Today!**



**Date / Time**

- March 28, 2024
- 2:00 - 3:00 PM

**About this webinar:**

This practical presentation will provide a roadmap to help individuals focus on further developing their unique strengths and abilities, including: assessing their talents; embracing the full value of them; identifying opportunities to use them in greater ways; and, planning for their use in meeting the needs of others.

Employee Advisory Service (EAS)  
*Support - Empowerment - Growth*

Your privacy is important to us. Your confidentiality is protected by state and federal law and regulations. All of the services offered are guided by professional and ethical standards. Contact us to learn more.

 [EAS\\_Help@csc.gov](mailto:EAS_Help@csc.gov)

 1-866- 327-9133 ( Toll FREE)

 [www.nj.gov/csc/employees/programs/advisory/eas.html](http://www.nj.gov/csc/employees/programs/advisory/eas.html)

