

# MERRITT

Wellness

Committed to the Health of our Family

August 2014

## Merritt's Employee Assistance Program: Brief Counseling - What Is It, Who It's For, and How It Works

Have you ever had a concern at home that you kept thinking about at work? How about a work issue that you just couldn't seem to leave at the office? If so, you're not alone — everyone has personal problems from time to time. The good news is that you don't have to face your problems alone. There are a variety of resources that can help you address personal concerns. One of these resources is called brief counseling. This tip sheet takes a look at what brief counseling is, who it's for, and how it works.

### What Exactly Is Brief Counseling?

Brief counseling is also known as problem-focused or short-term counseling. This problem-focused therapy is designed to help you resolve everyday concerns that may be getting in the way of your job or your personal well-being. Brief counseling is generally most effective in addressing daily living and general wellness-oriented concerns. These commonly include relationship problems, stress-related concerns, financial worries, parenting concerns, occupational issues, "phase of life" issues (such as retirement, marriage, new parent, relocation) and grief.

### When Should You Seek Out Brief Counseling?

When you have a physical problem, you talk to your doctor. But who do you talk to when you have an emotional problem, and talking to a friend or a relative isn't enough? That's when brief counseling may help.

### A Typical Session

The main goal of brief counseling is to help you resolve your personal concerns as quickly and easily as possible. Each session with a counselor usually lasts 45 to 50 minutes. To make the most of your time together, your counselor may do one or more of the following:

- Help you clarify the problem and explore what occurred that prompted you to seek counseling. This ensures that the total concern is being addressed.

- Help you identify options. Together you and the counselor will explore alternatives for addressing your concerns. Counselors provide an objective point of view and can offer suggestions that you may not have considered.
- Work with you to develop a plan that outlines your concerns, your objectives and a strategy for accomplishing your goals in a brief counseling format.
- Give you homework assignments that help you work out your concerns. Examples might include breathing exercises to manage stress, setting aside 15 minutes at the end of each day for quality time with your partner to address relationship issues, or establishing a behavior contract with your child.
- Suggest specific changes you can work on to resolve the issue. A possibility might include keeping a to-do list as a strategy for improving your time management skills.

### Planning Ahead for Your Sessions

There are several easy steps you can take to prepare for a brief counseling sessions. Start by thinking about why you decided to ask for help at this particular time. Consider when the problem began, and try to recall any times when you've experienced similar problems in the past. If you have had similar problems, consider how you've tried to cope.

Next, think about what you would like to have happen as a result of your counseling sessions (such as feeling happier or improving an important relationship). That way when you see your counselor, you can be as clear as possible about your needs. Most important, keep your appointment. Consider it an investment in yourself.

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### Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.MagellanHealth.com](http://www.MagellanHealth.com). Or call **1-800-327-4585** for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

## Employee Spotlight: Mike Passarello

**“People think you need to take your whole lifestyle, ball it up, and throw it away and that’s just not the case.”**

This month we cast our wellness spotlight on Mike Passarello. Mike, aka “Jello,” joined our Customer Service team in July of 2012. Mike has undergone a dramatic transformation through participation in the A.L.I.V.E. program offered through Merritt Athletic Club. He has been kind enough to share with us his story and how the Merritt Wellness program gave him the drive and the tools to make it happen:

**Q. What inspired you to make wellness a personal goal?**

A. To see a decline in my wellness in one year through our biometric screening – I went from failing 2 of 6 [metrics] to 3 of 6. Taking into account my family history, the diabetes and cancer that run in my family, I decided to make a change. I have not made all the changes I want to make. I’m constantly working on it. That is what really inspired me. It was a reflection on the biometric screening. I saw failing numbers and when I start failing things I work harder to pass them.

**Q. You said you were making changes, what kind of changes are you making in your personal life?**

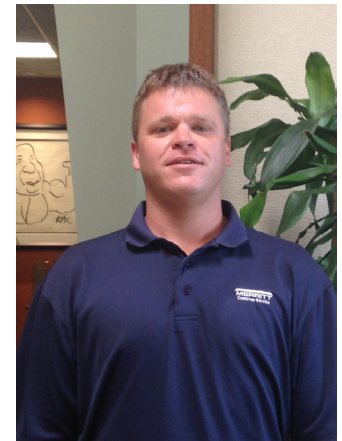
A. The biggest change was my diet. And like the [A.L.I.V.E.] program says, I’m not ‘dieting.’ I made changes in my eating habits that are better and healthier. I didn’t know I was eating unhealthy. I don’t buy anything anymore from the inside of the grocery store, everything [I need] is on the walls. I never walk in the middle, ever. It’s amazing and it’s cheaper, you’d be surprised how much money you save on fresh fruits, vegetables. When I eat out I try to choose the right things on the menu. The program I started wants you to have four to six meals per day depending on how many calories you burn in a day, how much energy you use. [Each meal should have] a starchy carb, fibrous carb, and a lean protein. Do I fall off that wagon? Sure, everyone’s going to go out and eat something unhealthy. That doesn’t mean you fail the whole program! It means from the time you’re done the meal you start over. It took 10 weeks to really change my eating habits, and my portion control issues. I used to sit in front of the dinner table and I’d eat 1000 calories. I don’t do that anymore. I used to eat 3000 to 5000 calories a day! Now I go from 2000 to 2500. And my weekend drinking habits have not changed. That’s one of the changes I’d like to make but I enjoy my social life. I’m single, I like to go out on Friday nights at happy hour and blow off steam.

**Q. How have these changes improved your quality of life?**

A. They’ve changed my overall wellbeing: my mobility, my stability, my energy, my daily routine. Just getting up in the morning feels better. I don’t feel tired because of something unhealthy I ate for dinner. I have energy throughout the whole day because I don’t eat giant meals, my meals are portioned out throughout the day. The girls like me more, they like skinny Jello! Everything has changed with me.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

**Q. Tell me about the program you’ve been participating in.**

A. It’s called ‘A.L.I.V.E. Across America.’ It’s run by a guy named Phil Kaplan out of Florida. It’s provided through our Merritt Athletic Clubs. Every Monday night for 10 weeks you have a webinar at 8 o’clock; the first one lasts an hour and a half and they get shorter from there. They send you the downloads of the webinar via email 20 minutes after the webinar ends. [Phil] doesn’t change anything radically. He realizes that changes, lifestyle changes, don’t happen overnight. You’re going to fail, you just got to get back up and keep going. And they have A.L.I.V.E. coaches in the clubs. You can go on your own outside of the webinar program. It’s for everybody. He has three different categories, the program isn’t based on just this person over here who might be less well than this person over here. These two people can share the same program and get the same benefits out of it.

The workout is one of the easiest workouts I’ve ever done to start and I didn’t understand why at first. The first 3 weeks were 12 to 20 minute workouts and you’re going ‘what’s this all about?’ But by the tenth week you’re seeing results and you’re realizing that he’s building your muscles up to get to the big picture: I’m not here to get cut and be muscle man, I’m here to be healthy and well and lose weight.

Nutrition-wise he totally made me see the light on the wrong foods and the right foods and eating 4-6 times a day. Eating breakfast – I used to never eat breakfast and to me that was the hardest thing. To put food in my stomach in the morning was terrible. The first two weeks I shortened it to a smoothie, a nice, healthy protein shake with plant-based protein powder and fruits and vegetables. And that boosts your metabolism. He gives you all the changes and all the tools and all the things you need to be buying. If you go out, don’t eat this, choose this instead. Which I had never thought of! I’d go out and think ‘pasta Milano, that sounds good, I’m going to get that.’ You don’t realize it but you can eliminate things like that from your everyday diet. You’re going to eat it every once in a while but you don’t have to eat it

every day. Some people think that eating healthy means 'I've got to give my good food up.' It really doesn't! He gives you the tools to cook the foods that are really good but just not using butter or margarine or processed foods.

The fitness end, you can do it at home. He gives you the tools you need to not even go into a gym. For people who are not into going to the gym you can do it right out of your house. And it only takes 12-20 minutes. Who doesn't have that in the morning to start their day?

**Q. How has the Merritt Wellness program helped you on your path to wellness?**

A. They have provided me with the tools I needed. The gym membership is unbelievable. I can go to any gym close to where I'm working. If I'm near one of our buildings that have a gym I walk into it and work out at the end of the day. It's unbelievable. The biometric screening was huge in my opinion. Some people don't really feel that we need that, they feel like they are being regulated, but my personal opinion is that I like to see that. I saw my decline in health.

**Q. Is there anything you want to say to encourage Merritt employees?**

A. I've made changes in my life but not everyone is going to want to make changes in their life. Some people are happy with who they are and how they feel. I wasn't. I didn't feel good, I was overweight, my back hurt all the time. My overall wellbeing was very important to me and I would love to encourage other people to change their wellbeing. Not everybody is going to make changes. How do we encourage them? I don't know. Other than giving them the tools to do it and that's what I feel like I've gotten out of it. I encourage everybody to use the tools that I used that Merritt provides for us to live a healthier lifestyle.

**The next A.L.I.V.E program is starting September 7th!**

For more information regarding the A.L.I.V.E. program offered at Merritt Athletic Clubs go to <http://www.merrittclubs.com/alive/>.

Or, if you would like to speak with someone directly, please call Scott Wohl : 410-563-0225 x1541.



# QUICK FIRE CHALLENGE

## FitBit Step & Sleep

### September 1-30, 2014



**For September we're mixing it up and adding another layer to our Quick Fire Challenge. Track your steps and your sleep online using the FitBit Flex.**

Participation in the challenge is simple:

1. See Tracy to sign up. She will give you a FitBit Flex Wireless Activity & Sleep Wristband and a tracking sheet. That is correct, you will get the FitBit Flex for just participating in the challenge!
2. Go to [www.FitBit.com](http://www.FitBit.com) to create an account and set up your FitBit (see Tracy if you need additional assistance in setting up an account.)
3. Each day track your steps, your sleep and your water intake with your FitBit account and check off the boxes for which you

meet the daily goals. (Step Goals: 7,500 steps; Sleep Goals: 6-8 hours; Water Goal: 6 glasses)

4. At the end of each 6-day period, total up the number of days that you met each of the daily goals. (In the 6-day period you need to meet Step Goals: 3 days; Sleep Goals: 5 days; Water Goal: all 6 days)
5. Put your name on the form and submit complete form to Tracy to be entered into a drawing for a **Ravens Gear Package\***. There will be one male winner and one female winner drawn from all completed entries.

\* Winner may elect to receive a \$100 gift card instead of one of the packages above.

## Mark your calendars for these upcoming Wellness events:

**September QuickFire Challenge:** Participate in our FitBit Step & Sleep Challenge and earn a FitBit Flex for participating as well as chance to win Ravens gear.

### **October 23rd Seminar with Cooper**

**Consultants:** Join us during our Company Meeting to learn more about Why the Key Indicators are important and how we're doing as a company on improving our health.

**November QuickFire Challenge:** Stay tuned for details about our Put It All Together Challenge that will incorporate Squats, Push-ups and Sit-ups. You'll earn a reward just for completing this difficult challenge.

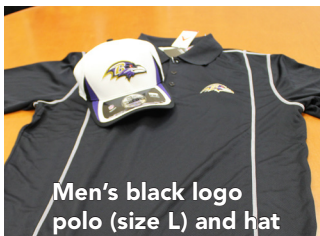
**November 4:** Biometric Screenings at Virginia Office from 8am to 11am. Details to follow at a later date.

**November 6 & 7:** Biometric Screenings at Baltimore Office from 6am to 10am. Details to follow at a later date.

## WANT TO KICK OFF THE SEASON WITH SOME COOL RAVENS GEAR?

You can win one of the packages below by signing up and completing September's Quick Fire Step & Sleep Challenge!

Complete the challenge and you'll be entered into the drawing. There will be one male and one female winner, who will get to choose from one of the packages\* below:



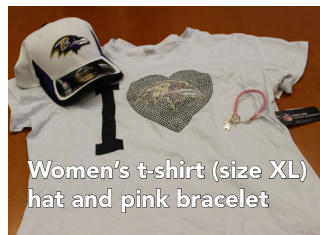
Men's black logo polo (size L) and hat



Women's Torrey Smith purple jersey (size XL)



Men's Torrey Smith black jersey (size XL)



Women's t-shirt (size XL) hat and pink bracelet

\* Winner may elect to receive a \$100 gift card instead of one of the packages above.

## Looking for Volunteers!!!

The Tyanna Foundation's is looking for volunteers to help with BreastFest 2014 on October 18th (in the afternoon and early evening). See Pam White if interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities.

Improving the lives of breast cancer patients is at the heart of the Foundation. The Tyanna Foundation honors a mother's life, love, and living legacy. through their commitment to awareness and prevention.

Share any ideas you may have for upcoming events, newsletter articles, contests, questions, seminars, & more by speaking with any committee member (Meg Truchon, Holly Moye, Tracy Funk, Ken Jonmaire, Pam White, Mike Pasarello, Eric Dunn, Lauren Cannon) or by sending an email to:

**MerrittWellness@merrittproperties.com**

**All ideas are welcomed!**