

THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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Professional Use of Self!

“Going along to get along” is not always a bad thing when it comes to clothing at work. Your appearance sends a powerful message to others, so wearing clothes that reflect the work culture and represent the company’s style is a smart move. Don’t worry about not being “true to yourself.” The general consensus of career counselors is that work is not the best place to express your individuality with unusual or controversial dress wear. Remember that it is not how you dress that makes you who you are at work—it’s how you perform. Find what you enjoy about your job and do it well. Distinguish yourself and you will leave the impression you want, and you will feel less confined by rules or unwritten work customs that define a dress code you don’t prefer.

Drug Use Dropping?

There may be some good news about drug abuse. A June 2005 report shows the number of drug positives for federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers nationwide decreased 8% in 2004, while drug positives for the general U.S. workforce declined 2%. Unfortunately, the rate of amphetamine abuse is still rising, but it did slow in 2004 to the same rate as 2003. The statistics are based on 7.2 million tests conducted in the workplace. Dangers of amphetamine use include addiction, violent behavior, anxiety, confusion, insomnia, hallucinations, mood swings, and paranoia.

Source: Quest Diagnostics

Parent Advice and College Adventures

College traditions such as pulling all-nighters and attending frat and sorority parties are exciting adventures for many new students. Unfortunately, alcohol abuse at college is also a new adventure for many. As a parent, you can play a mitigating role by being up front and open with your child about your expectations and the dangers of alcohol, such as date rape, car accidents, and alcohol poisoning. Discuss alternatives to drinking, such as attending alcohol-free events. Remind your child never to mix drinking and driving. Do not encourage experimentation with alcohol, but communicate that help or guidance from you is only a phone call away in a compromising situation, or where your child has had too much to drink.

Making Sense of Sleep Medication

With so many prescription sleep aids available, it is hard not to consider giving one of them a try if sleep problems affect your life. Follow your doctor’s instructions, and read all the warnings. Many can produce dependency if improperly used. Meet with your doctor regularly so he or she can gauge your body’s response to sleep medications and determine whether a tolerance build-up is an issue for you. Never “just quit” sleep medications without a medical doctor’s supervision. Withdrawal can be dangerous when not managed properly.

Opening a Dialogue . . .

Your supervisor has suddenly asked you to work overtime again, but you don't want to "rock the boat" by complaining. This is a repeating issue, and you feel anger. Do you remain silent or communicate with your boss so the impact on your life is understood and adjustments negotiated? Many employees suffer in silence because direct communication is too challenging. Supervisors can't read minds, but most are surprisingly open to negotiating workload issues. So before you seethe in silence, try calmly asking: "I've noticed that lately we've been working overtime consistently and wondered if I should plan for this from now on?" This often sends a signal that maybe too much is being asked of you. Your supervisor also has the opportunity to explain why you need to work overtime again. This process is called "opening a dialogue." It's the first step to understanding why your supervisor may do or say certain things. (Opening a dialogue is often a missing element in relationships, both at home and work.) In a fast-paced workplace, supervisors may not realize the impact of their decisions on those they count on. But most do count on you to step forward and share your concerns. There are other benefits for calmly and honestly communicating with your boss, the least of which is opening a new path of communication that may not have been there before.

Getting a Teenager to Counseling

Whether it's bouts of anger, violence, substance abuse, or other behavioral issues, you may be thinking about professional counseling for a teenager. The rule is not to wait until behavioral problems are so extreme that your ability to influence your teenager's cooperation with professional counseling has deteriorated. Don't take a "my teen needs to be fixed" approach. This can stigmatize or label your teenager as "the problem". Families are systems where one part affects others. So, see the situation in a different light. View professional counseling as an opportunity for your teen to discover and learn new coping techniques for common life problems. Tell your teenager that you are willing to participate and discover improvements that you can make in your relationship. In the beginning, expect the counselor to meet with you together so a broader view of the issues involving your teen can be understood.

Friends to Avoid

Does your teen have friends you don't know about? Hopefully they are not Ana, Ed and Mia? These friends might be more dangerous than you know. Ana (anorexia), Ed (eating disorder), and Mia (bulimia) are "pseudonyms" for self-destructive behaviors that teens may be learning on the Internet. These Internet sites allow desperate teens to share tips on unhealthy weight loss behaviors and boast of how they manage to keep the weight off. Parents should be on the lookout for their teen visiting sites that promote eating disorders, glamorize thinness and dieting, and lure teens into using laxatives, diuretics, supplements, or herbal products. If you find your teen visiting these sites, take action. Treatment options are widely available for teens experiencing eating disorders. Just as you would intervene if your teen hung around with friends who abuse drugs, so should you intervene if your teen makes friends with Ana, Ed, and Mia.

Source: National Eating Disorders Association

Are You a Stress Hound?

If you are a "stress hound" who thrives in an intense environment with pressuring deadlines, do you know how your body will signal you to slow down? Be on the lookout for tense muscles, anxiety, forgetfulness, fatigue, stomach pains, headaches, insomnia, an inability to concentrate, memory loss, carelessness, irritability with family members, increased injuries, or depression and loss of interest in things you once found pleasurable. Constant stress can make you more susceptible to disease and decreases your body's ability to heal itself. So, stay aware. The intensity that drives you personally may not drive your high productivity in the long run.