

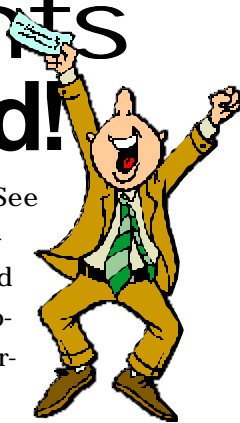
# Faculty & Staff Living

A work and life newsletter

**Employee Assistance Program 278-5018**  
**Christopher Knight, EAP Director**

## Complaints May Be Gold!

**C**omplaining customers —ouch! See complaints as opportunities to improve your product or service and you could reduce your stress while helping your organization. L.L. Bean and Starbucks made understanding complaints part their strategic plans and won more customers, created more products, and doubled employee morale. Shift to this winning strategy by taking three steps: (1) separate the message of a student or employee complaint from the feeling of being blamed; (2) get everyone in your workgroup to view a complaint as an opportunity, not as a “who-done-it” investigation; and (3) see disappointed customers as people offering you the secret of your success. Use such opportunities to discover more of what they want.



## Keep Your Workplace Civil

**C**onsider avoiding the following common ways coworkers act toward each other and you’ll be a hero for reducing incivility in the workplace: (1) withholding information about office functions or social events; (2) omitting information necessary for a coworker to be successful with a task, project, or work goal; (3) refusing to reciprocate civilities with a coworker (also called “the silent treatment”); and (4) avoidance or refusing to show approval of a coworker in response to social cues to do otherwise (birthdays, awards, praise by supervisors, etc.).



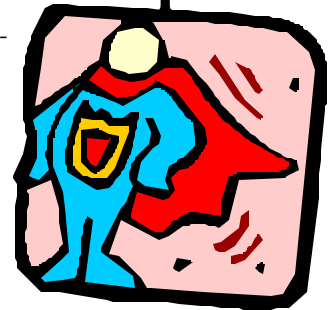
## GREY Legal Pros

**L**awyers now specialize in a wide array of growing specialties of eldercare law. These include planning for disability, contested medical care decision making, estate planning, estate and gift tax planning, descendants’ estate administration, guardianship and conservatorship issues, Medicaid and Medicare issues, long-term care issues, eldercare abuse, civil commitment issues, and many more. Learn more from the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys. [www.naela.com](http://www.naela.com).



## Do I Need a Therapist?

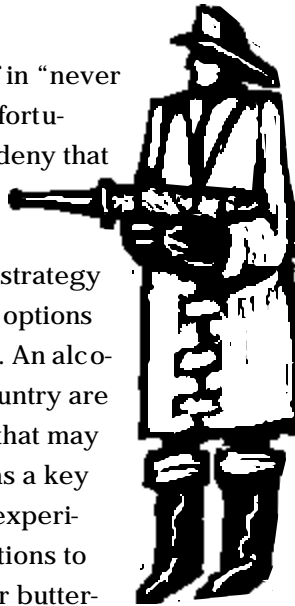
**Q** I have always handled my problems on my own. How do I know if I need a professional counselor? I don’t want the EAP to refer me to a professional counselor if I don’t need one. Should I know what I want before calling the EAP?



**A** Most people try to solve problems by themselves before seeking help. Meeting with the EAP to discuss your issue or concern can help you decide whether a professional counselor might be beneficial. Don’t worry, the EAP will not unnecessarily refer you to a mental health professional. Generally, if a personal problem is starting to interfere with your personal functioning, it is time to consider whether a professional counselor might be helpful.

# Don't **FREEZE UP** Under Stress!

**D**o you pride yourself in “never feeling stressed?” Unfortunately, some people deny that extraordinary stress has any effect on them. Some people learned this coping strategy early in life when few other options existed for managing stress. An alcoholic home or a war torn country are examples of environments that may contribute to use of denial as a key coping strategy. Have you experienced nervous system reactions to stress such as a headache or butterflies in your stomach? Imagine extraordinary stress causing your nervous system to keep a hand or even your legs from moving! It has happened to some people. This puzzling experience is called a “conversion reaction.” Anxiety is “converted” into a physical symptom wherein a part of the body refuses to function. If this happens to you, be sure to get medical attention. Ruling out a physical cause is your first step. If no physical cause is found, consider talking to the EAP to learn more about resources that might benefit you.

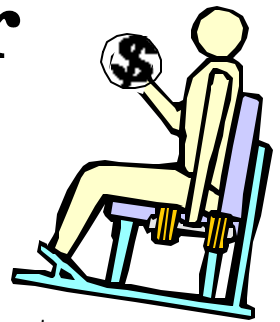


# Your Job Finances **YOUR** **JOURNEY**



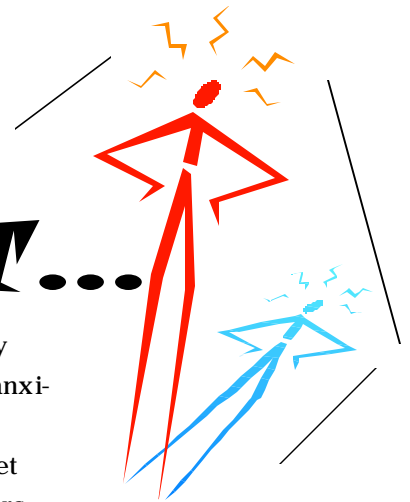
**S**tress management is frequently about a decision to change perspective in an attempt to feel more in control of whatever source of stress you can't alter right now. This change of perspective gives you a greater capacity for productivity and renewed energy. Life is a journey, and yours is probably still continuing. When you experience stressful moments at work and you need perspective, take a breath and consider this maxim: “Your job only finances your journey.” Notice the effect. You, and your employer, might be better for it.

# Tax Help for Taking It Off



**A**sk your tax advisor about deducting the cost of a weight loss program. The IRS recently ruled to permit a tax deduction for a weight loss program “undertaken at a physician’s direction to treat an existing disease, such as heart disease.” The IRS did not rule out obesity. *Obesity is a disease* according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9-CM) used by the World Health Organization and the United States Public Health Service. Obesity is defined as a “body mass index” (BMI) of 30 or greater. Discover your BMI at <http://www.weight.com/definition.asp>.

# It's Not Just About **WEIGHT**...



**E**ating disorders are not simply about weight. They are about anxiety, depression, shame, and perfectionism. They are about secret hurts, secret desires, and secret fears.

They are about fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of exposure, and fear of losing control. They are about the assumption that if only you can control something, like eating or weight, you can be safe, popular, happy, or at least not so miserable. They are reinforced by all the advertising images of slender, attractive people looking happy, successful, and desirable. Some of those slender people are not so happy. Some of them have eating disorders. Eating disorders often begin when people begin strict or crash dieting in a desperate attempt to change the way they feel about themselves. Chronic hunger leads to fears of losing control that must be suppressed. A food binge is experienced as failure and may lead to purging or renewed commitment to the unrealistic diet. Don't be fooled. Dieting is not the answer. Anorexia or bulimia can lead to bone loss, heart damage, dental problems, digestive problems, poor concentration, increased depression, social isolation, and plenty of misery. If you have concerns about yourself, a family member, or a friend who may have an eating disorder, talk to the EAP confidentially and get some help from many fabulous and competent resources in our area.

Brock Hansen, LCSW,  
Change and Growth Consulting, Washington, D.C.