

## Stop the Downward Slide with EAP Help

Even if you pride yourself on being an optimistic employee with a pleasant disposition, workplace negativity can still affect you in ways that you may not like. Negativity tends to be as contagious as a cold virus, and it can be a self-perpetuating force. The good news is that negativity in the workplace can be beaten. It has weaknesses, the most important of which is refusing to participate in it. This isn't easy, of course, and it requires education and individual employees willing to be change agents. Here's how: Speak up when you spot negativity, not by criticizing but by educating about its impact and suggesting a different approach to communication. Team up with a coworker to practice this same change-agent role. There is nothing more powerful than peer influence, and you have the right action on your side. Note: If you feel affected by negativity, turn to your EAP for guidance and support to build your resilience so you don't succumb to the limiting pattern around you and instead can be a positive force that influences others.



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## Design a Conflict Resolution Strategy

Meet with your team to develop a conflict resolution strategy. Doing so will help you experience fewer, less intense, and more easily resolved conflicts. Most businesses are advised to establish these intervention strategies as part of their standard business systems, so there is no reason for you not to create one, too. Figuratively, this is an “in-case-of-emergency-break-glass” strategy, but here's the point: You're going to have conflicts. Predesigning a strategy allows you to have (1) faster implementation when needed; (2) an agreed-upon approach, where outcomes are more acceptable to team members; and (3) improved awareness to seek cooperation early in order to avoid conflicts entirely. How to develop a strategy: Ask the EAP for guidance, or include it in a facilitative role as part of your conflict resolution strategy.

## Try a Winter Garden to Improve Mood

No need to wait for spring to experience Mother Nature's greenery; savor the rewards now with an indoor garden. This mood enhancer and positive distraction is easy and inexpensive to create. A Google image-search of “indoor garden ideas” will make you excited about getting started. Winter, with its shorter and grayer days, can be a difficult time for those who experience symptoms of depression. If that's you, the delight of a small indoor winter garden and watching sprouts go from turf to table may be the uplift you need. (Seek counseling help if the blues linger on.)

## Be a Networking Pro

Most of us will naturally develop a network of supporters, allies, and potential helpers over the years who can play valuable roles in enhancing our careers and magnifying our influence. Although this is usually a scattered and undefined process, consider making a conscious effort to accelerate this as a practice. Become more “socially aware.” See engaging with others as not just a pleasant social interchange but also an opportunity to consider how you can be of service to them and they to you, now or in the future. The positive benefits of a professional network are, of course, reciprocal. Realize that your address book and professional friends in a membership association or other groups are a virtual gold mine. The hottest tip is to make annual contact with your network by mailing a short postal note with personal news, achievements, and good wishes. Several years of these “touches” will produce tremendous leverage and “top of mind” awareness among your contacts, and you will experience a surprising number of opportunities to help others and be helped by them.