

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# BUILDING A THRIVING LIFE

### *When our outlook is bright, we experience less stress and fatigue*

The five pillars to build a thriving life are: practicing positive thinking, developing and maintaining strong social connections, finding meaning and purpose, using our skills and talents, and paying attention to our emotional and physical health. We thrive when we're happier, and when our outlook is bright, we experience less stress and fatigue and are better able to persist toward reaching our goals.

The first pillar, positive thinking, is a challenge for many of us. Thousands of thoughts cross our minds each day, but research shows that a significant percentage of our thoughts tend to be negative and repetitive. While it's impossible to track every thought you have during the course of the day, pay attention if you tend to focus on the negative or constantly put yourself down in your thoughts. Negative attitudes and feelings of hopelessness can create chronic stress.

It takes time and practice to break the habit of negative thinking, but here are some tips:

- When you become aware of negative thoughts and images entering your mind, redirect your attention to the sights, sounds and smells around you. Being present in the moment is one way to step out of negative thinking.
- Identify the old, repetitive "stories" you tell yourself that create anxiety or worry. Are these thoughts actually true? Counter them with examples that show otherwise.

The second pillar, strong and supportive social connections, is an integral part of overall well-being. In fact, social isolation and chronic loneliness are just as harmful to your physical health as smoking or having a substance use disorder. Working on your relationships not only increases overall life satisfaction, but contributes to physical wellbeing.

Having meaning or purpose in life is guided by personal values. Some people find meaning through their profession, a social or political cause, a creative endeavor, a volunteer activity, or a religious/spiritual belief. People who report having purpose in life live longer and have greater life satisfaction and fewer health problems.

Using our skills and talents to accomplish our goals can give us a sense of mastery and satisfaction. As Andrew Carnegie said, "If you want to be happy, set a goal that commands your thoughts, liberates your energy, and inspires your hopes."

Finally, it's important to take care of ourselves mentally and physically by getting adequate sleep, eating healthy foods, exercising regularly, and managing stress.

