

# Employee Assistance Program

Faculty & Staff Living Newsletter

(916) 278-5018



SACRAMENTO  
STATE

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Wellness, Productivity, & You

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## Secrets of Small Talk

**D**on't hate small talk or dread business social events. Great connections and increased productivity may result from your willingness to engage. The secret is improved "engagement skills." If deep down you'd rather be social, decide to feel "adventurous." This powers up sociability and boosts your enthusiasm, which can overcome the "I hate these events" feeling. To prepare, discard the dread and focus on having a few conversational topics at the ready before your arrival. Focus on three categories: 1) your location and immediate environment, 2) the purpose of the event, and 3) the event's anticipated outcome or result. Apply who, what, where, when, how, and why questions to these topics. Numerous icebreakers can be formulated using these topics and question-word starters. (The world's best conversationalists are newspaper reporters. Now you know why: This is how they think!) Key point: Break the ice with questions. After a conversation starts, then give your name. Offer a firm handshake first, and look the person in the eye. When introduced to others, repeat their names as you shake hands. Verbally affirm ("Uh-huh") or nod your head to show interest, and look for opportunities to volley the conversation. Don't monopolize. When you employ these skills, new acquaintances will remember you as someone who is personable. Being a good conversationalist isn't something you can easily put on a résumé, but it is one skill that will boost your career dramatically. Many people feel uncomfortable in social situations, but by taking the risk to initiate conversations you help to put others at ease, which can create positive feelings and responses toward yourself. As with any change, the more you practice the more comfortable you will become with the new behavior.



## Stepping out of Your Comfort Zone

**S**uccess almost always requires stepping out of your comfort zone. The next time your anxieties start clawing at your willingness to explore a new workplace opportunity, remember that it's natural to feel unfit for a task at first. Expect to fumble a bit until you get your footing. Living up to your potential doesn't include firm instructions or a "paint-by-numbers" approach. False starts and dead ends happen. Don't be discouraged. Follow this rule: You know more than you think you do. The key is applying old experiences to new situations, getting feedback, and making adjustments until you excel. Then move on to the next challenge. Set realistic expectations for yourself. Use your self talk to keep perspective; not doing something "perfect" the first time doesn't make you a failure or incompetent. Break the new task down to smaller steps so you can acknowledge the progress you are making along the way as you move towards your final objective. Talk to others who may have already acquired the skills you are trying to learn; frequently you will hear new positions or responsibilities may take a year (or more) to fully understand and become competent at. Above all, recognize and appreciate your willingness to learn and grow.



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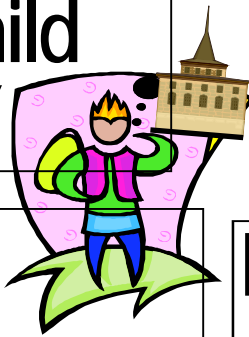
## Maximize Productivity Take Breaks!



**T**reat your work like a marathon rather than a sprint and you'll get more done in less time.

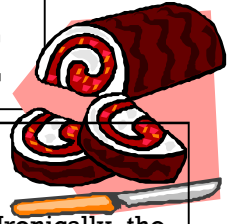
Start by warming up with a few easy tasks, and slowly increase your pace until you hit a comfortable rhythm. Take frequent, short breaks. If you don't, you will experience fatigue followed by vulnerability to distractions. This is your body's way of saying "Enough!" These distractions can morph into procrastination, which will usually keep you away from work longer than planned breaks would! Acknowledge your successes and accomplishments along the way before moving on to the next task.

## Helping Your Child "Think College"



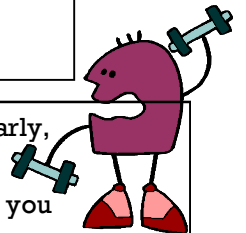
**I**f you value a college education for your child, the secret to implanting the idea is "expectation" and "anticipation". Start imparting messages in middle school (or even earlier), *rather than high school*. Treat college attendance as a natural and assumed event in your child's life. Help your child envision the experience by visiting different campuses and talking about the benefits and drawbacks of each. Working on a college campus provides easy and low key opportunities to expose them to college, without being so obvious as to put them on the defensive. Don't push too hard for early decisions on a major. Instead, talk about different career options and how they fit in with your child's strengths and interests. Most people at 18 years old don't really know what they want to do with their lives; and many who think they do end up changing their minds as they are exposed to new fields. Discuss how making good grades and securing scholarships today gives your child more options down the road. If you're a graduate, share some of your own college experiences with a sense of excitement and explain how they helped shape your life.

## Kick Cravings to Keep to Your Diet



**D**on't beat yourself up for failing to slay the craving goblins in the psychological war against hunger. Ironically, the solution may be your need to eat *more frequently*. If you reduce caloric intake too quickly, a starvation/binge cycle can begin. Set realistic goals for developing healthier eating patterns, and ease into it. Do you need more sleep? Exhaustion can make you want high-calorie foods. Also, eat breakfast. If you don't, you risk overeating at lunch or later in the day. If you aren't hungry first thing in the morning, head out the door with something nutritious in hand that you can eat on the way to or at work. Stress can be a trigger for binges, so manage it with help from your EAP. If possible, try short exercise breaks; you can have that snack after completing a walk. Keep your focus on developing healthy habits (staying active and keeping your body properly nourished) versus what you are "denying" yourself. Make sure to acknowledge your successes.

## Hidden Motivators for Exercise



**Y**ou know you should exercise regularly, but keeping your body physically fit may not be enough motivation for you to do it. Acquiring more positive beliefs about exercise will give you more reasons to do it regularly, and you may feel new motivation. See exercise as a form of recreation, a way to apply work-life balance, and a means of achieving the goal of finding mental relaxation. Exercising will produce a tranquilizing effect that you will feel hours later, and it can give you the feeling that you accomplished something. These effects can be especially beneficial if you've had a hard day. Exercise can be the one bright spot during those times where you feel a sense of helplessness about specific worries and concerns. Don't think of exercise as just something you "have to do." Instead, think of its many other benefits. If you are starting an exercise program, get clearance from your doctor. Then start slow, building on the consistency of a regular routine.