

hAPPiness: Technology and the EAP

By Ryan Atherton



“hAPPiness” is the term I use to describe the suite of well-being application software programs I recommend to EA professionals to help employees and employers; in short, APP + happiness = hAPPiness. I originally came up with this concept in 2018 as a way of providing free, practical tools to help audiences at organizational presentations.

Apps are accessible, cost effective, and easy to use. I recommend every employee assistance professional incorporate this concept into their work. I’ve used differing amounts of apps in situations ranging from conference presentations to Critical Incident Responses (CIRs) with various degrees of success at every turn.

Please note that an app is **not** a replacement for clinical interventions or diagnoses but as an *additional tool* to use with current CEAP guidelines. There is not a situation I can think of where providing someone with a free (usually) tool at their fingertips would not be helpful.

Specific Recommendations

That said, my recommendation of using apps requires further explanation. In terms of clinical use, I suggest merely that the app will *improve the well-being* of a typical client – and **not** for formal mental health diagnoses. In addition, since many apps utilize CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) and ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) I envision combining these apps *with traditional* aspects of therapy in assisting an individual with a formal diagnosis.

Even here, the exact use will depend on the client and the therapist. Again, the general idea is that many of these apps will help the average employee improve their mental well-being, and in turn enhance their quality of work. Here is an example:

Last year I delivered a training seminar to an organization on this very topic. After the presentation a woman approached me and asked about some further features of the What’s Up app. After some discussion we identified some of her unhelpful thinking patterns.

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I opened the Thinking Patterns part of What's Up. Since it's rooted in CBT, we were able to identify Mind Reading and Catastrophizing as her two primary negative thinking patterns. Whenever she caught herself doing this she could go to the app and use the "Ask Yourself" portion of the Thinking Patterns page to replace the negative thoughts and reduce her stress.

Using Apps

Many mobile apps, which are the focus of this discussion, have corresponding desktop applications (e.g., email). To add an app to your mobile device, go to an app store (Google Play, Apple, et al.) and choose the appropriate icons. If an app requires you to connect via a social media account or email I always choose email and use what I refer to as a "burner" or "dummy" email account; in other words, an account I don't monitor and won't clutter my primary email inbox. You can use the following template to create one on Gmail quickly: yourname.dummy@gmail.com. Some of the apps I will mention I want to receive notifications from, so in that case I use my standard email address.

The Apps

I've reviewed 200+ apps since 2018 and continually update my "master" list. With that in mind, the following apps can be leveraged in the EAP industry as a counselor, account manager or leader; additionally, you can utilize many of these apps for your own personal growth. **Disclaimer:** I have no conflict of interest in disclosing the information provided in this article. I have not been influenced to promote specific products nor received compensation from any company to use a tool cited in this article.

Mental Health

What's Up (free)

Can't beat the cost and clinical paradigm. Uses CBT and ACT to address stress and anxiety.

CrewCare (free)

Most used professionally because of the cost and effectiveness. This app is designed to offer mental health assistance for first responders. EMS, police, fire, military, and others looking for a specific line to call or text for assistance by someone from their vocational milieu. For example, the Frontline Helpline is a 24/7 call line answered by first responders to speak to first responders (there are similar lines for police and veterans).

Talkspace (Subscription, \$250 to \$400 monthly)

One of the most discussed mental health apps. Anyone

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over 13 can register to discuss their mental health. Users can be connected to licensed therapists by state.

MindShift (free)

Uses CBT and a quality interface to assist with anxiety and depression.

Physical Health

Charity Miles (free)

The best for motivation. This app partners with sponsors who donate money to a charity of your choice (available on the app) based on how much you exercise.

MyFitnessPal (free + premium options)

One of the most, popular physical health apps as it combines diet and exercise into one platform. Able to sync with fitness trackers.

Fooducate (free + premium option)

Nutrition app. Use the barcode scanner to find healthier alternatives to foods while you're shopping or search by categories for food grades (A to F).

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FatSecret (free)

Tool specifically for counting calories. Fast. Simple.

Couch to 5K/10K

This one offers a plan to get you from little physical activity to a 5K/10K at a pace that works for almost everyone.

Freeletics Bodyweight (free + add-ons if desired)

This app provides strength building tutorials using your bodyweight.

Financial Health – NOTE: Many of these apps involve linking financial accounts.

Mint (free)

Planning app. Tracks and categorizes spending habits. Provides net worth and credit score updates.

Pocketguard (free + premium options) and *Dollarbird* (\$4.99 + subscription options)

Budgeting apps. Pocketguard subtracts expenses and lets you know how much is left in your “pocket” for spending. Dollarbird uses a calendar interface to visualize budgeting. Can also link with family members for further organization.

Prism (free + variable fees)

Payment app. Prism tries to do it all and succeeds; however, it does everything at an average level and nothing really stands out.

Acorns (\$1 monthly up to \$5k – check rates after), *Chime* (free), *Qapital* (free), *Digit* (\$2.99 monthly, and *Qoins* (\$1.99 monthly)

Saving apps. The idea between many of these involves rounding up your purchases to the nearest dollar and putting that extra money to work (I call them digital piggy banks). Acorns invests it. Chime saves it. Qapital saves it toward a specific goal, Digit uses AI to determine how much you can save. Qoins pays debts.

It's Deductible (free)

Tax app. Log charitable donations and easily track how much you can save on your taxes.

Joy (free)

Uses affective psychology to alter individual spending patterns.

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Editor's Notebook

When Ryan Atherton contacted me about his pitch for this month's cover story, I have to admit I was pretty skeptical. After all, a lot of companies are touting apps as a substitute for the services provided by employee assistance professionals.

Dave Sharar, a renowned EA clinician and developer of the Workplace Outcome Suite, refers to these tools as “digital disrupters.” He makes the important point that few, if any, of these apps and related products can provide clinical evidence that they can actually do what they claim.

But the typical employee, unaware of the requirements and standards involved in clinical practice, doesn't know the difference, and these products *are* easy to use after all.

Given the proliferation of well-being apps and self-help applications, it's clear they are not going away either, so what's an EAP to do? While Ryan uses apps in his work as a CEAP he stresses to his clients that an app is NOT a replacement for clinical intervention or diagnosis, but it is an ADDITIONAL tool to use in assisting them.

If people are using well-being apps anyway, why not take advantage of the situation and educate them about what apps can and CAN'T do?

Returning to work after a lengthy absence is never easy, but between masks, social distancing, and other precautionary measures, the pandemic has made this transition more difficult than ever. This month's *Brown Bagger* takes a look at this important topic.

Remote work, while a boon for some, has been more of a bust for others, and some of the negative aspects of this workforce trend are explained in the conclusion of a series in the *Lifestyle Tips* insert.

Be careful and be well!

Mike Jacquart

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Return-to-Work Policies must not be Static

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently revised its guidance for determining when non-hospitalized individuals with COVID-19 may end home isolation — a change that should drive employers to revisit return-to-work policies, according to an employment attorney. Updated guidance may be found here <https://www.hrdiver.com/news/revised-cdc-isolation-timeline-may-prompt-workplace-policy-changes/582526/?MvBriefArticleId=24984>

The update also serves as a reminder that employer policies on the subject cannot be static, according to labor and employment attorney Debra Steiner Friedman.

Employers may, for example, have policies in place requiring employees who test positive for COVID-19 to quarantine from the workplace for 14 days, a timeline previously referenced by the CDC in its guidance for individuals with COVID-19 or who tested positive for the disease.

“While that still may be appropriate in many cases, we are learning that this is not a one-size-fits-all rule,” Friedman said. “Accordingly, at this time employers should consider policies that allow employees to return to the workplace 10 days after the date of a positive COVID-19 test if they never develop symptoms, and to extend the 14-day standard time away from work if employees need additional time to recover due to severe illness as a result of COVID-19.”

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has said that employers may choose to administer COVID-19 testing to employees before they enter the workplace, and employers may require a doctor’s note certifying fitness for duty, in accordance with the standards of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). But EEOC also said the law does not allow employers to require workers to submit to a COVID-19 antibody test. ■

Additional source: HR Dive.

In 2020, EAR Needs Your Help!

No one is made of money, and so *Employee Assistance Report* (EAR) has always strived to hold down subscription costs. Three years ago, we dropped our print version, which cost \$229.00. Without mailing or printing expenses, we were able to pass those savings onto you – meaning the digital EAR only cost **\$99.00/year**. That’s a \$130 savings!

In recognizing that nearly all businesses have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, we tried to help by reducing our annual subscription by \$10 to **\$89.00**. That breaks down to just under \$7.50 a month!

But now EAR needs YOUR HELP. We have fixed costs each month for design, layout, and to maintain email hosting services that are not covering what we are receiving from renewals and new subscribers. In other words, we are losing money and need your assistance.

Some of you are diligent about renewing when you receive an emailed invoice, and we thank you! For whatever reason, others lose track of when your subscription came due (we do send email reminders), but our costs never went away.

If you are a paid subscriber, I encourage you to check your email inbox to see if you have received a notice about your subscription coming due. Could it have gone into a spam folder? Or perhaps you just *thought* you renewed it. We get that “stuff happens,” so if **you are unsure about the status of your subscription, email or call me and I’ll be happy to check on it for you!**

In short, we need more paid subscriptions, or we may not be able to continue producing this newsletter in 2021.

Sincerely,

Mike Jacquart, Editor and Publisher
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Handling Political Talk in The Online Workplace

By Angela Civitella

If you thought the last four years was difficult trying to keep politics out of the workplace, get ready for the next few months. The race to the November election is heating up, and you can bet that discussions about politics will bleed over into the workplace, especially online if your employees are still working remotely.

What's more, is that even if you manage to successfully avoid those dreaded political discussions with your colleagues, it may very well still come up with customers, vendors, and especially when you least expect it. Here are some ways you can keep political talk (and tempers) in check at work during this election season.

Establish ground rules. Some companies will decide to implement a “political free work zone” and take this very seriously whether in-person or working online. The other way to approach it is for a company to make a statement about the general discourse about what is playing out in the political field. Let everyone know it's ok to have emotions about what is taking place, but not to lose sight of the greater picture of the business, team members, and customers. It's a decision that each company will have to make for itself.

Separate your personal and professional life. At some point, a coworker or customer may check you out on social media. If you are someone who tends to post your political views online, or talk about other controversial topics, consider adding some form of privacy settings such as only allowing your direct connections to be able to see your content, or going private altogether. Remember that anything you post to social media always has the potential of being discovered by others. Be smart about what you post and remember: sometimes it's best just to remain quiet.

Don't fan the flames. A lot of business is being done on Zoom calls, but don't let your guard down because you never know when someone might start talking about politics. If the tone of the conversation



starts to rise, it's time to change the subject to a work-related topic.

It's always your right to decline comment. Simply say, “I'd rather not discuss my political views at this time. I wish you the best with your political decisions.” Or “I'm still evaluating the issues and would rather focus on getting the best results on this project.”

Summary

Handling political talk isn't something businessowners and leaders need to be afraid of. With a little preparation ahead of time and a plan to disarm the situation if needed, you can rest easy that this time leading up to the November election can go smoothly.

The reality is political conversations are an inevitable part of life. At the end of the day, remember what's most important: coming to work should feel like choosing to be part of a team—not picking a side. ■

Angela Civitella is a business leadership coach and founder of Intinde. www.intinde.com

Presenteeism is Key EAP Finding

The newest Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) reports identify work presenteeism as the number one area of employee improvement after engagement of EA services. This is a very significant finding given the focus of attention by HR and work organizations regarding anxious, distracted, and not fully engaged employees – both pre-COVID and during the pandemic.

Morneau Shepell, a leading EAP provider, and the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA), recently announced the publication of the 2020 Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) reports.

“The results of the 2020 Workplace Outcome Suite confirm that short-term counseling offered through EAPs work very well for employees and employers alike,” said Barb Veder, vice president, global clinical services, research lead and chief clinician, Morneau Shepell. “At a time when employees need convenient and effective support for work and life issues, employers looking for a cost-effective way to both provide this benefit while countering presenteeism and absenteeism should strongly consider an EAP.”

Greg DeLapp, chief executive officer, EAPA, added: “EAPA has endorsed and promoted the WOS as a best practice for measuring and evaluating work-related outcomes of employee assistance programs. The WOS offers a standardized approach for the entire industry to use as a way to document the effectiveness and business value of EAP services. We encourage the companies that purchase EAPs and brokers who sell EAP services to support this tool and use it as a way of demonstrating the importance and value of EAP services to their clients.”

The study sample included 35,693 employees with self-reported data collected over a period of 10 years, between 2010 and 2019. A total of 38 different sources provided valid data on all five WOS measures.

For the complete reports, including links to previous studies, visit <https://www.eapassn.org/WOS>

Information about using and licensing the WOS is available at <https://www.lifeworks.com/resources/wos/> ■

Time Management

Recent Brown Baggers

The way months, and even years, fly by, it's quite possible that, as an EA professional, you have a training coming up and one of the resources that would make your preparation much easier is buried among some papers in your office! As a refresher, the following are the titles of some recent *Brown Baggers*, and the general category they covered:

- **Management consulting** – “Leading in Uncertain Times,” Sept. 2020
- **Grief**– “Grief in the Workplace,” Aug. 2020
- **COVID-19** – “In-Person Still Matters,” July 2020

- **Stress management**– “Radical Acceptance as a Stress Management Tool,” June 2020
- **COVID-19** – “Unexpected Ways to Make Online Meetings More Engaging,” May 2020
- **Technology**– “The High-Tech/High-Touch Balance,” April 2020
- **Management consulting** – “Why Kindness is the Key in Promoting Employee Engagement,” March 2020
- **Workplace performance**– “Solving Performance Issues,” Feb. 2020 ■

For additional topics, contact the editor:
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Firm Pays Employees to Adopt a Pet

The Zebra, a leading insurance comparison site, has added a new employee benefit: covering expenses up to \$300 annually for employees welcoming a new cat or dog into their family. To the company's knowledge, this is the first policy of its kind to be offered by an employer. In addition to the stipend, employees are encouraged to use The Zebra's



paid time off policy to get acquainted with their new pet, sometimes known as “pawternity” leave.

“There was a time a while ago when I took my Labrador, Zuma, with me on the train into my office daily. I know this kind of companionship can make a huge difference in quality of life and mental health. Especially now that we’re all working remotely for the foreseeable future, I want to make sure that anyone at The Zebra who wants to, can experience that,” says Keith Melnick, CEO of The Zebra.

Maribeliz Ortiz, Agency Quality Assurance Coordinator at The Zebra, recently used the benefit to welcome Niko, a miniature long-haired dachshund and her “dream dog” since childhood.

“I’m not ready to have a child any time soon,” says the 27-year-old. “But it feels really nice to be supported by my company to help start a family in the way I can right now.”

Dan Kujanek, Senior Manager, Performance Marketing at The Zebra, adopted his dog Ripley right after his move to Austin from New York in 2017. He and his wife had always planned on adopting a second dog. Their recent move to a new home with a spacious yard, coupled with COVID-19’s stay-at-home directive ended up being the perfect time to use the benefit to rescue Romy, a shepherd mix, from Austin’s AjK Family Rescue.

The Zebra’s extensive employee benefits include 20 weeks of fully paid parental leave for the primary caregiver (16 weeks of fully paid parental leave for the secondary caregiver) in birth or adoption of a child with flexible reentry to work, \$100 monthly wellness perk, unlimited paid time off, flexible work from home options, weekly catered lunches, an in-house barista, standing desks, fully stocked snack and drink pantries, and subsidized parking at the East Austin office. ■

Maribeliz Ortiz with her adopted pet, Niko.

Quick Ideas

Choose Your Words Wisely

1. **Be honest.** Start with “I feel...”
2. **Be aware** that you might be misunderstood. Ask questions.
3. **Be creative.** Humor helps.
4. **Be specific.** The recipient may not understand.
5. **Be sensitive** to how the other person reacts.
6. **Be expressive** when you listen. Use verbal and non-verbal feedback.
7. **Be patient.** Interruptions can be irritating, but don’t let them get to you!
8. **Be reassuring.** Make sure the other person knows you’re interested. ■

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Academy Offering Police Empathy Training

*Editor's note: This article appeared in the July 2020 EAR, and is being re-run due to an incorrect URL in the original version. The academy's website is not yet live, but it **does** have a go fund me page. See info in bold at end of the article below.*

The Police Empathy Academy (based in Denver) is offering an empathy training and racial bias certification for police officers, precincts, academies, and police departments across the country. The long-term goal of the organization is to push for politicians to make empathy training a requirement to becoming a police officer.

The goal of the training is to appeal to the human nature of its participants through structured sessions led by industry leading and qualified professionals. Once the course is completed, successful candidates are presented with a Police Empathy Academy – Continuing Education certificate and are able to affix the academy's logo to their websites and resumes.

The academy is operated nationwide and open to all police personnel who would like to improve their empathetic and communication skills, improve their mental health, learn personal life skills, and manage their emotions during tense situations.

With the current state of unrest across the country due to the George Floyd protests against police brutality, many are touting this measure as a necessity for all police departments to begin implementing immediately.

Learning to deescalate confrontation between an officer and a civilian is a key component of this important job. This tactic can keep both the police officers and civilians safer and help heal the divide.

For further information, contact Brianna Hatcher, (720), 262-4077; email support@policeempathy.com or visit gofundme.com/the-police-empathy-academy ■

Additional source: PR Newswire.

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Cognitive Health

Elevate (Free for 14 days, then \$39.99 per year)

Created with input from educational experts. Improves abilities that translate to professional skills such as memory, speaking, and attention.

Peak (free + Pro version for \$34.99 per year)

Designed with help of U.S. and U.K. neuroscientists. Personalized games with performance analysis. View your own “brain map” and get help from a coach.

Spiritual Health

Calm (free + subscription options)

One of the best, if not “the” best meditation apps out there. Truly an all-inclusive relaxation aid.

Headspace (free + subscription options)

If Calm is (1a) then Headspace is (1b) in terms of popular meditation apps. Spiritual mindfulness for those that don't want a religious base.

Aura (free + premium options)

Short (3 minute) daily meditations. AI directed stress reduction meditation app.

Simply Yoga (free + paid ad free)

Pose guides with different class lengths. Good for fitness of the mind and body.

Summary

The most frequent questions I receive when discussing these tools all relate to personal privacy, confidentiality, and data integrity. For example, “*How do I know what they're doing with my information?*” First, understand that I am not responsible for the information a user provides on any of these apps. That said, I've downloaded all these apps cited in this article and have not had any of my data compromised.

Lastly, the two best pieces of advice I can give you are: 1) *Read the security disclaimers* each developer provides and, 2) *Don't do anything you're not comfortable with*. It is nearly impossible to feel 100% at ease with anything in the ever-changing world of technology. I have chosen to explore and embrace this tool and suggest any reader does, too. ■

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