

THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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Getting Your Team Unstuck

When your team is meeting to tackle problems and concerns, you may discover it sometimes gets stuck in the non-work mode. Only a few members are talking. Others are withdrawing. Conclusions are not being reached. Ideas dry up. The tension in the room builds. Try one of these teamwork greasers:

1) Acknowledge the team is stuck. This will prompt commitment from group members to get the ball rolling again. 2) Ask someone for a summary of work completed so far. 3) Ask open-ended questions of those least contributing to group work, such as, “How do you feel about...?” “Can we have your opinion on ...?” 4) Leave the room for a few minutes, then return. This break can be effective in “rebooting” the teamwork process. 5) Go for the gut. Ask how everyone is feeling about what’s going on right now with the team.

Cell Phone Risk Revisited

Talking on your cell phone while driving will quadruple your risk of a serious accident, according to new research by a leading Australian university. The study also found that hands-free mobile phones are no safer than handheld mobile phones while driving. The distraction of your mind appears to create the risk, not your hands! The link between cell phone use and increased crash risk was true regardless of the driver’s age or sex.

Source: British Medical Journal; 07-12-05; Role of Cellular Phones in Motor Vehicle Crashes

Keeping Your Brain At Its Best

As you age, exercising your brain appears just as important as exercising your body to maintain long-term health. Research by Dr. Ryuta Kawashima, a prominent neurologist in Japan, has shown that a mere five minutes a day of quick, simple math calculations or reading aloud helps keep the brain stimulated and sharp. His research does not stand alone. Daily brain exercises maintain optimal brain function—slowing the natural deterioration of the brain. Simple calculations have even been shown to help those diagnosed with Alzheimer’s.

Source: Train Your Brain: 60 Days to a Better Brain: Kumon Publishing; 2005

Inside Injury Prevention: Are You Addicted to Risk?

Is your life a bit too exciting? Social scientists have observed that some people actually enjoy taking more chances and living with greater risks than others. They appear to be addicted to the adrenaline rush caused by “living on the edge.” If this sounds like you, it may be worth learning more about this syndrome, getting counseling if needed, and changing your appetite for risky behavior. Behaviors like driving over the speed limit, running red lights, ignoring health problems, gambling away your paycheck, or pursuing get rich quick schemes can lead to tragedy and loss of what you truly value most. Before the next big high that ends in a letdown, talk to the EAP.

Preparing for Natural Disasters

While some natural disasters are easily predicted, others happen without warning. Plan in advance so you are prepared. First, find out what natural disasters are most common in your area. Flooding is the nation's single most common natural disaster and can happen in every state. Earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, wildfires, landslides, and severe winter weather can also cause natural disasters. Making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan are important in any natural emergency. Prepare your family by creating a family disaster plan. Gather family members and review hazards, warning systems, evacuation routes, and community plans, as well as what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Additionally, discuss the following: family communications, utility shut-off and safety, insurance and vital records, special needs, caring for animals, and safety skills. Create an emergency supply kit including your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Remember that basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or possibly weeks. Once you have developed your plan, you need to practice and maintain it. Conduct drills that test the knowledge of your plan. *Important:* Don't forget to replace and update perishable disaster supplies!

Source: www.fema.gov (Disaster Communities> Preparedness> Community and Family)

Plan Ahead to Battle Burnout

You might think that burnout is an inevitable part of your career. But is it? One-fourth of all employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives, according to Northwestern National Life. Burnout can in fact be avoided by being proactive in your daily life and dealing with stress head-on. Planning early and deciding on intervention options is the first step in preventing chronic, toxic stress and burnout. Keep a diary for two weeks and inventory what's causing your stress. Then sort the list into three categories: 1) stressful relationships; 2) things in the work environment that stress you out; and 3) behaviors you practice that cause you stress. While you may not have much control over the first two categories, you have a lot of control over the last one. Ask the EAP how it can help.

Suicide Prevention Counseling Works!

A person who receives counseling following a suicide attempt is 50 percent less likely to make another attempt. So, encouraging a friend or family member to seek professional counseling is the most important thing you can do to demonstrate support. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for adults under 65, according to the National Institute for Mental Health. Seventy percent of people who commit suicide tell someone about their plans or give warning signs. Despite progress in the battle against the stigma of seeking mental health services, much of society still lacks a positive attitude toward mental health care. This results in patients failing to show up for scheduled appointments and other resistance to help. Give positive reinforcement to the person seeking mental health services, acknowledge a person's depressed state, and provide support to save a life.

Source: NIH News; 08-02-05

Staying Calm for Your Customers

How do you keep your cool when a customer blows his top? Customers are people, just like you, who may be having a bad day that has nothing to do with you. Try not to see confrontational behavior as a personal attack. Instead, challenge yourself to win the customer over. Agitated behavior of a customer is fueled by any reciprocal reaction from you. This state of mind is not pleasurable for the customer, so remaining calm will generally reduce agitation. The most powerful intervention is listening and empathy. If a customer is unhappy, try problem solving with him or her to find alternatives. Even if you are unsuccessful, make the customer feel that you tried to help.