

THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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Tripped up by Tranquilizers

Be sure to talk to your doctor about your job functions if you are prescribed minor tranquilizers or sleep aids such as Xanax, Ambien, Valium, Librium, Dalmane, Restoril, or Tranxene. Your doctor may want you to consider modified duty if you work at dangerous heights, or require psychomotor skills to maintain balance. Minor tranquilizers are a primary cause of balance disturbances experienced by patients who fall in hospitals. There is reason to suspect that the risk of falls (the most common occupational injury) is similarly increased in the workplace with the use of these medications.

What Your Assistant Wants...

Whether you have an Instructional Assistant in an elementary school classroom or an Assistant Secretary of State working for you, here are five secrets to maximizing the success of your team of two.

- 1) Demonstrate mutual respect in your relationship.
- 2) Make your expectations clear so your assistant knows how you would like things done.
- 3) Make time to talk about mutual needs in your relationship.
- 4) Be flexible in accepting how each of you pursues work goals differently to reduce relationship stress.
- 5) Proactively solicit input from your assistant in shaping work goals and desired outcomes.

Computers and Vacations

Because you can't lug a home computer along with you on vacation, take steps to protect it.

- 1) Back up your files, and put them in a safe place. If there is a theft or fire while you are gone, you will be able to restore the files.
- 2) Unplug your computer. A lightning strike nearby can damage your computer beyond repair. A surge protector will not stop lightning.
- 3) Protect the modem, too. Disconnect it from the wall jack.

Actively Listen!

"Active listening" is a powerful relationship skill for improving mutual understanding. Active listening means avoiding being distracted, half listening, or thinking about something else when another person is speaking to you. There are three keys to demonstrating active listening:

- 1) Decide that you will learn something vitally new from the speaker, no matter what your relationship has been in the past.
- 2) Be prepared to repeat back to the speaker the key points of what was said.
- 3) Show that you understand the feelings or the psychological response of the speaker to help him or her feel truly heard. Benefits of active listening include fewer misunderstandings, development of mutual respect, deeper relationships, more openness and trust, less conflict, increased morale, and quicker discovery of solutions to problems.

Fighting Identity Theft

Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information such as your name, Social Security number, credit card number, or other identifying information without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes. People whose identities have been stolen can spend months or years—and their hard-earned money—cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record. If you think your identity has been stolen, contact one of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion) to place a fraud alert on your credit file. The other two credit bureaus will be automatically notified. Creditors will then contact you before opening any new accounts or making any changes to your existing accounts. All three bureaus will then send you free credit reports. Close the accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently. Use the *ID Theft Affidavit*, available online at the Federal Trade Commission (www.FTC.gov), when disputing new unauthorized accounts. File a police report and get a copy to submit to your creditors who may require proof of the crime. File your complaint with the FTC, too. Filing a complaint helps law enforcement learn more about identity theft and the problems victims are having so they can be helped.

Source: U.S. Federal Trade Commission;
ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name

Bouncing Back from Job Loss

Count yourself fortunate if you have not experienced the sudden loss of financial security, good friends, and a life you enjoy by losing a job. Like a sudden accident, your reaction will likely be, "This can't be happening." Although anger is another reaction to job loss, quickly begin to consider healthy action steps. It is also natural to feel guilty if your performance problems were an issue, but making it a learning experience is better than feeling immobilized. Your goal in facing job loss is to pass successfully through these and other emotions to arrive at a renewed sense of hope for your future. Be sure to ask the EAP how it can help.

Chocolate Helps Your Heart!

Lovers of dark chocolate and cocoa rejoice—you are helping your heart and arteries, according to two studies presented at the American Society of Hypertension's Nineteenth Annual Scientific Meeting, May 19-24, 2004. However, caffeine lovers aren't so lucky. The results of another study released at the conference found those needing a caffeine jolt had better switch to decaf to preserve the endothelium—the layer of cells lining blood vessels that control the ability of the blood vessels to dilate and prevent clot formation. Poor endothelial function and arterial stiffness are considered cardiovascular risk factors, in addition to smoking, hypertension, obesity, and high cholesterol.

Intervening to Help a Coworker

Q Is it appropriate for me and members of my work team to intervene with a fellow worker who has personal troubles affecting performance, even if the supervisor hasn't noticed?

A You may become aware of the performance problems and personal troubles of a fellow worker much sooner than a supervisor might. As a result, it is possible to talk with a coworker about the EAP and encourage him or her to get help. Your employee could recover from a serious personal problem and avoid possible job loss. Coworker interventions can be effective, but you should meet with the EAP to discuss your concerns and consider whether an intervention is appropriate. The EAP will also help you understand boundaries and the limits of your ability to help, along with how to approach your coworker in a supportive, caring way that will increase the likelihood of success.