

THE *FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE*

Wellness, Productivity & You!

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Which Comes First : Happiness or Success?

Does success in life bring happiness, or is it the other way around? Most research studies presume that happiness follows success, but the American Psychological Association recently announced findings based on 250 other studies on happiness that point to just the opposite: Success follows happiness. Other factors such as intelligence, family, and physical fitness contribute to success, but making decisions that help produce happiness really does help you achieve it. Happy individuals are more likely to have fulfilling marriages and relationships, high incomes, superior work performance, community involvement, robust health, and even a long life. It looks like the adage “do what makes you happy and success will follow” has empirical support.

Source: American Psychological Association,
Press Release, Dec. 18, 2005.

No Hangover? Not Good

While there is nothing fun about a hangover, you should be concerned if you have the ability to consume large quantities of alcohol with little or no adverse effects. Research shows that individuals who don't experience hangovers after heavy drinking may be inclined to drink more heavily over time, possibly taxing an unsuspecting susceptibility to alcoholism, and thereby incurring the illness. Many studies have shown this biologic response to alcohol to be inherited. Talk to the EAP to learn more.

Source: *Nature* (Vol. 436, p 845).

Avoid Going Nuts Remembering Names

Forgetting the name of a person you just met is common—but it's also frustrating and potentially embarrassing. Tips for keeping a name with that face: 1) Try memorizing just the first and last letter of the person's name when you are introduced. Fill in rest later. For example, Thomas is TS, Susan is SN. 2) Repeat the name silently ten times, using a number with each repetition: “Phillip-one”; “Phillip-two”; Phillip-three.” This works better than repeating “Phillip...Phillip...Phillip.” 3) If writing the name down is a must, keep a small piece of index card on hand and write the name on it. Have several—one for new neighbors, one for the workplace, and so forth.

Involuntary Psychiatric Hospitalization

Hospitalization, even against the will of the individual concerned, is usually necessary when a psychiatrically ill person won't accept help and their behavior makes them dangerous to themselves or to others (planning suicide, harming self or others, etc.) Hospitalization is usually necessary when a person is not in control of his or her emotions and/or has lost contact with reality. State laws differ regarding involuntary hospitalization, but would you know how to help a family member or loved one if it was necessary? In an emergency, a call to the police should be your first step, but if you are growing concerned about the behavior of a loved one, and their unwillingness to accept help, talk to the EAP.

Updating Your New Year's Resolution

If you made a New Year's resolution, are you sticking to it? If you have wandered off the path to achieving your goal, don't panic! It is always okay to start over. First, decide whether or not you are really ready to make the commitment to the goal you've set. Half-hearted efforts are the leading cause of failed New Year's resolutions, so reaffirm your commitment and set yourself up for success. Then set small, attainable goals for yourself. Write out your plan in achievable steps. Don't rely upon trying to remember where you are and what the next step is. Instead, keep a schedule, plot your progress, and mark a calendar. Imagine the benefits of achieving your goal, and if possible develop a support system by teaming with someone else who is trying to achieve the same thing. Give yourself rewards for reaching steps toward your goal, and celebrate your milestones. Finally, be willing to look for professional help, especially if your "bad habits" are actually symptoms of disease. For example, are you committed to "cutting back on drinking" or "eating less"? These may not be habits you are struggling with, but symptoms of illnesses like alcoholism or an eating disorder. Let the EAP help you find the right path to success.

Just a Little Bit of Anger

Anger is a normal human response, and your ability to feel and manage it constructively has health benefits. Participants in a Carnegie Mellon University research study were presented with mentally frustrating tasks that provoked anger. Subjects who demonstrated justifiable anger had lower blood pressure, a lower pulse rate, and a lower level of cortisol, a stress hormone. Justifiable anger seemed to protect them from the negative affects of stress, and gave the subjects a sense of optimism and a feeling of control over their lives. Other subjects who maintained "control" and did not demonstrate justifiable anger experienced just the opposite—more stress, higher blood pressure, and feelings of less personal control over their lives. The lesson learned? Anger is not inherently bad. When expressed appropriately, it may in fact be beneficial. Some people do need help with anger management, but others may need help feeling and expressing justified anger so that they can better respond to life's stressors. The EAP can help.

Source: Carnegie Mellon University, Press Release, Oct. 2005

Humor in the Workplace

Humor is a great stress-relieving tool, but understanding and using appropriate humor at work will help you and others avoid stress—or, worse, the accusation of harassment or offensive behavior. The bottom line: Negative humor—any joking that insults or is offensive to someone—hurts the workplace environment. Workplace humor tips:

- 1) Avoid humor associated with age, sex, race, ethnic background, weight, or other human characteristics.
- 2) Avoid using humor to make light of emotionally painful situations.
- 3) Avoid humor until you understand a coworker's personality and sensitivities.
- 4) Avoid sarcasm and cynical humor.
- 5) Don't use crude or offensive humor with coworkers, even in informal or social settings outside work.

Successful Aging a Matter of Attitude

We all know that healthy aging is dependent on health and physical exercise, but did you know that it may be equally important to be optimistic? Research has found that people who have a positive attitude and are good at coping with change tend to age more successfully. One study of people who ranged in age from sixty to ninety-eight showed that the participants' attitude was even more important than their level of physical fitness. Staying involved in the community and having a strong social network also predicted successful aging. What this means to you: Retirement planning should focus not just on health and wellness but on those factors that influence a positive attitude and allow you to maintain a healthy social network into the future.

Source: American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, Dec. 12, 2005