

# City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program

## Coping With Being On-Call

Coping with being on-call may be stressful. Simply anticipating a work related call increases stress hormones, namely cortisol. High cortisol over long periods of time are linked to weight gain, mood swings, anxiety, high blood pressure and a weakened immune system.

Cortisol isn't bad. It's a hormone that drives our *fight or flight* response. Stress hormones trigger adaptive or good stress that may help motivate when the pressure is on. Again, too much cortisol may lead to both physical and mental health issues.

### Mood

Individuals who are on-call may find themselves feeling restless AND without energy at the same time. This "*wired but tired*" paradox is feeling exhausted but too fidgety/agitated to rest or focus.

### Disturbed Sleep

Yes, receiving a call at 3am is going to disrupt your sleep. However, studies show that on-call employees experience disrupted sleep regardless of whether or not a call is actually received. Just the anticipation of an incident is enough to keep us on our toes, in work-mode, and unable to rest and refresh.

### What Can I Do?

**Detachment:** Employees who were able to *detach* themselves from work demonstrated the ability to rest and refresh even while on-call. However, how does this look in practice?

This entails purposefully placing your attention and energy on something else

other than work for a set period of time. What you place your attention on will be personal, what you like and find enjoyable (reading, gaming, walking etc.) Your detachment duration will also depend on on-call expectations. For example, do you have 30 or 60 minutes to respond to an on-call message?

**Redundancies:** Worried about missing a notification while on-call? Set up redundancies and smart escalation rules on your phone and email. For example, you may want to change the tone of incoming calls from work phone numbers. Change your email/texts setting to prioritize work related notifications.

**Confidence:** Part of the anxiety of being on-call is about not being in control. When on-call employees are confident they'll be able to resolve an incident, they're less likely to expend energy dreading the call. This means consciously telling yourself that whatever call may come in, you will be able to handle it because you have done so in the past.

### Summary

Being on-call is challenging. The mere fact of anticipating calls drives up stress hormones, which over time may negatively effect mood and sleep.

Build in opportunities to detach from work and set up redundancies to decrease anxiety about missing a call. Instill confidence in your abilities. If a call comes in, you will be able to address and get through it as you likely have before.

Employee Assistance Program



City of Milwaukee EAP

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## Regulating Your Sleep Pattern

In order to make the most of sleep time, make changes to your routine.

- If possible, wake up and sleep at the same time
- Avoid caffeine or alcohol before bed
- Avoid eating heavy meals at least two hours before going to bed
- Do not watch TV or electronic devices in bed
- Reserve bed for sleeping only
- Engage in healthy and relaxing activity an hour before bed (e.g. reading, meditation, music)
- Ensure your sleep area is dark, cool and quiet
- Racing mind? Write out your thoughts, worries or plans before going to bed. If your thoughts begin to race, acknowledge them and make a mental note to write it out the next day
- Do not exercise or increase your heart rate an hour before bed
- Engage in physical exercise during the day for at least 30 minutes
- Do not take naps during the day or evening
- Seven to eight hours of sleep is recommended for most people. However, sleep quality and how rested you feel is as important as how much sleep you get.

## EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

## City of Milwaukee Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: [www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM](http://www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM)
- The City's Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, onsite and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City's health insurance and dependents (18 mos and older) on the City's health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.
- The City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program web page houses topical information and resources on a wide range of work-life issues. Visit: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/DER/EAP>
- The City of Milwaukee offers a free Care.com membership through Care@Work to employees. A Care.com membership provides unlimited access to a platform employees can use to find and manage care for children, seniors, pets and their home. Visit [www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork](http://www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork) to learn more.

## Happiness

Everyone has their own unique path to happiness and well-being. However, research in the area of happiness has identified 10 keys to boost your mood.

1. **Giving.** Altruism is a word used to describe the happiness we feel when helping and giving to others.
2. **Relating.** Connect with people that support and care about you.
3. **Exercising.** Regular exercise boosts our mood and releases feel good hormones.
4. **Appreciating.** It's easy to develop negative tunnel vision. Take stock and value the beautiful moments.
5. **Try out.** Keep an open mind and curious spirit. Experience and learn new things.
6. **Direction.** Have goals to look forward to. Plan and develop both short and long term goals.
7. **Resilience.** We all falter and fall short. Find ways to bounce back.
8. **Emotion.** Seek positive experiences, places, people and things.
9. **Acceptance.** Don't be your own worst critic. Be patient and kind to yourself and comfortable with who you are.
10. **Meaning.** Be involved in something positive that is bigger than just yourself.