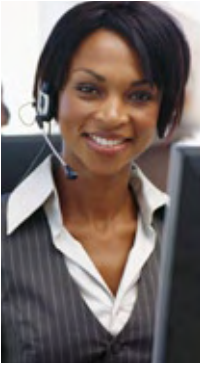




# BalanceWorks<sup>®</sup> Newsletter

March 2009 | Written by the work/life experts at **eni**



## Emotions and Cardiac Health

Love, compassion, joy -- some of our most profound emotions are felt deep within our hearts. At the same time, some negative emotions can have a lasting physical effect on the heart as well. Recent research shows a clear link between heart disease and certain stress-related emotions.

Unrelenting depression can not only worsen existing heart disease, it also can increase the risk for the disease in otherwise healthy people.

The same is true of persistent anxiety and "toxic anger." Research suggests when these emotions aren't managed well, over time they may raise blood pressure, block arteries, weaken the immune system, cause abnormal heart rhythms, or even lead to sudden cardiac death.

### Normal vs. Toxic

We all get angry or sad now and then. Occasional bouts of negative emotion are, in themselves, not a big deal; in fact, they're part of being human, and they help us become aware of important issues that need to be addressed. When toxic emotions aren't managed well and keep arising regularly in our day-to-day lives, over time they can have a harmful effect

on the heart. Therefore, it is important to manage your emotions effectively. A healthy emotional state has positive effects on the heart and is just as crucial for your health and well-being as what you eat and how much physical activity you get.

### The Findings Are In

There is a growing body of scientific evidence related to anger, anxiety, and depression.

For example:

- In the six months after a heart attack, being depressed increased the risk for sudden cardiac related death by more than 400 percent in one study of 222 heart attack patients.
- The higher a person's level of anxiety, the higher the risk he or she eventually will experience sudden cardiac death, according to a study of nearly 40,000 health professionals.
- In a study of more than 2,000 men, those with high levels of hostility had more than twice the risk for death from cardiovascular disease than the men with low hostility scores.

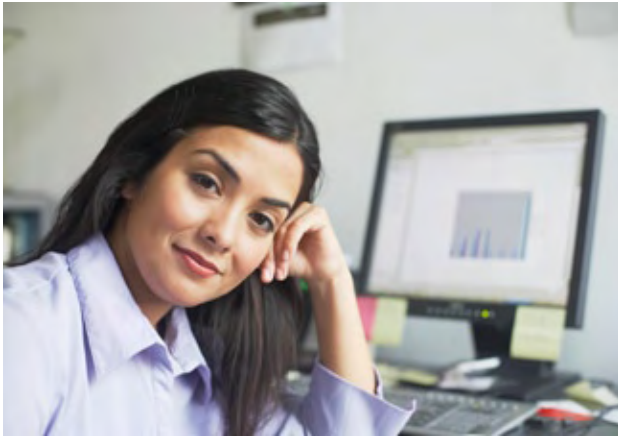


For more information or advice about Emotions and Cardiac Health, contact the work/life experts at BalanceWorks<sup>®</sup> by calling:  
**1.800.327.2255**

eni's BalanceWorks<sup>®</sup> program is a confidential 24/7 service provided by your employer to help achieve work/life balance.



## Managing Your Emotions



You cannot get rid of your difficult emotions. But when they're having a negative impact on your day-to-day life, you can learn to manage them more effectively. Notice which emotions may be ruling your life and take steps to turn the negative feelings to positive ones. For example, learning to forgive is extremely important for someone who has an anger problem. For sadness or depression, you can focus on cultivating positive emotions, such as joy and gratitude. If you're often anxious, certain relaxation strategies and changing the things you say to yourself under stress can be very helpful in turning off the worry-switch.

**Don't deny your emotions.** You can't fool your body by pretending something isn't bothering you.

**Find constructive ways to express emotions.** Instead of seething or fretting, try writing down your feelings or talking about them with someone in a safe environment.

**Realize it's OK to let go of anger.** Don't think that letting go will make you weak. The more you let go, the less control people have over you because they can't push your buttons as easily.

**Seek help.** This is important, particularly if you've tried other options and they haven't worked. Therapy or counseling can help you identify the causes of your troublesome emotions and manage them, and you have free and confidential counseling available to you through your BalanceWorks EAP.

### Other Solutions

**Medications.** Effective medications are available to ease symptoms of anxiety or depression while you learn to change toxic thought patterns or behaviors. And don't rule out an anger-management class.

**If you can, solve stressful problems.** There may be an external solution. For example, if morning rush-hour traffic always makes you angry, try getting up earlier to beat the rush.

**Don't neglect other heart disease risks.** Take steps to address high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, obesity, or excessive alcohol consumption.

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