

NEELY EAP

APRIL 2026

GET THE MOST FROM YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



WELCOME

We are so pleased to serve as your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. The EAP is designed to be your first stop for support, offering prevention and short-term problem-solving services when life gets challenging.

Through the program, you have access to confidential short-term counseling, wellness seminars, legal support, and financial consultation services, all at no cost to you.

Each month, you'll receive a newsletter filled with helpful wellness tips along with updates on upcoming seminars, webinars, and additional resources available to you and your household.



24/7 Helpline: 866-212-6096
For TDD: 800-735-2989
Email: admin@neelyeap.com
Web: www.neelyeap.com

WELLNESS SEMINAR

The Art of Difficult
Conversations: Staying Calm,
Clear & Respectful Under Stress

04/23/26 | Thursday
2:00 PM CENTRAL TIME

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

QUARTERLY WEBINAR

Psychological Safety:
Reducing Fear So Employees
Think, Speak & Innovate

06/26/26 | Friday
2:00 PM CENTRAL TIME

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

The Art of Difficult Conversations: Staying Calm, Clear & Respectful Under Stress

By: Rosalinda Rodriguez, LPCA

As much as we might try to avoid them, difficult conversations are inevitable, both at home and at work. They can leave us feeling deeply uncomfortable, but the reality is that these moments often create space for growth and healing. With that in mind, the goal here is to help you approach difficult conversations with greater confidence and intention.

The University of Texas at Austin offers a helpful framework for approaching these moments. I've pulled three of those stages and rounded them out with insights from Berkeley Executive Education on communication and self-reflection:

PREPARATION

Begin by clearly defining the primary goal of the conversation. Consider:

- What is the issue, and why does it matter?
- What are the facts of the situation? (Facts are different from opinions.)
- What would a successful outcome look like?



INITIATION

How you start the conversation sets the tone for everything that follows. A few things to keep in mind:

- Choose the right time and place
- Open with empathy: acknowledge the other person's perspective before diving in
- Establish common ground: lead with shared goals, not opposing positions



DISCUSSION

Now for the nitty-gritty:

- Pause before responding, especially when emotions start to rise
- Seek clarity - listen to understand, not just to reply
- Use "I" statements to avoid accusatory language



Berkeley Executive Education reminds us that self-reflection is a critical first step. Before you walk into a hard conversation, ask yourself:

- *Are you engaging to win or to repair? The latter leaves far more room for growth.*
- *What assumptions or biases might be shaping how you're approaching this? How could those impact your ability to stay open?*

I hope this framework gives you a bit more confidence and a little less avoidance the next time a hard conversation comes knocking. Remember: navigating difficult conversations is a skill that is practiced, not one you master in a single go.

To learn more about this topic, please join our upcoming webinar, [The Art of Difficult Conversations: Staying Calm, Clear & Respectful Under Stress](#) on Thursday April 23rd, at 2:00PM CST.

References

University of Texas at Austin Employee Assistance Program. (n.d.). How to prepare for a difficult conversation. <https://eap.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/How%20to%20Prepare%20for%20a%20Difficult%20Conversation.pdf>
Berkeley Executive Education. (2024, April 25). How to have difficult conversations. University of California, Berkeley. <https://executive.berkeley.edu/thought-leadership/blog/how-have-difficult-conversations>

Counseling Awareness & Reducing Mental Health Stigma

By: Rosalinda Rodriguez, LPCA

To truly understand counseling awareness and the mental health stigma, we have to start at the root, and the root of the mental health profession doesn't begin with Freud. It begins with indigenous healers. Curanderas, shamans, priestesses, Babalawo, and countless others across the globe, long before the Anglo-Christian gaze shaped what we now call "mental health care." That is where this work originates. It matters because there is a very real and reasonable public skepticism toward the mental health profession. Why are we paying a stranger to listen to our problems? For many individuals, especially those from cultures that prioritize keeping struggles within the family or community, this model can feel unfamiliar and even a bit uncomfortable. That hesitation is not a weakness; it reflects deeply rooted values of connection, trust, and communal care. While modern systems have normalized seeking support outside of one's community, it is important to acknowledge why that discomfort exists in the first place.

At the same time, the mental health system, as it stands, is not without its flaws. There are valid concerns about how quickly medication can become a primary intervention, and how Eurocentric much of the education remains. Built largely on the work of white European philosophers and researchers, with study populations that historically centered white men, then white women, and later those with access to higher education. Ancestral knowledge, indigenous practices, and culturally rooted healing traditions are often absent from formal training. As Jennifer Mullan writes in *Decolonizing Therapy*, ignoring collective global trauma makes it impossible to deliver truly effective care, and failing to examine how we, as professionals, may participate in systems of oppression is deeply irresponsible (Mullan, 2023). This gap is real and it deserves to be acknowledged.



And yet, there is also profound strength within the counseling profession. As a counselor, I can speak to the depth of insight that this field offers; understanding attachment, recognizing how early experiences shape the way we show up in adulthood, and identifying how unaddressed wounds from childhood can quietly influence our relationships, work, and sense of self. There is meaningful value in this knowledge.

At its best, counseling is a space for being heard, a fresh set of ears, a trusted confidant. It is a relationship with someone who can sit with your most vulnerable moments without judgment, offering empathy and unconditional positive regard, while also holding space for accountability, honesty, and growth.

When it comes to what good counseling actually looks like, the hope is that you are working with someone who operates from a culturally humble, anti-oppressive lens. A clinician who understands that healing doesn't happen in a vacuum. Someone who believes in collective liberation: the idea that our struggles, our freedom, and our justice are all intertwined. To quote Dr. Han Ren, "Everything that is happening outside, it's happening within. We can't help other people unless we're willing to address what is happening within. We can only take others as far as we have met ourselves" (Ren & Martin, 2025).

A good counselor knows you are the expert on your own life. They aren't there to fix you, but to listen, hold space, and stay mindful of the unseen: *your story, your systems, and how to meet you with true respect and cultural humility*. At its core, counseling is rooted in connection and community. In a world that prioritizes independence, choosing support is a quiet act of resistance and a good reminder that you don't have to do this alone.

References:

Mullan, J. (2023). *Decolonizing therapy: Oppression, historical trauma, and politicizing your practice*. W. W. Norton & Company.
Ren, H., & Martin, R. (2025, January). *Anti-racism in clinical practice* [Staff training presentation]. Neely Employee Assistance Program



WHAT CAN MY EAP DO FOR ME?



About Our Logo

For decades, enslaved African Americans looked to the North Star for hope, inspiration, and freedom. Neely EAP (NEAP) provides the **hope** that your situation will improve, the **inspiration** to move you in the right direction, and the **freedom** to live your best life.

At Neely EAP, we understand the challenge of balancing work and life stresses while staying mentally healthy. That's why we've partnered with your employer to offer you the following services free of charge:

- 24/7 Hotline, Access to Confidential Services
- Free Short-Term Counseling and Couch Time Check-In (preventive annual counseling session)
- Legal and Financial Assistance
- Work-life referrals for adult care, childcare, pet care and more
- Wellness Trainings & Online Employee Training Vault
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

