

# THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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## Inhaling helium is no laughing matter

Have you seen someone inhale helium from a balloon or tank at a party in order to cause a high-pitched distortion of the voice and make everyone laugh? Evidence has shown that the inhalation of helium can be fatal. One of the world's largest producers of helium, Praxair Technology, Inc. says that inhalation of helium can cause sudden acute asphyxia characterized by fatigue, dizziness, irregular heartbeat, loss of coordination, suffocation, convulsions, unconsciousness, coma, and death. Adverse effects from inhaling helium is a medical emergency. Don't inhale helium and do discourage others from doing it.

*Source: Praxair Technology, Inc, Material Safety Data Sheet*

## HMO Consumer Strategies

Managed care organizations and HMOs deliberate, question, and control the dispensing of many healthcare services. This can delay services and cause customer dissatisfaction. Anticipate these delays and be a more savvy healthcare consumer by keeping notes from all contacts with the HMO and asking these questions: When will a decision be made to approve care? Who is the decision-maker? How long will it take to schedule the procedure? What is the longest it will take before this doctor sees me? Most important question -- who am I talking to now?

*Source: Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights*

## It's a Family Disease

Ask any addiction treatment program what sabotages the recovery of addictive disease patients most, and you will likely hear that failure by significant others to participate in counseling or education programs ranks near the top of the list. The issue -- family members often believe that the addiction is solely the patient's problem. They are unaware of common enabling and provocative behaviors that help fuel the progression of the disease. When the patient exits treatment, family behaviors haven't changed. This contributes to the patient's decision to not manage the disease properly. Relapse follows.

## Solution for keeping your New Year's Resolution

Social science research suggests the formula that can help you achieve a New Year's resolution goal:

- 1) Use strategies that both focus on rewarding yourself for successful steps and that take away rewards for not achieving those steps.
- 2) Schedule regular activities or steps in pursuit of the goal.
- 3) Monitor your progress in writing.
- 4) Use positive self-talk or other reinforcement for successful steps. Self-criticism backfires -- don't use it!
- 5) Make attempts to keep your environment supportive of your goal. How can the EAP help you? Call to find out.

*Adapted from Interviewing Strategies for Helpers, 2002, Wadsworth Publishing*

## Balancing Work & Family

Achieving work and family balance is an ongoing process of juggling responsibilities at work and the needs of family. One key to success is stepping back and periodically analyzing how things are going. Then you can make adjustments where possible.

Consider these other keys as well: 1) Work and family balance is a conscious decision. It doesn't happen automatically. Understanding this can reduce frustration when you experience temporary setbacks.

2) Write down family goals. Family needs change over time. Opportunities to build a tree house for the kids or experience a new family pastime don't last forever. Decide what is important, write it down, and commit to making certain goals "absolutely happen." 3) Manage distraction and procrastination. Working long hours causes stress that sometimes finds relief naturally through workplace distractions and procrastination. If you are at the office for twelve hours, do you really work only ten? If you are searching for more family time, it might be found here. 4) Discuss family expectations and responsibilities. When one family member is taking on too many responsibilities at home, resentments can build. Periodically discuss family needs to gain the awareness needed to consider choices for work and family balance. 5) Be careful about justifying imbalance. At times, it is realistic for family members to recognize that your job will have to take priority. Use this rationale with caution so it doesn't become a habit.

## Could It Be PTSD?

Difficulty falling asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, excessive watchfulness and being easily startled -- are these symptoms of stress or something more? Could it be posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)? PTSD can create symptoms that may puzzle you for years. A traumatic event in your past -- even as a child -- might explain these experiences, but only a careful evaluation can tell for sure. If symptoms like these are getting in the way of your social life, your job, or other important areas of your life, think about calling the EAP for confidential help. The EAP might be able to help you get your life back.

## Triumphant TEAMS!

What makes teams successful isn't necessarily what you learned for individual success. Plan on seeing more energy, less conflict, and better morale within your team by adopting these team principles. Discuss and reinforce the principles and make them part of your success strategy: 1) There are no team failures, only unexpected outcomes. Mistakes are lessons to be avoided a second time. When things don't work out, the focus is on change, not blame. 2) Team members share resources. Knowledge, time, materials, and information are the lifeblood of teams, never to be hoarded. 3) Feedback is valued and sought. Constructive feedback is a tool for growth when used between team members and offered to the team as a whole.

## Handling Holiday Debt

The holiday bills have arrived. Experts suggest that you pay off the debts with the highest interest rates first regardless of the balance, but if knocking off another credit card with a low balance will give you a feeling of success quickly, go for it. The bit of extra interest you will pay might be worth it. Otherwise, pay as much as you can each month to the card with the highest interest rate, and pay the minimum on the others. Once you have paid the full balance on the first card, continue the same plan with the other cards in the list. Here's a creative solution from finance guru Ric Edelman: To reduce the temptation of using credit cards, place them in a big plastic cup of water and freeze it. Should you have the urge to use one, the time it takes to thaw out may be enough to change your mind.