



**EMPLOYEE SUPPORT SERVICES**

**offered by**

**FAMILY LIFE CENTRE**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Family Life Centre** (FAMSA, Johannesburg) is affiliated to FAMSA National Council and is one of the FAMSA organisations in South Africa.

**Family Life Centre** originated in 1949 in the response to the need to combat marriage and family disintegration. Initially the target group was couples and families who were experiencing relationship difficulties. Over the years the target groups changed to meet the growing demands from the community. Currently individuals both adults and youth, couples and families, groups and communities are assisted with a wide range of problems through counselling, mediation and preventive education programmes.

To achieve our goal of promoting healthy employees and their families, **Family Life Centre** ensures that the team of professional staff:

- are highly skilled social workers or psychologists
- have access to psychiatrists, psychologists or lawyers for consultation
- receive ongoing development training
- attend workshops and seminars on the current trends in services in the work place.

Their combined experience, knowledge and skills provide an excellent service to all members of the community.

During the last year **Family Life Centre reached 66120** people through their consulting and preventive programmes.

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

When consulting in the business environment, **Family Life Centre's** philosophy is:

- personal problems affect work performance
- without intervention situation is likely to worsen
- treatment is more cost effective than replacement
- financial loss and loss of wellbeing are equally important.

## **THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF YOUR BUSINESS**

The emotional health of any business is like the emotional health of a family. The people that live and work in it often have different levels of emotional health. An emotional "thermometer" does not give the causes of illness but will be an indicator that something is wrong. It will need the attention of the "family". Interruptions caused by imbalance need attention.

### **INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE**

#### **Stress**

When people are in relationship crises, emotions take over and they regress to primitive coping mechanisms like fighting, fleeing, freezing and submitting. These mechanisms require energy and physical resources, leaving people exhausted. If these issues are not resolved, the stress and pain goes under cover and takes revenge at times when least expected. The demand for attention on a company can then be more time consuming, more costly and will require more expertise to handle.

#### **Burnout**

When a person is exposed to trauma, or has not mastered stress, or is overburdened by the strain of everyday living, and is finding him/herself stretching more and more to cope, burnout with resultant depression is the very next small step to breakdown.

#### **Trauma**

Trauma is defined as:

*"an emotional state of discomfort and stress resulting from memories of an extraordinary catastrophic experience which shatters the survivor's sense of invulnerability to harm"*

It can be relived in traumatic stress symptoms of arousal, intrusions and avoidance.

The process of healing in the case of trauma requires early intervention (within 24 hours) and subsequent professional support (debriefing and therapy).

Fearing discrimination at the workplace, stress and trauma victims may not disclose their stories and the subsequent effects. The disclosure of weakness and pain may jeopardize their jobs.

## **BEHAVIOUR INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

The list below are some of the behaviours of individuals which indicate the emotional health of a company suffering from traumatic stress.

- Corruption
- Petty theft (telephone bill, stationary, stolen "hours", indiscreet use of overtime, misuse of sick leave and medical aids, unauthorized mileage, etc.
- Absenteeism
- Drug abuse
- Family problems, eg divorce
- Emotional instability, eg aggression, poor concentration, mistakes
- High turnover of staff
- Negativity in staff, eg sleeping in meetings
- Inability to co-operate
- Poor concentration
- Careless mistakes
- Hyper-vigilance
- Social withdrawal
- Depression
- On-going physical symptoms, eg headaches, stomach-aches and diarrhoea
- Inability to work for days after stressful events
- Severe anger at the organization due to lack of perceived security and support
- Discontentment and resentment at working in the same environment

If untreated, serious long term consequences for both the employee and the employer may occur. At best, the employee is unable to function at an optimal level. At worst, the employee could develop chronic psychiatric illness.

### **Aids**

More people are dying as a result of "acts of loving" than actual physical combat. How is the Aids threat affecting your company?

## **EMPLOYEE SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Employee Support Services, which began in 1988, is a division of the **Family Life Centre**. The first corporate contract was signed in 1990.

Employee Support Services may be defined as a:

*"Manpower Management Systems" designed to assist employees with personal problems affecting job performance or with the potential to affect job performance".*

Most organisations assume that they do not have troubled employees but according to studies world wide, 20% of the population suffer from some type of mental disorder. In South Africa 50% of road accidents are alcohol or drug related and absenteeism can cost companies up to 25% of the salary bill.

The Employee Support Services are based on an understanding that:

- a healthy society is dependent upon healthy family life
- healthy family life requires healthy relations within the family, the social milieu and the work environment
- difficulties experienced within the family impact on the workplace
- difficulties experienced in the workplace impact on the family unit
- individuals have the right to services which are confidential, accessible and provided by skilled professionals.

For the Employee Support Services, **Family Life Centre** provides:

- a professional quality service based on 50 years experience
- a wide range of services
- multi-lingual, multi-cultural professional staff
- services on a national level - 27 organisations throughout South Africa
- an organisation with credibility both in the community and in business
- access to a wide range of resources
- an accessible service to communities as we have satellite offices and we are able to respond to client needs within 72 hours.

## **COUNSELLING SERVICES**

The list below are the issues which have been brought to counselling:

### **Emotional difficulties**

These may be presented as:

- depression
- stress
- ill health
- psychiatric disorders

If problems are of a deep psychological origin we consult and refer these clients to our psychologists or psychiatrists for assessment and/or treatment.

### **Family problems**

Every family experiences problems - many can overcome them without help. Clients requested help with the following difficulties:

- marital (abuse, affairs, etc)
- divorce re-marriage
- parenting
- step parenting
- children
- adolescents

### **Inter-personal difficulties**

Reaching our potential is often hampered by a lack of skills in:

- communication
- conflict resolution

### **Addiction**

- alcohol and substance abuse
- eating disorders
- gambling
- internet

## **Trauma debriefing**

Trauma debriefing is a structured, cognitive process which assists a traumatised person or group in normalising and integrating their response/reactions to a traumatic event. This process encourages a restored sense of mastery and purpose. A traumatic event, by definition, is something that is external to the individual, surprising and experienced as overwhelming by most people subjected to it.

## **Violence and abuse**

Domestic violence includes:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional verbal and psychological abuse
- economic abuse
- intimidation harassment and stalking

## **Financial**

Anxiety of personal management of finance can cause problems:

- budgeting
- fraud

## **Legal issues**

Information and assistance on the procedures for:

- marriage
- child custody
- maintenance

If professional legal assistance is required we refer to our panel of lawyers.

## **Play therapy**

A specialised service which involves an assessment interview and specialised therapy with the child

## **Religious and cultural differences**

Workshops and counselling aims to assist employees to address those issues which impact in the workplace.

## **Suicide**

We have a service which provides:

- Support for families who have experienced this trauma

## **Mediation**

An interesting new development is the mediation service we offer. Couples are assisted by mediators to negotiate divorce or family disputes rather than go the litigation route.

## **Grief and loss**

On the Holmes Life Event scale, death of a spouse, divorce, marital separation and death of a family member score highest on the scale of stressful events. Loss, through death, immigration and change in a variety of situations are common events in employees lives. Counselling aims at increasing their understanding of the grief cycle, helping them to deal with their emotions and work towards acceptance and re-integration into life.

## **HIV/Aids**

Services include assistance with:

- Pre and Post Test Counselling
- Counselling HIV positive clients
- Support Groups for Living Positively with HIV/Aids
- Support for families with an HIV/Aids member

## **INTERVENTION PROCEDURE**

### **Counselling**

Interventions may be short-term or long-term depending on the need of the client and the agreement between the organisation and ***Family Life Centre***.

Counselling will be provided in the following manner:

- **self-referral** where the employee initiates the counselling process.
- **informal referral** where management/supervisor encourages employees to seek counselling.
- **formal referral** where management/supervisor/colleague formally refer employees for counselling, in conjunction with the company procedure. In order for a formal referral to be successful, management guidance and supervision of the employee is necessary. A very specific procedure concerning the formal referral is followed and therefore emphasises that company guidance needs to be taken into serious consideration. Furthermore, follow up with the company is undertaken, in order to determine the effectiveness of the referral.

Counselling may be face to face on-site or at our offices. A telephonic counselling service can be provided to employees during office hours. The Employee Support Service is a confidential service.

### **Referral**

An integral part of the counselling service is the assessment of an individual and any subsequent referrals, if required. We therefore maintain a comprehensive resource system, which is maintained for easy referral both within Gauteng and other major cities and towns.

### **Staffing**

There are two co-ordinators of the Employee Support Services. Employees contact them at the office during office hours and the employee may be seen by them or "matched" to one of our experienced counsellors.

### **A National Service**

***Family Life Centre*** will co-ordinate a national service. FAMSA's 27 offices are located in:

- **Eastern Cape**
  - East London
  - Grahamstown
  - Port Elizabeth
  - Knysa
  - Oudtshoorn
  - Stutterheim
- **Free State Province**
  - Bloemfontein
  - Welkom

- **Gauteng**
  - Vanderbijlpark
  - Johannesburg City
  - Kempton Park
  - Parkwood, Johannesburg
  - Benoni
  - Pretoria
  - Soweto
  - Roodepoort
- **KwaZulu/Natal Province**
  - Durban
  - Pietermaritzburg
- **Mpumalanga Province**
  - Secunda
- **Northern Cape Province**
  - Kimberley
  - Upington
- **Northern Province**
  - Tzaneen
- **Northwest Province**
  - Potchefstroom
- **Western Cape Province**
  - Cape Town,
  - Mossel Bay
  - Worcester
  - George

## **PREVENTATIVE PROACTIVE SERVICES**

Since 1950 **Family Life Centre** has been designing and implementing preventative educational programmes in the community. The programmes are well researched and tested and can be adapted and tailor made to meet the needs of the company or community.

The preventive services of the Employee Support Services aim to provide information and knowledge, increase inter or intra personal skills and provide support. The programmes enhance the employees' well being and therefore contribute to the company and productivity.

The well trained, professional facilitators are experts in the field and are experienced and skilled in group dynamics.

### **Work Related Issues**

These programmes handled several aspects including:

- Preparing for Retrenchment
- Surviving Retrenchment
- Preparing for Retirement
- Managing Change

### **Life Skills Programmes and Support Groups**

On a broader front examples of these programmes are:

- Stress Management
- Effective Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Developing Assertiveness
- Managing Trauma
- Dealing with Loss - death and dying
- Personal Growth and Development
- Women Empowerment
- Building Healthy Families
- Effective Parenting Skills
- Post Trauma Support Groups

### **Managing Critical Life Events**

The pace of change in our environment, plus the critical health problems in our society has resulted in a increase in aggression, fear and an inability to cope in our communities.

**Family Life Centre** has designed specific programmes to address these critical issues:

- Living Positively with HIV/Aids
- Preparing for Death
- Adult Survivors of Child Abuse
- Managing Anger
- Dealing with the Loss of a Family Member
- Divorce Support Groups for Adults and Children
- Ill Health, Depression and Anxiety
- Single and Step Parenting Groups

### **Groups for Employees in High Risk Positions**

The escalating crime in South Africa involving personnel in high risk positions such as cash-in-transit staff, bank tellers, security, etc needs specialised handling. Our programmes are:

- Managing Stress
- Support Groups for Survivors
- Support Groups for Employees' Spouses/Families
- Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress

### **Education and Training Programmes**

We provide a vast range of general education and training programmes:

- HIV/Aids Education
- Basic Counselling Skills for Human Resource Managers
- Peer Counselling Skills
- Trauma Containment
- Trauma Debriefing
- Team Building
- Stress Management
- Assertiveness Training

### **Talks**

**Family Life Centre** is frequently requested to address groups, seminars, etc and has a team of professional and skilled speakers. Topics include:

- Healthy Families
- Marriage - Preparation and Enrichment
- Divorce - The Effects of Divorce on Adults or Children
- Remarriage - Step Families and Maintenance
- Working Women
- Stress
- Trauma
- HIV/Aids in the Workplace

- HIV/Aids - The Impact on Families
- Effective Parenting
- Parent Child Relationships
- The Mid-Life Crisis
- Adolescence
- Communication and Conflict Management
- Emotional Intelligence
- Death - Separation and Loss
- Emotional Difficulties and the Impact on Families
- Budgeting
- Building your Self-Esteem
- Retirement
- Retrenchment

An holistic approach by employers, which creates a balance between empathy and economics for employees, ensures a healthy and productive company.