

CONNECTIONS

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Three Trails Eligibility

by Don Benson

One of the more challenging parts of our program is determining eligibility for service. When someone calls for the first time, the person is asked some questions to verify that he/she is eligible. Why is this difficult? Three Trails operates from the philosophy of providing services to those in need. Having to turn someone away goes against the grain of this philosophy. Nevertheless, it is a necessary limitation to maintain an optimal and accessible program.

Each employer determines which employees are to receive the Three Trails benefit. While all employers provide the benefit to all full-time employees, and the vast majority of service users are full-time employees, many of our employers also purchase the benefit for some or all of their part-time employees. Since each organization sets its own rules for part-timers, we must carefully follow the specific eligibility criteria for each one.

When an employee calls who does not fall into the eligibility for service, this can be a confusing and frustrating experience for that individual. We do our best to explain the reasoning to the person and rely on our employers to convey the eligibility criteria to their employees as well.

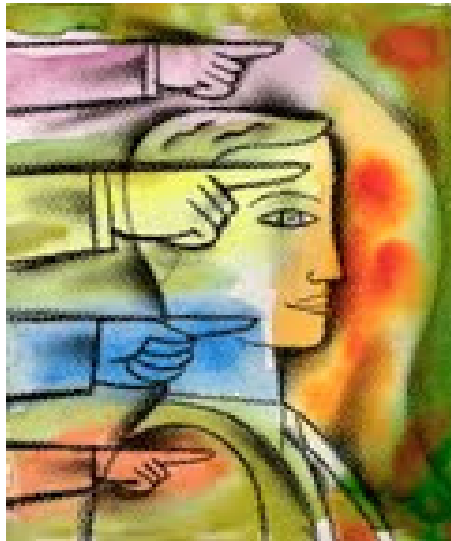
Why must Three Trails limit services to eligible employees (and eligible family members)? It is largely a matter of resources. The number of counselor hours Three Trails can provide must be able to meet the demand for services. If we allow non-eligible employees and family members to use the service, we run the risk of stretching ourselves so thin that our qual-

ity of service suffers and our availability is reduced. Maintaining adherence to the eligibility criteria is one of the ways we manage the demand for services.

We do make exceptions. On occasion, someone's circumstances will be so pressing that we will see this person. These are handled on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that we always take people's concerns seriously and will often go through

a painstaking decision-making process to arrive at the best decision. Also, we always provide referral resources to those who are not eligible to come to Three Trails EFAP.

It is our hope that this helps provide the rationale for those difficult times when we are unable to see certain people. We are receptive to any feedback you might have on how we have chosen to handle this. While we are certainly not "all things to all people", we do our best to provide what clients need within the realistic constraints of what we can do.



NCSD - all health insurance-eligible employees (not just those who take the insurance)

City of Casper - all full-time employees

WMC - all full-time employees and all half-time employees (not part-time or PRN)

Casper College - all full-time employees and regular part-time employees (does not include those who are solely adjunct instructors)

Of course, all spouses, minor children of eligible employees, and retirees with benefits are included.

STRESS AND CORTISOL

By Joanne Robinson

Although the counselors at Three Trails EFAP are not qualified to be medical doctors, we do like to stay informed about popular medical buzz words. In the past everyone has been inundated with claims for Vitamin D, antioxidants and Omega 3. These have been very informative, but another hormone we have also heard about is cortisol. By investigating the internet, magazines and books, we have turned up some interesting facts.

Cortisol is the so-called stress hormone. All of us have some level of it in our bodies because it contributes to many bodily functions involving energy regulation and mobilization. This is why it is normally higher in the morning to wake us up and lower in the evening to help us relax. There was not much information on how working shifts affects cortisol. Like adrenaline, it is produced by adrenal glands. Small increases are beneficial, including:

- **Quick burst of energy (aided by adrenaline which produces the fight-or-flight response)**
- **Heightened memory function (good when studying)**
- **Burst of increased immunity**
- **Lowered sensitivity to pain**
- **Helps to maintain homeostasis in the body.**

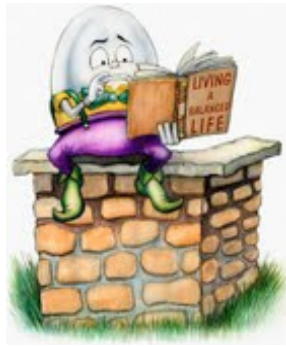
Cortisol means well, but it doesn't know when to quit. Relentless stress will increase this survival hormone, reducing its good intentions. When these stress reactions remain continuous, the toll they take on our bodies and minds can be substan-

tial. Prolonged increases of cortisol in the blood that are negative include:

- **Impaired cognitive performance**
- **Suppressed thyroid function**
- **Blood sugar imbalances**
- **Less bone density**
- **Less muscle tissue**
- **Higher blood pressure**
- **Increase in abdominal fat**
- **Lowered immunity.**

These negative responses point to a dire need to lower stress. If stress continues and cortisol contributes to lower immunity, for instance, the body is more susceptible to everything from colds to flu to maybe even cancer. Since cortisol is a hormone that moves fat around to supply energy, if it is not used, the fat will be dumped in the abdomen. This increases the cholesterol and fats in the blood and so increases the chance of heart disease or stroke. Higher blood pressure, which can be a side effect, also contributes to this chance. If a person has diabetes, the blood sugar imbalances can be dangerous. Also studies have shown that elderly people with elevated levels of cortisol more often suffer from dementia and Alzheimer's. These diseases do not come from stress itself. What happens is that the body loses all resistance in its effort to ward off the stress. That is why all of us need to practice stress reducers often.

If you feel that you are under too much stress, call Three Trails EFAP to discuss this with a counselor. We can investigate which stress reducers would best fit into your lifestyle and make you healthier.



Autumn
is a second spring
when every leaf
is a flower.
-Albert Camus

"Autumn"
...falling leaves
...hide the path
...so quietly
-John Bailey

NOTEWORTHY NEWS



Three Trails EFAP welcomes Amy Kirkman, M.S. in the position of part-time counselor. Amy will be available for late afternoon and early evening hours. She has practiced with various mental health professionals in the Casper community and we are excited to have her join our team and contribute her expertise to the mission of Three Trails. Welcome, Amy!

As we rejoice over the addition of Amy, we are saddened by the departure of Candise Leininger. Candise has served Three Trails for over two years and is leaving for a new and exciting opportunity in the community. We wish her well and are very grateful for her contributions to Three Trails EFAP. Good luck, Candise!

Three Trails EFAP wants to note and thank its Board of Directors for all their hard work: Crystal Mueller, Board Chair; Reed Barr, Vice-Chair; Peggy Milberger, Secretary, and Linda Toohey, Treasurer. Gayle Schnorenberg and Leanne Woodfill serve as Board Members-at-large.

We want to recognize Sharon Bell, our long-time Board member from Casper College, who has earned a much-deserved retirement. We will miss her and are indebted to her for her years of leadership on our Board of Directors.

THREE TRAILS EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Three Trails Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is a counseling agency designed to respond to the needs of eligible active and retired employees, spouses, and dependent family members of participating businesses and organizations.

Our mission is to provide professional assistance early and in a timely manner so that problems do not worsen. Such concerns may include workplace stress, marriage and family tensions, alcohol and drug abuse, and other difficulties that may impact individuals. Counselors at Three Trails assess the scope and nature of the presenting concerns and will either provide counseling or refer the individual(s) to specialized services as necessary.

Three Trails EFAP is staffed by three counselors and an administrative assistant. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 237-5750 or stop by the office at 812 South David Street.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday & Wednesday	9:00 to 6:00 pm
Tuesday & Thursday	9:00 to 7:00 pm
Fridays	12:00 to 5:00 pm

We are closed through the noon hour except on Fridays.