

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# SETTING THE STAGE FOR 2021

### *Real change takes time, effort, and patience.*

The start of a new year often prompts people to take stock of where they are in their lives and where they want to be. For some people, the transition from one year to the next is a time to look with fresh eyes at how they can improve their health or relationships. Is there a habit you'd like to change or a specific goal you want to achieve?

Positive change is possible, but setting too many expectations all at once and creating unrealistic goals is a recipe for failure. Real change takes time, effort, and patience. Replacing a bad habit with a healthy one or mastering something new often takes weeks or months before it becomes routine. To start, try focusing on just one or two goals that will create the most change in your life. For example, if your goal is to make healthier choices regarding food and exercise, write down three things you will commit to do over the month of January. Examples are:

- Plan at least one healthy meal or snack each day. Replace unhealthy foods with fruits or vegetables, and substitute water for soda or juice.
- Schedule a physical activity that you enjoy in your day, even if it's just a short walk after work. Use technology to help you track your progress, such as fitness monitors and apps.
- Go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Studies show that chronic sleep deprivation can lead to weight gain and other physical and emotional problems.

Small changes are not only easier to start and maintain, but can be very motivating when you start to see positive results. Every few weeks, evaluate your progress and raise the bar a bit higher, making adjustments to your goals as needed. If possible, share your goals with people who will support and encourage you and hold you accountable. Most importantly, don't give up if you have a setback. Pick up where you left off and keep going.

