



The FSAP Update

a newsletter from the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program
for University Faculty and Staff

Spring 2005

The Domino Effect stop, get help, before they fall down. *by Elizabeth Holtzman, FSAP Counselor*

The Faculty and Staff Assistance Program provides assessment, brief counseling, and referral services for all faculty and staff regarding any personal or health-related problem which affects an individual's life and work.

FSAP services are free to faculty, staff, and family members and are completely confidential. The staff also provides consultation to supervisors when an employee's personal problems are affecting work performance or relationships. For more information or to make an appointment, call 545-0350.

Life is unpredictable.

We can make plans to try and keep our lives under control but we simply cannot control all of the events that will impact us in our lifetime. Sometimes one huge event, such as losing a spouse or a child, will overwhelm us.

More often than not, however, smaller pressures begin to mount and may produce a domino effect making the sum of the events larger than its parts.

- **Susan** is a working mother of two children ages seven and ten. Her husband travels a great deal in his work leaving her most of the responsibility for the home and the children. She is proud of her ability to balance a demanding career, the responsibilities of getting her children to various activities, and managing a house all on a demanding schedule.

Recently, however, Susan has seen a reorganization at work requiring her to move to a new site and modify her job description. While trying to accommodate to these changes she learns that her mother, who lives across the country, has become severely ill.

If any of these events happened in isolation, Susan would have managed by stretching to adapt and make whatever decisions and changes she needed to. With this combination of events Susan is finding herself immobilized. She is barely sleeping; she has trouble focusing at work, and finds herself in tears for no reason. She is trying to appear untroubled around her children.

- **Robert**, age sixty-three, is approaching retirement. He is prepared financially but not sure what he will do with himself when he retires and would actually like to continue working as long as possible. He has two grown children who are doing well but who live a considerable distance from him. Robert divorced two years ago after his wife left him for another man. Robert has been depressed, but is managing with exercise and meditation.

During a routine physical with his doctor an unusual lump is discovered. Robert is diagnosed with prostate cancer and must undergo medical treatment.

The combination of stressors Robert is now facing is overwhelming.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Caring for Elders

At Amherst College
(For 5 College Faculty and Staff)

June 2, 2005

Call 545-0350 for details.

Emotional Aspects of Retirement

UMass Amherst, Campus Center Rm 917

June 9, 2005

9-11 a.m.

**Call Workplace Learning and
Development at 545-1787
for details or to register.**

- **Susan** may find her stress spilling over into irritability with her children. The children may then begin acting out in school. Susan may start getting phone calls from the school at her place of business leading to further discord.
- **Robert** may find that with his illness he is unable to exercise to the same degree, which may lead to increasing depression. Depression may lower his energy and motivation leaving him low ability to plan for a successful retirement. It may also prevent him from working as long as he would have liked.

We may not have the ability to foresee or control all things in our lives, but we can choose to deal with the smaller issues in our lives before they escape our control. It is useful to develop a self-awareness of what level your stress has reached. There are many lists that rank stressors and self-assessment tests that can be performed to give you a rating or score. Most people assume that the death of a loved one would be high on the list. Not everyone would realize that moving or changing jobs are also potentially high-level stressors.

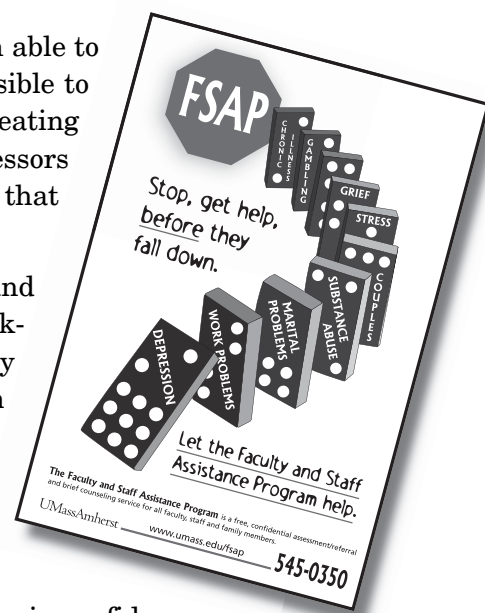
Many of the people in college towns are used to coping and being able to get things done on their own. They pride themselves on their coping abilities. These people may not anticipate the impact of some upcoming events in their lives such as the birth of a child or an upcoming wedding.

It is beneficial to acknowledge these stressors early on, because you are then able to prepare for the impact the event may cause in your life. Only then is it possible to deal with your emotions before they spill over into other areas of your life creating even more disharmony. It is also helpful to anticipate the impact of stressors because you will recognize that what you are experiencing is normal. At that point, stress-relieving techniques may be helpful.

At the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, we work with many faculty and staff members who are experiencing a wide range of personal, health and work-related problems. In our office, people have an opportunity to resolve any issues or problems that may be building in your life and stop them from becoming a combination that leaves you feeling helpless or overwhelmed.

FSAP services are free of charge and offer assessment, brief counseling as well as referrals and are available for all faculty, staff and members of their immediate family.

If something is troubling you, it might be beneficial to talk about your concern, in confidence, with a counselor.



Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

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