

THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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Winning with Team Balance Your Personal Action Plan

Two things must be in balance for an effective team: content and process. Content is the work, tasks, agenda, and goals of a team. Process is how team members interact, treat each other, and behave. Many teams focus on content, but let problems with process sabotage productivity. *Diagnostic question:* Does each team member feel valued, respected, included, energized, and happy to be a member of the team? If not, try this fix: Create a tradition that team members actively observe team process and point out team behaviors that impede work. All agree to be evaluated on how well each member helps manage process issues. At every meeting ask: "How do we feel about our productivity and how well are we working with each other?" Then decide how to make improvements for the next meeting.

New Coworkers Need Inside Track

A new hire can take years to learn everything about an organization necessary to maximize his or her productivity. Shorten the learning curve by sharing information with a coworker about work culture, traditions, and important communication expectations within the organization. Don't forget sensitive political issues crucial to successful networking. Provide a list of key relationships to develop, and build in opportunities to interact and obtain feedback to avoid workplace mistakes and pitfalls.

If you are motivated to pursue a goal, put together your personal action plan. Its purpose: to put the goal into action and make its success more likely. Successful plans are written, and include breaking the goal down into distinct actionable parts. Each part or step must answer *how*, *what*, and *when* action will occur. If any one of these measurements is missing, you will be more vulnerable to procrastination and distraction, the two villains of every worthy pursuit. Here's a step from a larger list of steps toward establishing a fitness routine. *Not specific:* I will exercise this week after work. *Better:* This Friday, at 5:00 P.M., I will go to the ABC Gym and exercise for 45 minutes.

FDA Approves Antidepressant

The Food and Drug Administration has approved Cymbalta® for treatment of major depression. Cymbalta has been studied in more than 6,000 patients. Unlike other antidepressants, Cymbalta has the effect of potentially relieving the physical aches and pains that sometimes accompany depression, not just symptoms such as crying and sadness. Like most medications, Cymbalta may have side effects for some patients. If you suffer with stubborn depression, consider talking to your doctor or learn more at <http://www.newsroom.lilly.com>.

The Boomerang Generation

Millions of parents have at least one adult child living at home, and the number of empty nesters welcoming an adult child home for a temporary stay is growing. These adult children have been called the “boomerang generation.” Divorce, unemployment, financial troubles, mental illness and chemical dependency, and other problems help explain this phenomenon. For most parents, the goal is helping the adult child gain independence as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, many parents worry about the meaning of “a temporary stay.”

If you have an adult child at home, or one on the way, consider the following tips early on to keep your relationship healthy and help facilitate a transition back to independent living: 1) Discuss mutual expectations, house rules, chores, and shared financial responsibilities. 2) Consider a written agreement on these issues and the length of stay. 3) Avoid the trap of parental guilt that can fuel a lengthier stay, financial dependency, and the avoidance of responsibilities. 4) If relationship conflicts emerge, talk to the EAP. Don't wait. 5) The same goes for a substance abuse issue. The EAP can lead you to intervention help. Good communication, clear expectations, and a willingness to keep boundaries will help both you and your adult child look forward to a successful future.

EAP's, Health Issues, and Your Supervisor

Q. The EAP knows about my stress problems. If I sign a release, can the EA professional tell my supervisor that I need to cut back on certain duties, overtime, or other essential functions of my job that may interfere with my mental health?

A. EAP's cannot initiate requests to change an employee's job description or direct the organization to modify the employee's duties or essential functions. However, EAP's can report written recommendations of physicians and other health care providers to supervisors (or appropriate management) to have changes considered to an employee's duties or essential functions. A signed release is necessary. The EAP can discuss the management of stress with you and what intervention strategies might be helpful.

Support for Returning Troops

A significant percent of troops returning from war reportedly face mental health consequences of exposure to combat (posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety) according to a New England Journal of Medicine study (July 2004). One out of two Americans knows someone serving overseas, so it makes sense to know a few tips to help a veteran readjust to civilian life. 1) Listen carefully if your vet wants to talk. 2) Be patient. Don't take anger or other strong feelings personally. 3) Don't make statements such as, “You're lucky you made it back.” This is not reassuring because it can invoke guilt over friends or acquaintances wounded or killed. 4) Spend time with your vet, but also give him or her private time. 5) Encourage the troubled vet to take advantage of mental health resources in the community or from the military. Two-thirds of vets with PTSD refuse help because of concerns about stigma, but may change their minds later.

Workplace Hazards and Teens

Teens are injured on the job at a higher rate than adults. Studies show that most teenagers don't recognize workplace dangers as easily as older workers who have more experience in recognizing hazards and understanding necessary protective measures. Teenagers are also more reluctant to ask important safety questions that can prevent injury or death. Encourage younger coworkers to follow safety precautions, ask questions, wear proper protective clothing and shoes, and resist taking chances that may endanger them.