



Dartmouth College
Faculty & Employee Assistance Program
603-646-1165

HEALTHY

EXCHANGE

Dedicated to providing quality confidential assistance to employees and or their families who may be experiencing difficulties that impact their lives

FALL 2008

For Your Information

PARENTING TIP

To help your child become resilient...a flexible person who can "bounce back" after a setback...focus on the following:



- ◆ Help your child identify emotions he/she is feeling and tell him/her you understand
- ◆ Ask your child to think of ways to solve his/her own problems
- ◆ Let your child know that you have confidence in him/her
- ◆ Encourage your child to ask for help when he/she needs it

COUPLE CARE

Seek help early if you are experiencing marital difficulties. Half of all marriages that do end, do so in the first seven years, yet the average couple waits six years before seeking help for marital problems. This means the average couple lives with unhappiness for far too long.

REDUCE HOLIDAY STRESS

Follow these suggestions to minimize holiday stress:

- ◆ Keep holiday plans and dreams realistic
- ◆ Budget your time as well as your money
- ◆ Deal with everyday stress immediately
- ◆ Make a "to do" list
- ◆ Learn to say "no" to invitations and requests
- ◆ For those things that you have to do, find a better way of doing the task



BETTER COMMUNICATION

Making Sure Your Good Ideas Get Included

Have you ever felt treated like an outsider, cut out of the loop on an important decision, or thwarted in your attempts to improve a situation that definitely needed to be improved? Even if your good ideas were exactly what a particular group could benefit from using, possibly there was a powerful insider or a few entrenched keepers of the status quo who found a way to shoot down your suggestions.



According to Leonard Felder, Ph.D., author of the new book **FITTING IN IS OVERRATED: The Survival Guide for Anyone Who Has Ever Felt Like an Outsider**, "You are not alone. Most innovative, smart, and helpful men and women have felt at times as if their good ideas were bumping up against heavy resistance from people who feel threatened by anyone who's suggesting even the most realistic and positive changes."

It might be a situation in your extended family where you have some outstanding ideas on how to improve the next family gathering, but a certain powerful relative tends to veto anything that alters "the way we've always done it before." Or at work you might have a creative new solution to a long-standing problem, but one of the higher ups is opposed to any changes you suggest. Or you belong to a church, temple, parent-teacher association, condo association, or volunteer group where you've come up with some excellent suggestions for improving things, but one or two cliquish insiders manage to thwart any possibility of trying something new.

Becoming more effective as a change-agent

In his book **FITTING IN IS OVERRATED**, Felder suggests a variety of creative ways to get your ideas included and taken seriously, even in groups, families, and organizations that have been hesitant about change for many years. Here are three realistic steps that can improve the clout and impact you have in any situation where you have great ideas:

- 1. Start by taking the chip off your shoulder.** Felder has found that many people who have been treated like an outsider in their family, their workplace, or their volunteer activities tend to get a chip on their shoulder – a verbal or nonverbal attitude that communicates to the group, "I know you're not going to like what I'm about to say, but here goes anyway." He suggests, "Rather than sabotaging your own good ideas by the resentful way you present them, why not try something different this time." He recommends saying to yourself, "Since my good idea can definitely help this group, family, or organization, my biggest challenge is to find the right allies, the right wording, and the right timing for building a supportive consensus."

Continued on back page

MAKING SURE YOUR IDEAS...

Continued from front page

2. Have a brainstorming phone call or lunch with one or two insiders who are secure enough and smart enough to back you up on this new idea.

Usually when a person looks at a cliquish group, he or she thinks they are all in agreement and that no one will ever have the courage to step outside the status quo and support any changes. But if you look carefully at any group, family, or organization you will find a few somewhat-innovative insiders who have the wisdom and the strength to break with the pack occasionally to support needed changes. Identifying those few insiders who are willing to align themselves with an insightful outsider is crucial to whether or not your good ideas will be heard and taken seriously.

For instance, in your extended family it might be pointless to suggest to the most rigid family members any changes in the way the next family holiday gathering will take place unless you first identify and build an alliance with one or two creative insiders who have the clout to influence the rigid insider who is most resistant to making any changes. Only when you have the backing and support of these important allies can your excellent ideas receive the hearing and consideration they deserve.

3. Make sure the most rigid or cautious insiders know ahead of time that you aren't trying to disrupt or change most of the things they cherish, but that you are offering a small, helpful solution to one specific problem that almost everyone knows could use some improvement.

Rather than seeing the cautious or stubborn insider as an all-powerful giant, consider for a moment that this flesh-and-blood human being might actually be quite insecure or quite afraid of losing something if changes are made. This person will need some reassurance from you and others so that he or she knows you aren't trying to shift too many things that are familiar and comforting to this person.

You may need to tell him or her, "We definitely want to keep most of the traditions the way they've always been, but we're just trying out a temporary experiment to see if we can improve this one particular aspect that hasn't been working lately." Using this kind of compassionate, gentle, reassuring approach will often help an entrenched insider to see that your outsider insights are not as threatening as they first thought they might be.

Making A Successful New Year's Resolution

According to a University of Washington survey, 63% of the people questioned were still keeping their number one New Year's resolution after two months. The keys to making a successful resolution? The researchers say a person's confidence that he or she can make the behavioral change and the commitment to making the change, are most important. In addition, the study indicates that successful resolutions are a process, not a one-time effort. Of the people who successfully achieved their top resolution, only 40 percent of them did so on the first attempt. The rest made multiple tries, with 17 percent finally succeeding after more than six attempts.



Resolution mistakes

According to the University of Washington researchers, the following are sure-fire ingredients for resolution failure:

1. Not thinking about making a resolution(s) until the last minute.
2. Reacting on New Year's Eve and making your resolution(s) based on what's bothering you or what is on your mind at the time.
3. Framing your resolution(s) in absolute terms, such as "I will never do X again."

Tips for resolution success

The survey researchers offer the following tips to help you attain your New Year's resolutions:

1. Have a strong initial commitment to make a change.
2. Have coping strategies to deal with problems or obstacles that are sure to come up.
3. Keep track of your progress. The more monitoring you do and the more feedback you get, the better you'll do.

Take credit for success when you achieve a resolution, say the researchers, but it is a mistake to blame yourself if you fail. Instead, the researchers say, look at the barriers that were in your way. See how you can do better the next time and figure out a better plan to succeed. You do get to try again and can make behavior changes throughout the year, not only at New Year's.



Faculty & Employee Assistance Program Services

Provided by Dartmouth College for you and your family members

The Faculty Employee Assistance Program (F/EAP) is a free, confidential, professional counseling service for members of the Dartmouth College faculty and staff and their families. The FEAP may be used to address work-related or personal conflicts, including relationship or family problems, substance abuse, stress, and legal or financial concerns. We also provide consultation services for supervisors and departments, as well as maintain a resource directory.

For FREE confidential counseling and consultation call: 603-646-1165

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