(To translate this text, copy/paste into Google Translate.)

For Your Benefit: Mental Health Resources

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UVA HR Total Rewards Team

Hi, I'm Stuart. I've been working for UVA for three years. Some days, work is hectic and stressful, but I really like my job. I live with my partner, Marcy, and our two young kids, with a third on the way.

Between work and kids, I can sometimes feel worn out, but for a while, I just wasn't able to bounce back. I would wake up exhausted and fall into bed at night feeling the same. I was functioning, but that's it.

I noticed that I was more irritable with Marcy and the kids, which made me feel terrible. I tried staying away from them so that I wouldn't get snappy, but that only made me feel worse. Sometimes, I would just stare at my computer at work, unable to focus on what was next. No one seemed to notice, but I was worried I would fall behind and wouldn't be able to catch up. Even though I was exhausted, I would lie awake at night, worrying that I could lose my job.

One of my coworkers, Amanda, noticed how tired I'd been looking and asked if I was okay. I thought about brushing it off, but I've always trusted Amanda, so I let her know that I've been having a rough time. She listened kindly and let me know that she had gone through a recent period where she was stressed out and anxious too.

My daughter was going into high school, and we had a fair amount of debt. I started seriously looking at college costs and was convinced that we couldn't afford to send her. I felt like I was letting her down. It was all that I could think about, and it was awful.

I went to speak with someone at FEAP, and it really helped. I felt more hopeful about the situation and was motivated to explore options using a lot of the benefits that I get here at work.

Our priority was to come up with a plan to pay for college. We attended a financial well-being webinar on that topic and learned about many savings options I didn't even know existed, and I got a $25 reward just for attending the webinar. FEAP gave me a referral for a free 30-minute financial consultation so that we could start tackling our debt. We even took a class on financial wellness for couples and families that I found on the HR website.

I'd heard of FEAP before, and I easily requested an appointment on their website. I felt nervous, because I'd never done anything like this before, and I wasn't sure what to expect. But the FEAP consultant was very kind, and I immediately felt at ease. She explained that everything we discussed is confidential and let me know the few legal exceptions to that. By the end of the first session, I felt more hopeful than I had in a while.

I learned that what I was going through is very common. I'd been thinking that something was wrong with me, and that I'd been letting people down. When I began to consider my experience differently, I began to respond to myself in different ways. I also learned ways to comfortably share my experiences with Marcy so that I could get her support. After a few sessions with the FEAP consultant, I was less irritable at home, and less anxious and more focused at work.

After I met with FEAP, I decided to meet with a health coach though Hoos Well. I wanted to stay focused on what triggers my anxiety, and look at how exercise, diet, and changing my sleep habits might help. I took some free exercise classes through UVA Rec and did some physical activity journeys through the Hoos Well portal. Marcy took some virtual yoga classes and met with a registered dietician for prenatal nutrition counseling, all for free through our benefits.

I've learned how important it is to pay attention to my physical and emotional well-being. I'm not as consistent as I'd like to be, but I've learned that that's okay too. When I remember, I continue to use resources on the FEAP and Hoos Well portals. Marcy and I also downloaded the Healthy Minds @ Work app from the HR website. The lessons are quick and easy to understand, like listening to a mini podcast. We can do the practices while enjoying our morning walk together. We both feel that it helps our sense of calm and resilience, as we get ready to welcome another child into our family.

It took a few months, but I've started to feel like my old self again, only better. If you're feeling like I was, or you identify with any of the other states on the stress continuum, visit the FEAP, Hoos Well, and other wellness resources that I did, so that you and your family can stay positive, energized, and well.

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