Behavioral Health Services helps through times of change

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Despite the popularity of the fictional television psychiatrist Dr. Frasier Crane, or of the media psychologist Dr. Phil of Oprah fame, people frequently feel a stigma when thinking about asking for help with emotional or social problems. People will grapple with seeking counseling because it feels more uncomfortable to reveal problems than it does to continue to have the problem. Major changes at work or in the family can push a person beyond his or her ability to cope.

Many workers and their families can benefit from counseling services. The goal of the services offered through Behavioral Health Services at the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation is to help Hanford workers and their families recognize emotional and behavioral problems early, so they can develop adaptive and caring ways to resolve the problems.

People who do well with changes have developed skills that build self-assurance every day, and these same skills carry them through very difficult times. Many people developed a strong sense of who they are because they were raised by parents who nurtured that confidence by providing praise and accountability. These people feel confident that mistakes are allowed, learn from their mistakes and can reach beyond themselves in most things they do. Confident people know their strengths and weaknesses, and are comfortable asking for help. They are not focused on perfection and are not excessively self-reliant. They value working with others while accepting responsibility for their own actions. They react to someone's poor treatment by engaging in conversation to resolve the bad feelings.

We can learn to be self-confident by developing effective emotional and social skills. Here are some suggestions for activities that will help you feel good about yourself:

- Take each day as it comes.

- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Break large tasks into manageable parts and allow success for completing each.

- Listen to your self-talk, write it down if necessary, and try restating a negative point of view in a positive or more realistic way.

- Learn to laugh at yourself to reduce humiliation. Laugh at yourself before you laugh at someone else.

- Ask for and accept constructive criticism. Picture destructive and hurtful criticism rolling off your back.

- Seek out people who build mutual respect. Avoid people who repeatedly provoke you or make you feel less of a person.

- Build your own "community" of people with shared interests and values.

- Give yourself the same encouragement you'd give to a friend. Ask yourself, "Am I talking to myself the same way I would talk to a close friend?"

- Change your black-and-white thinking to gray. Things are usually somewhere in between good and bad.

Hanford workers and their dependent family members may schedule a visit with an HEHF psychologist or counselor. If you need assistance with learning to manage any life distress, please call us at 376-4418 to schedule an appointment at no cost to you or your family members.

All employees of Hanford contractors who have Hanford identification and who engage in Hanford work are eligible to use the HEHF Employee Assistance Program. This includes the staff of the Department of Energy, Fluor Hanford, Fluor Federal Services, Duratek, CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Bechtel Hanford. This service is paid for by the Department of Energy through its contract with HEHF. Call with questions, including those about eligibility for services, particular services and confidentiality. ■