

# THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

*Wellness, Productivity & You!*

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## Low-Cost Health Insurance for Children

If you have uninsured children 18 years old and younger, and your family earns less than \$34,100 per year (for a family of four), find out about low-cost or no-cost health insurance sponsored by the federal government and administered through your state. This is not a welfare program. It is a special program authorized by Congress to pay for doctor visits, prescription medicines, hospitalizations and much more. For more information, phone 1-877-KIDS-NOW.

## Ready for Group?

If you are thinking about professional counseling, you probably have a one-on-one relationship with a therapist in mind. Don't rule out group therapy or group counseling as a possible approach to achieving your goal. The skilled facilitation of a group of patients or clients seeking to conquer similar issues can be a powerful and exciting approach to personal change. Group therapy is typically less costly, and meetings usually last for an hour and half versus an hour for individual therapy. There are many types of therapy groups. Not every personal issue is suitable for group therapy, but the EAP can help you decide if a group is the way to go.

## Is That . . . Sexual Harassment?

Can you interact with a fellow worker and make polite comments about their dress, what they did over the weekend, or even participate in mildly flirtatious interactions without having to worry about such acts constituting sexual harassment? Gauge your behavior by asking yourself, "Would a reasonable person object to this?" Then follow these guidelines: 1) Use common courtesy and common sense. 2) Pay close attention to a person's reaction to what you say and do. And, 3) if it appears unwelcome, don't do it again. Know your organization's policy on sexual harassment.

## A Lesson from Last Year

A study found that 17 percent of U.S. residents living outside of New York City reported symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder two months after 9/11 last year and 6 percent reported symptoms six months later. Looking deeper, researchers found that persons who did not cope as well with the event were more likely to "pretend it didn't happen," "think of something else," or "stay distracted." The larger lesson on coping with stressful events is to be proactive in coping with them rather than "give up." Struggling to understand or make meaning of a traumatic event – even if there is none – may prevent negative effects on health down the road.

*JAMA: Longitudinal Study of Psychological Responses to September 11.; Univ. California Irvine; Lori Brandt; lbrandt@uci.edu*

## Depression Medication Get the Instructions!

When anti-depressant medication is prescribed, about 75 percent of physicians say they tell their patients to take the medication for at least six months. However, when asked, more than half of these patients say they were not given instructions on how long they should take their anti-depressant medication. Anti-depressants can be lifesavers, but they don't work overnight. If you and your physician are talking about medication for depression, be sure to discuss the period of time you will be taking the medication, its effects and when you should anticipate results. Patients who don't have such a discussion are more likely to stop using medication that otherwise may have been helpful.

*Source: Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 288, No. 11, Sept. 2002.*

## Bracing for Holiday Blues

The holidays are supposed to be a time for joy and celebration – full of wonderful foods, social occasions, religious and spiritual enrichment or just plain fun. However, many people experience holiday blues, and feel there are expectations and pressures surrounding the season. They may have other issues as well such as personal health, relationship, past losses, isolation and financial woes which may contribute to their depression. The EAP can help you find support you might need during this or any other time of the year.

## Wise Moves For Night Owls

If you have been a shift worker for awhile, you have probably discovered ways to balance your work and personal life. No one has to tell you that your stress is unique. If you are new to shift work, it is important to know that adapting to night work while keeping a harmonious personal life is possible, but it takes a conscious effort to achieve your goal. Whether you are new to shift work or not, consider these five warning signs: 1) Since starting shift work, a family member complains that “everything” is now on his or her shoulders. 2) You continually feel “guilty” about your job and its impact on your family. 3) You are drinking in the morning after getting off from work with the following rationale, “This is like coming home from an evening job and having a drink.” 4) You are not able to sleep, and those in your home “don't care.” 5) You are still waiting for quality time with family members to happen naturally. Consider the EAP as a source for trouble-shooting these or other issues.

## Fatigue Fighting Food Facts

There is a lot to know about food and its relationship to the prevention of fatigue. Because chronic fatigue illnesses are common, nutrition research is plentiful. Here are a few key tips if you are looking to fight the “three o'clock energy droop”: 1) Try vitamin C. Vitamin C is essential for adrenal gland functioning. Under stress, these glands emit hormones that fight fatigue. Try supplements and natural foods. 2) Drink more water. Fatigue can be an early symptom of dehydration. Drink water periodically during the day, even if you aren't thirsty. 3) Go easy on the coffee in the morning. It can reduce your desire to eat breakfast. By lunchtime, it could be 18 hours or more since your last meal — definitely an energy zapper. You need most of your calories during the day when you are most active. Appetite suppression can also contribute to overeating at dinner. 4) Snacking in the afternoon is good, but think fruits, vegetables, low-sodium juices and foods with whole grains.

*Adapted from Eat to Beat Fatigue by Joan Slage Blake, M.S., R.D.*