

# EMPLOYEE

## ASSISTANCE NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021

PROVIDED BY SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

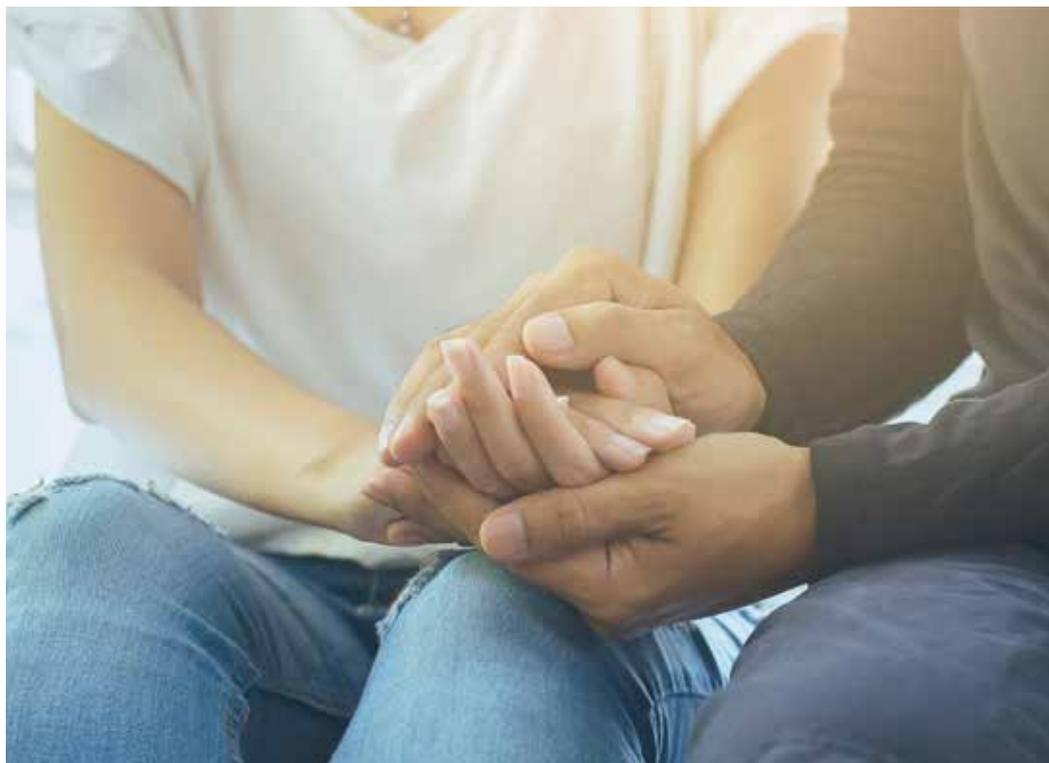
Forgiveness is one of the best tools we can use to heal, but it is one of the hardest things to do. In the words of my very wise grandmother when asked about life lessons, she said,

**“Holding on to resentments leads to regret. Forgiveness is the key to happiness.”**

We cannot fully love ourselves or accept ourselves unconditionally if we cannot do the same for others.

Years ago, as a hospice social worker, life review questions were part of anticipatory bereavement. Many people nearing the end of their life were processing decisions made around relationships and forgiveness. For example, one person said, “I would have ended the 20-year pride issue and spoken to my sister before she died.” Another said, “I would have forgiven my husband for his affair. We had a child die and I know he was hurting too. We didn’t talk for months, just existed. I never let him forget it and never treated him well.” Finally, another person said, “I wish I would have let little things go and laughed a lot more.”

Holding on to resentment can also contribute to physical issues. A young man on hospice said he was raised with criticism and physical punishment. He said he built up a wall and refused to become caring or vulnerable with anyone. He said he had pushed everyone away and he died without ever trying to resolve his anger. Prior to his death, he said he had often wondered if the emotional pain, contempt for others, and lack of social supports in his life led to his cancer.



So how do we forgive? It certainly doesn’t happen overnight. You can practice some tools to change your perspective about the person who has wronged you.

### Here are some tips to practice:

- Try to understand the possible intent or circumstances from the perspective of the person who has hurt you
- Remind yourself that forgiveness is for you, not them
- Acknowledge that we are all human and make mistakes
- When you start to think of the past, use a distraction technique
- It takes less energy to forgive than to hold onto resentments
- Use mindfulness techniques when you start to ruminate
- Ask what strengths or positive came from the negative event/How did it impact who you are today in a positive way?
- Remember a time you were forgiven or wanted to be forgiven to shift the focus
- Learn a technique to reframe the event

We can also apply the same principles to overcoming anger and regret. We can work on accepting our own imperfections. For example, we cannot have inner harmony if we try to accept our own imperfections but not accept other’s imperfections. One way we can be more in control of our dysfunctional and unhealthy parts is to try to understand where our thoughts are coming from.

### Use a Socrates approach:

- When does the judgement occur?
- What are the specific thoughts and behaviors?
- What thoughts and images are associated with these thoughts?
- What are the overall themes, beliefs and assumptions behind these thoughts?
- What is reinforcing the thoughts and behaviors? Once a person understands where the judgments are coming from, it is easier to work on acceptance, peace and forgiveness. People who are able to forgive seem to be happier and healthier.

*(continued on page 2)*



**Saint Alphonus**  
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**EAP MISSION** Saint Alphonus Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, confidential counseling service that assists employees and their families with issues that affect their quality of life at home and work.

## HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL

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- Decide to choose happiness over anger
- List the consequences of anger to you and how that might be harming you emotionally and physically
- Try to develop empathetic thoughts towards yourself and whomever wronged you
- Use a value behavior congruence model. For example, if you value respect, but are not respecting yourself or others, it creates a value behavior incongruence. This only leads to disharmony within ourselves

Every so often, someone on hospice said they had no regrets. They seemed to have suffered just as many losses and made just as many mistakes in their life as those who had regrets. The common denominator seemed to be their forgiveness and resiliency. They forgave others and they forgave themselves because they learned that we are all human and make decisions we regret. We all get hurt by others and we all hurt others, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Holding on to the anger and pain leads to blame and unresolved issues as a recipe for contempt. In conclusion, "Forgiveness is understanding there is nothing to forgive."

If you find yourself requiring the assistance of a licensed therapist to process and work toward forgiveness, our EAP counselors are available to assist in this process.

Finding out that someone you know is having thoughts of suicide can be very upsetting—you might not know how you can help or what you should do. Knowing what to do when someone is having suicidal thoughts can help you to get them the help they need, and it may even save their life. Listed below are the steps you can take to help someone who is suicidal.

### Five Steps to Take to Help Someone who is Suicidal

#### 1) ASK

- Ask the colleague directly if they are thinking about suicide. Talking about suicide with someone will not increase their suicidal thoughts or make them more likely to commit suicide; in fact, studies have shown that talking with a person about suicide helps reduce their suicidal thoughts. Ask questions like, "Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Have you been having suicidal thoughts?"
- Don't ask this way: "You're not thinking about suicide are you?" or "You're not thinking about doing something crazy are you?"

#### 2) BE THERE

- Practice active listening skills. Listen with your full attention, give them full eye contact, and offer hope. Say something like, "I care about what happens to you. You'll get through this." It can help to paraphrase or summarize what the person has said, such as "What I'm hearing is..." or "It sounds like you're saying..."
- Be non-judgmental and empathetic. Don't debate with the person whether suicide is right or wrong or whether their feelings are good or bad.
- Encourage them to discuss their reasons for living, their strengths, the things that give them enjoyment, and the positive people or experiences in their lives. Help them focus on their reasons for

living and avoid trying to impose your reasons for them to stay alive.

#### 3) KEEP THEM SAFE

- Never leave the suicidal person alone. Stay with them or have a friend or family member stay with them until they get professional help.
- Remove any objects that could be used in a suicide attempt (weapons, pills, etc.). It is important to increase the time and distance between the person and their chosen suicide method. If the person threatens suicide right then or has a weapon, call 911 immediately.

#### 4) HELP THEM CONNECT

- Help the person contact the suicide hotline or call it yourself (Idaho Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255) or call the Saint Alphonsus EAP crisis line at (208) 367-3300 (for Saint Alphonsus EAP clients)
- Take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room or have one of their family members or friends help get them professional help.
- At a minimum, get a verbal commitment that the person will get help.

#### 5) FOLLOW UP

- Follow-up with them after they've received help to see how they're doing and ask if you can offer additional help. Getting in touch with them after they've received professional help lets them know that others care about them.

(Source: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org))

### RESOURCES

#### Saint Alphonsus EAP

(208) 367-3300 (24-hour on-call crisis number for Saint Alphonsus EAP clients)  
<https://employer.saintalphonsus.org/mental-health/>

#### Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline:

Call: (800) 273-8255  
 Text: (208) 398-4357  
<https://www.idahosuicideprevention.org>

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

(800) 273-8255  
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

## ULTIMATE CHICKEN SALAD RECIPE

Chicken salad is a classic salad recipe with diced chicken, creamy mayonnaise, crisp celery, green onion, sweet grapes, and fresh herbs.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon dijon mustard
- 1 cup red grapes quartered
- 2 stalk celery diced
- 3 green onions (green and white parts) sliced
- 2 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped tarragon
- 1 lemon juiced
- salt and pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### To Make the Poached Chicken

1. Place the chicken breasts in a wide pot or pan and cover by about an inch with cold water. Season the water with salt. Optionally, you can add aromatics of your choice. Read my poached chicken recipe for more details.
2. Turn the heat to medium until it reaches a gentle simmer. Then reduce the heat back to low and cover the pan. Let the chicken simmer for 8-12 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 160-165° F. Remove the chicken and let it rest for a couple of minutes. Then chill in the fridge.

#### Chicken Salad Recipe

1. Transfer the cooled chicken to a cutting board and dice it into 1/2-inch pieces.
2. Slice and dice the celery, green onion, grapes, parsley and tarragon. Add those ingredients to a mixing bowl along with the mayonnaise,

Dijon mustard, and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper.

3. Mix everything together until it's well combined. Let it chill in the fridge until you're ready to serve.



# IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

The past 17 months have been some of the most challenging times many people have had to encounter.

There are clearly strong and divisive feelings and opinions about many issues facing us locally and globally. One of which has been and is the presence, treatment and handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Few have gone untouched by the impacts of the pandemic, whether they be felt economically, emotionally or physically. For a moment it seemed that we had a calm in the Coronavirus storm, and now we face more uncertainty with a new more virulent strain present. Despite the many differences in the ways we think about or experience the pandemic, it has been a traumatizing time for many people.

Trauma can be described as a response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causing feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences. Traumatic events generally include the witnessing of a real or perceived threat of serious bodily harm or death to oneself or someone else. Often it is unexpected, causing the person to feel a loss of control over themselves, their physical and/or emotional well-being or that of another person. Lack of control often leads to other concerns such as, a sense of hypervigilance, startle response, sleep and appetite disturbance, intrusive thoughts or flashbacks of the traumatic event or aspects of it, increased anxiety, including a sense of fear, physiological dysregulation, and panic. Many traumatic events happen quickly and there is a discernible end to the incident. Others are longer lasting, such as war, abuse and neglect and, sometimes, illness. Often when a person can see the "light at the end of the tunnel" of the distressing event, they experience a greater sense of agency, hope and trust that the world will be "right" again.



Now approaching the two-year mark, the pandemic and its impacts have been anything but short term. How do people cope with ongoing uncertainty and the stress that usually accompanies it? There is no quick fix, however there are some strategies that may prove helpful. When someone has survived or is surviving traumatic events, finding a sense of agency can be very helpful. Defining what a person has control over and taking steps to make changes they can, while identifying and letting go of what they do not have any say over can be a start. Often focusing on the very basic levels of self-care such as sleep, eating, exercise and getting through the day are things that fall under most people's control to some degree, which can help restore a sense of normalcy. Recognizing that with all trauma there is a sense of loss, whether that be of one's sense of security and safety, loss of a loved one, their job, or health. Often losses need to be acknowledged and grieved before they can be released. Taking it 'one day at a time', the pandemic has certainly proven to be a marathon and not a sprint. Attempting to stay in the moment and not become consumed with possible future events can decrease worry and wasted energy on things we cannot yet know. Finding ways to increase your sense of safety, and say over your own health choices, may also ease some of the

'unknowns'. Lastly, talking with a trusted person about what you are experiencing, can also help to alleviate some of the burden, as well as to decrease a sense of isolation that trauma, and a pandemic, can bring. Here at the EAP we would be honored to be a part of your support network. To make an appointment, just give us a call, 208-367-3300.

## Saint Alphonsus Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

### Regular Appointment Hours:

8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m., Monday-Friday  
*(special appointment hours by request)*

Phone: (208) 367-3300

### Locations:

6140 W. Emerald St., Boise, ID 83704  
3025 W. Cherry Ln, Ste 205  
Meridian, ID 83642

### Counselors:

Jared Belsher, MA, LCPC, NCC  
Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW  
Stephanie Hadley, MSW, LCSW  
Melissa Young, MSW, LCSW



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## EAP COUNSELORS

### SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



**Jared Belsher – Supervisor**  
MA, LCPC, NCC

Jared is a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) and national certified counselor (NCC) who has worked in outpatient mental health clinics and in private

practice since 2007. He received a bachelor's Degree in Political Science and a master's Degree in Community Counseling from Northern Arizona University. His approach to counseling is strength-based, which means that rather than dwelling on

things that are wrong, he focuses on the strength individuals have, and how they can use those strengths to overcome their obstacles. He uses a person-centered approach and additional counseling techniques such as cognitive-behavioral

therapy (CBT) to help clients discover healthier ways to cope and think about a problem.

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# NON-TRADITIONAL GRIEF

Over the past year and half, we've all endured a great deal of loss, some of us in a traditional sense of the word but most of us in the form of freedom, autonomy, emotional connection, and financial security. COVID could be described as a wrecking ball, leaving the wake of its impact in each of our lives. Regardless of where we each stand on matters of the virus itself, mask mandates, and vaccinations we have ALL been affected in some way shape or form.

Some of us have seen loved ones or colleagues hospitalized or lost to the virus, while others have been on the front lines trying to save lives, still countless others have contracted COVID and continue to struggle with symptoms making them "long haulers." While some were not heavily impacted directly by the virus or experienced little to no symptoms, those folks are indirectly impacted like the rest of us in many ways. Many lost jobs, homes, and relationships due to decisions that must be made whether personal or professional.

Children, teens, young adults, and adults alike are experiencing feelings of irritability and anger, increased worry or anxiety, distrust and disbelief,

feelings of dread or doom, decrease in motivation and mood, increase in interpersonal conflict, feelings of guilt, and general "COVID fatigue." We often find ourselves experiencing little tornados of emotions that seem to come out of nowhere. These little tornados are difficult enough to manage on our own, let alone when our grief tornado smashes into someone else's.

We long for the days of past and what used to be, urging the world to be rid of the virus so we can return to a former state of normalcy. We have and continue to miss out on the typical way we experienced concerts, family reunions, sharing time with loved ones, movie theaters, festivals, not to mention travelling. Our plans are mired by checking to see if we have a mask, checking the ever-changing rules related to where they should or must be worn, and even find confrontation and restrictions placed on us if we don't comply.

We have and continue to see mandates on everything from distancing, masking, and vaccines. Our belief about the pandemic is on a spectrum ranging from those we observe to be hypervigilant and highly anxious to those who

believe the virus is not real. We have been divided as humans, families, colleagues, and within the systems we work. We have all lost so much, we as a collective group of humans are grieving.

Some of us have pulled close to those we love. Others have lashed out and isolated themselves, leaving them feeling alone and/or angry and/or sad; marriages have ended, friendships have been broken, and trust completely shaken. Some have turned to drugs and/or alcohol and others, tragically turned to suicide.

So what do we do with this grief? We feel it, honor it, talk about it, and learn to cope with it. We fight stigma, isolation, and shame. We say to one another, "I am struggling. How are you holding up?" We seek help and support and address the only person we have control over...ourselves.

The pandemic does not discriminate and neither does grief, we are in this together. If you need someone to talk to about your grief during this unprecedented time, please feel free to contact the Saint Alphonsus EAP office to speak with one of our counselors.

## EAP COUNSELORS

### SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



**Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW**

Jenny Lee has been practicing as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for nearly a decade. She has worked in the mental health field for more than 20 years in a variety of treatment settings including but not limited to schools, day treatment centers, hospitals, and local community agencies. Jenny Lee has provided treatment to children, pre-teens and teens, and adults in individual, group, and family settings.

Jenny Lee is skilled in working with complex family units, emotional and behavioral issues, trauma, depression, mood disorders, anxiety, co-occurring diagnosis, psychotic disorders, self-harm, suicidal ideation, gangs, and those involved with foster care and Child Protective Services. Jenny Lee practices from a strength-based approach to treatment, while using a combination of interventions tailored to meet each individual's needs.



**Stephanie Hadley, MSW, LCSW**

Stephanie is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has worked in private practice, community mental health agencies, hospice, hospital and substance abuse settings. She specializes in working with relationship issues, grief and loss, anger management, blended family issues, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, co-dependency, stress, trauma and parenting. Stephanie's approach is adjusted to meet client needs and developed with the client's learning process in mind. She utilizes an eclectic model including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Solution-focused, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Family Systems, Gestalt, Gottman, Humanistic, Adlerian, Motivational Interviewing, Person-Centered, Positive Psychology, and Trauma Focused therapy with a Strengths-focused direction in her sessions.



**Melissa Young, MSW, LCSW**

Melissa has been a Mental Health Professional for 30+ years having the opportunity to serve in a variety of mental health settings, with diverse client populations, working in various roles. As a Clinical Social Worker she has had the opportunity to work with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence; as an Outpatient Psychotherapist within a Community Mental Health Center; a Peace Corps Volunteer in Asuncion Paraguay; Hospice Social Worker; and currently working as a Counselor at the Saint Alphonsus Employee Assistance Program and Clinical Supervisor with Tidwell Social Work Services and Consulting Inc. She employs an eclectic approach to her work with clients, believing that a trusting and supportive relationship is key to any therapeutic success. In addition to her professional life, she is a mother of three teenage boys, wife of 18 years, and a proud dog and horse owner.