

THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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Holiday Health Talk

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released a new, free software program that will organize your family health information to help you determine whether you or someone in your family is at higher risk for disease. The new computerized tool, called "My Family Health Portrait," can be downloaded at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory. The idea is to get families talking so they can identify common diseases that may run in the family. The tool creates a printout and graphical picture of your family's generations and the health disorders that may have moved from one generation to the next. It's part of HHS's new Family Health Initiative. Thanksgiving was dubbed National Family History Day to encourage families to exchange information at get-togethers. For a print copy write: "My Family Health Portrait", HHS, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Reining in Holiday Spending

Did you create a budget this year to keep the reins on holiday spending? If not, save your receipts and keep track of your expenses. Then visit Bankrate.com's free "Savings Calculator." It will help you spot expenses you probably missed and help you budget and save for next year. *What to do now:* Consider canceling credit cards you may have obtained with attractive low-interest and discount deals. If you miss a payment, interest rates on some cards jumps to over 24 percent!

<http://www.bankrate.com/brm/calc/holidayspending.asp>

EAPs: Always Confidential

Q. Do EAPs give reports to employers about how well the program is used or appreciated by employees? If so, is the confidentiality of clients maintained?

A. Yes. All EAPs must demonstrate value to the host organization. Measuring impact and gauging worth is a key element of EAP activity. However, this reporting never includes the names of employees who are clients, only general information such as the number of employees seen during a given period. It does not include confidential information.

Quandary over "Casual" Attire

"Business casual" attire is popular in many workplaces, but are you pushing the edge of the business envelope with your clothing choices? Definitions of business casual differ among employers because work cultures vary widely. Avoid the disapproving glance by considering these tips:

- 1) Make sure whatever you wear is neat and clean.
- 2) Decide to dress "a tad bit up" from what you perceive as the norm.
- 3) Think "dressy casual." It will help you avoid sweat suits, worn-out jeans, an overly sexual appearance, and T-shirts with slogans.
- 4) Still unsure? Consider asking your supervisor if a clothing choice matches his/her idea of "business casual."

Attitude Adjustment Power

Sometimes our attitude toward our experiences and the environment causes most of our stress. If we change our attitude, the stress lessens or goes away. Do you find yourself asking questions like, “How can I act or think differently about this situation?” Or, “How does my coworker stay so calm with the type of customers who come in here?” If so, consider this simple approach to attitude adjustment. **Step 1** (the most important): Decide that you want a new attitude and what it will be. **Step 2**: Find people (“models”) with the positive attitude you want and ask questions. How do they think about this person or situation? What thoughts go through their mind when a particular situation occurs? Tell them how you think about it, and ask why they don’t think similarly. (Your beliefs will begin to change by listening to the testimony of another person who has successfully mastered your goal of attitude change.) Keep asking questions until you see your model’s logic. **Step 3**: Imagine responding with the new attitude. Compare the new attitude with the old attitude. This is called “mental rehearsal.” **Step 4**: Practice Step 3 daily. You will need a technique to remind yourself to practice because you are fighting natural resistance to change. There is a lot more to learn about attitude change. The EAP can help.

All Knowing Customers

The Gallup Organization recently polled over 4,000 customer service employees who work for a major telecommunications company. They discovered several employees who scared off every single customer they spoke with in a given day. These customers did not return. The company might have made more money if these employees stayed home. You can be more valuable at work by listening and responding to customers so they feel really heard. Don’t be “problem averse.” When a customer starts talking about a problem, don’t react emotionally and interrupt to avoid hearing it. Instead, let the customer vent. Don’t lecture or offend customers for bringing a problem to you that they have not thought through completely. Don’t view customers as annoying, but competent and knowledgeable (even if they aren’t). Here’s why: Every customer’s experience gives clues about how your organization can be more successful serving them.

Turning on Optimism

Every person who succeeds against the odds is probably optimistic. Optimism isn’t about naïve beliefs or magical thinking about a positive outcome. Instead, optimism recognizes reality, but makes adjustments along the way. The energy you see in optimistic people comes from the belief that a positive outcome will eventually be achieved. Positive beliefs create excitement and energy causing optimistic people to work harder. Optimistic people often imagine outcomes that may be beyond what is actually achieved, but this tendency makes optimistic people hurdle roadblocks and avoid feeling discouraged when the going gets tough. With optimism, you can tolerate the drudgery often necessary to make a positive outcome likely. The good news is that human beings are naturally optimistic because it is an aid in survival as a species. This means the ability to be optimistic can be rediscovered, uncovered, or learned if it is lacking. Talk to the EAP to learn more.

Powerful Parental Tidbits

It’s easy to get caught up in the daily rush of work and home, and feel as though you aren’t spending enough quality time with your children. Still, you can make a positive impact on them in seconds that can last a lifetime. Every day ask your children to share one good thing that happened to them. Also ask them, “If you could change one thing about the day, what would it be? And why?” Stick a note expressing your love, encouragement, or praise in a lunchbox or drawer. Try sending a kiss to school—hold your child’s hand out, kiss his or her palm, and say “there is a kiss in your hand all day in case you need it.”