

A Personal Experience with the EAP/MAP

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(Author's note: John's real name, along with some identifying details, was changed to preserve his identity. He was enthusiastic about being interviewed and very generous in sharing the details of his life. We at the EAP/MAP deeply appreciate his contribution to this edition of our newsletter.)

When John was told that he had to call the Employee/Member Assistance Program (EAP/MAP) for an evaluation due to a positive drug screen, he remembered "I was embarrassed...I had let myself down and my wife and kids down." John had known about the EAP/MAP for some time, had even used it once before, so he understood that it was a free and confidential program that was focused upon providing counseling, information and support to employees and their family members. But John had not been ready to admit to himself or anyone else that his drinking and drug use had gotten out of control – that is to say, not until he had followed the EAP/MAP's recommendations and gotten into a drug treatment program.

Born and raised in Chicago, John was the youngest of 3 siblings. "We were raised Catholic and had a really stern upbringing. In our family, you knew that you were loved, but no one ever showed it outwardly." He quietly added, "It would have been nice to have had that confirmation."

When asked about his history with drugs and alcohol, John recalled that he first experimented with huffing and then tried alcohol and pot in high school. An honor student, John was a bit of a loner in high school. He recalled, "I never really felt like I fit in." His pot use increased after high school until he was arrested at 19 years old with the intent to sell. John recalled that episode vividly and still clearly remembers how afraid he was that his father would kick him out of the house. John's father didn't kick him out, as he had feared and for a while afterwards John tried to be good, but it wasn't long before he lapsed back into drug use. In the years that followed, he went

to work as a road crew manager for a rock band. "Sex and drugs and rock and roll!" John laughed wryly. For seven years, he watched the band members' drug use spiral out of control while he began experimenting with cocaine. Over the next few years, John would change careers and find work in a highly technical field that was challenging and rewarding. Yet, despite these positive changes, he never completely stopped his drug use. He stated, "In my mind, I was a social user and I could stop at any time."

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Meanwhile, his family knew that John still used drugs occasionally and they continued to worry about how it would impact him. It was enough of a concern that when John joined the family business, his father extracted the promise that he would never come to work high. For several years afterwards, things were good with the family business. John's drug use had significantly decreased to occasional weekend use and he felt that he had finally gotten himself into a good place in his life. During this time he had gotten married and begun to start a family of his own. Then he began to have trouble sleeping. After a while he decided to smoke some pot to help with this and while it did help initially, it wasn't long before he found himself smoking pot more often and in greater amounts. And then his luck finally ran out when his name was called on a random drug test that his union had implemented. He tested positive for marijuana and was sent to an education level drug program. John admitted feeling ashamed and embarrassed about testing positive and so he had minimized his drug use pattern and history, as he still felt that he was in control. His family was shocked to learn that he had tested positive and couldn't understand why he had continued to smoke pot. Unable to articulate why, John began to grow distant from his family

and made the choice to switch from pot to cocaine, "because that didn't stay in your system for as long." This went on for about a year and a half until he tested positive a second time, this time for narcotics in his system. John was again told to call the Employee/Member Assistance Program for an evaluation, which recommended that he go into a much more intensive 6 week day treatment drug program.

John realized that this time had to be different, that he could not continue using drugs but was terrified to try anything different. What if he tried the program and failed? What if things became worse, not better? Despite his fears and anxieties, John realized that he owed it to his family and to himself to give it his best shot. It was incredibly difficult and John was frequently challenged early on by the other participants in his groups to overcome his rationalizations and denial. John finally realized that he had to honestly embrace the program and do the work that was required. "Probably the best thing that I ever did in my life," he would later recall. "I've learned that until you can say that your life is unmanageable that you're not going to get anywhere."

Today John is very active within his recovery. He goes to 3 meetings a week and often reaches out to those whom he feels could benefit from living in recovery. John has also reconnected with his own family. "They're real proud of me and my sobriety." John tries not to take things for granted and knows that he must stay focused on the moment and getting through the day. He also knows how far he has come. "I had no emotions. I was dead inside. I hadn't felt feelings for the last 10 years. I am alive because of this program that you guys referred me to. In the program, I live just for today."

Andrea Harkleroad, LCSW is the Director of Operations at ERS and also the contributing editor for the ERS Press newsletter. She has been with ERS for 18 years.

Interested in submitting a question or comment?
Send an e-mail to aharkleroad@ers-eap.com.
Your feedback is greatly appreciated!



The Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Employee Resource Systems, Inc. provides nationwide mental health care services and Employee Assistance Programming (EAP) – Members Assistance Programming (MAP) for union members – to client company employees and their family members. These free and confidential services were developed to help address the personal difficulties that can affect anyone’s life both at home and at work.

The EAP/MAP defines “family” as anyone whose problem impacts the employee/member in a negative way, including in- and out-of-state parents, children and significant others of the same or opposite sex. While the

EAP/MAP does not intervene with personnel issues such as salaries, job assignments or other work-related issues, we do help people with a wide variety of life problems including:

- alcohol & drug abuse
- stress
- anxiety
- depression
- marital, family, and relationship conflict
- child & adolescent behavioral problems
- domestic violence
- child & elder care
- financial & legal concerns
- educational & career-related problems

Services, which include a comprehensive evaluation, brief counseling and referrals, if necessary, may be a first step toward resolution of these difficulties. When referrals are provided, every effort is made to use providers covered by the employee’s/member’s benefit plan or an agency that offers services on a sliding fee scale in which costs are based upon your income and number of dependents. The cost of service from a referral agency is the responsibility of the employee/member or the affected family member.

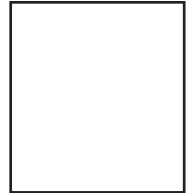
All contact with the EAP/MAP is confidential. The EAP/MAP counselor will

Continued below



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not speak with a supervisor, co-worker or family member without permission from the person using the program. Confidentiality is broken only when a threat-to-safety exists (i.e., suicidal/homicidal risk, stalking, or child/elder abuse.)

Callers can receive supportive counseling at any time – day or night - by calling (800) 292-2780. Our intake services are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to

5:30 p.m. Central Time and appointments for in-person sessions are scheduled during the intake interview. Calls are always answered directly by clinical professionals who provide immediate service, even after standard business hours. The 800 hotline number can be used anywhere in the United States. Calling the EAP can be a first step toward resolution of personal difficulties.

Feeling anxious or worried?
Call the Employee/Member
Assistance Program (EAP/MAP)
for free and confidential support
and resources.
1-800-292-2780

**Contact the Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-292-2780
for more information and to schedule an evaluation.**