

# THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

*Wellness, Productivity & You!*

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## Get a Grip on Control

So co-workers think you are “controlling,” but you disagree? Demonstrate balance with these team skills:

**Practice Vulnerability:** Be open to feedback and constructive criticism by co-workers concerning your ideas. Develop a “thanks first, defend later” attitude toward feedback.

**Share Leadership:** Reduce the frequency of being “in charge.” Show that you can share responsibility for the outcome of the team’s work without directing its final result.

**Share Information:** Share information and devise ways of doing so more easily or automatically. Teams benefit when all members have access to the same information necessary to complete a task. Demonstrate the belief that “If the team wins, we all look good,” rather than, “If I win, I look good to the team.”

## Under-promise Over-deliver!

Experiment with setting due dates that are not just do-able, but more than easily met. When appropriate, consider over-estimating the time it will take to complete a job or task. This will better ensure on-time delivery even if unexpected delays occur. You will surprise and delight your boss, clients and co-workers by delivering sooner than anticipated. Remember how impressed you were the last time you requested a service and it was delivered or finished earlier than expected?

## E-mail Etiquette & Co-workers

Avoid using e-mail when resolving personal conflicts with co-workers to prevent making them worse. Especially avoid the temptation to send blind copies of such exchanges to others (i.e., the entire work group, the boss etc.) without your co-workers’ knowledge. (Blind copying prevents the primary recipient of e-mail from knowing others have received the same message.) A co-worker who discovers that others have observed personal communications without his or her knowledge will feel violated.

## Think – and Stay Safe at Work

Sixty-four percent of working Americans think a work place injury won’t happen to them, but the reality is that work place injuries are rising. Research trends indicate that 3.9 million employees will be injured in 2003. The leading causes of injuries are transportation incidents, violent acts, contact with objects and equipment and falls. Over-exertion is frequently a contributing factor. Every 10 minutes, 5 finance, insurance and real estate employees are injured; 7 wholesale/retail employees are injured; 9 government sector employees are injured; and 13 construction employees are injured. *Key prevention tip learned from injured employees:* If something you are doing at work feels unsafe or dangerous, stop and don’t do it, or do it a safer way.

*Source: Missouri Employers Mutual Insurance, National Safety Council, and U.S. Department of Labor*

## Mental Illness in the Family

Each year millions of Americans are diagnosed with mental illness. Family members commonly feel an overwhelming sense of helplessness and may secretly blame themselves, believing something they did caused the family member's mental illness. Since family members are often key to intervention, helping them cope is crucial to helping those with mental illness.

Avoid the trap of shame and isolation. Reach out for support and a listening ear. Avoid the trap of overprotecting your family member from the stigma of mental illness. That stigma is fast disappearing, and new medications for mental disorders are continually being researched.

Be hopeful and realistic. Many people with mental illness and multiple hospitalizations are capable of holding full-time, responsible jobs with the aid of proper medication and support.

Don't ignore the needs of children. Although mental illness should not be the focal point in your family, share information with them suitable to their age level that can reduce their fear and anxiety.

Understand patient responsibility in recovery. A key principal in mental health treatment is patients taking personal responsibility for managing their illness. This includes medication compliance.

Take care of yourself! Maintain balance in your own life. Family members often suffer from lack of sleep, nutrition, exercise, fun and stress management. Self-help resources can help you draw a balance between concern and detachment. Your EAP can help you find them.

Learn about the illness. Learn about the type of mental illness that affects your family member. Know its relapse warning signs so you can act early if intervention is necessary.

## EA Professionals Can't Tell

**Q:** Do confidentiality laws that pertain to EAP records prevent the EA professional from disclosing information about the identities of clients to people outside the EAP such as colleagues, friends or a spouse?

**A:** Yes. The EA professional cannot release information to anyone without a properly signed consent from the EAP client, even to people the EA professional intimately knows, such as a spouse. Strict laws and EAP policies of the organization govern the release of client information, and they must be followed. EA professionals study the subject of confidentiality, and literature pertaining to confidentiality is plentiful in the EAP field.

## Family Mediation Avoids the Mean

Although the process of divorce is adversarial, you have a good chance of avoiding the anger, hostility, expense and impact on your children if you include family mediation in your attempts to arrive at a divorce agreement. A trained mediator plays a neutral role in helping separated or divorced couples make their own, mutually agreeable decisions about children, finances and property. Conflicts you thought unsolvable may be answered through mediation. Professional mediation can save you the expense and loss of control over your life that can come with a court battle. Mediators say children whose parents reached an agreement through mediation are happier, more secure and less stressed. Check local listings or talk to the EAP about resources in your area.

## Don't Say Nay to a PSA

An estimated 189,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer this year. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of death in men. The key to surviving prostate cancer is early detection and treatment. One type of protein produced by the prostate is prostate-specific antigen (PSA). This protein is a good indicator of the level of activity of the gland, making a PSA test an excellent tool in helping detect the disease. Prostate cancer can also run in families. A man with one close relative with prostate cancer has twice the risk of contracting it. With two close relatives, the risk is fivefold. African-American men are at especially high risk. *The good news:* The 5-year relative survival rate for patients whose tumors are diagnosed at the earliest stages is 100%. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

*Source: American Cancer Society, Inc., "Cancer Facts & Fig-*