

Employee Assistance Program

Faculty & Staff Living Newsletter

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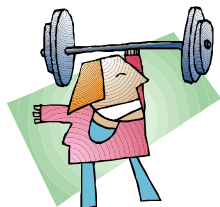
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Wellness, Productivity, & You

Douglas R Adams, LCSW, EAP Clinician
Cathy Connors, Psy.D. EAP Clinician

Action and Attitude Manage Stress



Everybody wants to manage stress more effectively, but many struggle to do it well. The solution lies in taking action. If you have been trying to “will” yourself into feeling or just thinking differently about stress, these mental efforts will only have a short-term effect. This will only lead to more futile attempts. The relief you want can only come with action. For example, if you are always running late for work, take time at lunch to jot down an itemized list of the things you must do in the morning before you leave the house. Maybe it works best to do a task or two the night before. Does it take 8 minutes to shower, 20 minutes to dress, and 25 minutes to get everyone out the door? Together this totals 53 minutes. It is a set up for stress if you only allow 53 minutes each morning to complete these steps as you can predict that many mornings something will “go wrong”. Add driving time, errands (if any), and some contingency time. Then plan buffer time for unforeseen events, and if they don’t happen, view the extra time as a bonus when you arrive at work early. Slot every activity into its required time. Determine what time you must go to bed and get up. Reward yourself and the rest of your morning crew for sticking to this schedule, even for one day. Plan a bigger reward for two days in a row, and claim the big prize for a week without a skipped day. Keep going. With a newly acquired good habit, you will soon be teaching others how to tackle stress. Rewards do not have to be elaborate or even cost money. Praise and acknowledgement is often enough. Special time together can also be a reward.

Is ADHD Getting In the Way?



Nine million adults in the United States suffer from ADHD/ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder, With or Without Hyperactivity). In severe cases, adult ADHD can make it difficult for sufferers to maintain steady employment. For many, it is a hindrance to doing their best job. Here are some signs to watch for at work: inability to stay focused during meetings, difficulty finishing projects, poor time management, disorganization, and difficulty maintaining concentration, especially if the task seems boring or routine. Treatments for ADHD include medication and psychological and behavioral therapies (all ADD/ADHD does not require medication). There are also other approaches to the problem, including organizational skills and creating environmental changes to the work setting. Don’t stay frustrated. Instead, seek help from your doctor, employee assistance professional, or other qualified professionals. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses in your work performance can help you achieve to your fullest potential. Many also find it makes their life outside work easier and less chaotic.

(Source: National Mental Health Association.)

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Forgo and Fend Off Gossip

Gossip can range from harmless chit-chat about a co-



worker's embarrassing weekend skiing to mean-spirited remarks about an individual's personality or character. Left unchecked, some gossip can feed rumors that contribute to a distrustful and a conflict-ridden workplace. A few intervention skills can make you an advocate for civility. Practice stepping in rather than stepping back with these tactics: 1) *The Redirect*: Friendly questions or comments such as, "Can we talk about something important—like where we're going for lunch?" or "That reminds me of something funny..."; 2) *The Big Shift*: If the rumor involves someone such as the head of a department, intervene with a question like, "Hey, speaking of (that department), what do you think of their new office setup?" 3) *The Call It*: When the gossip is malicious you must confront it by saying, "That sounds like a rumor to me," and walk away. These teachable skills will foster trust and teamwork by not reinforcing the gossip and rumor mill.

Holiday Eating Survival Tips



Here comes the fudge. The holidays add one pound to our waistlines every year, and most of us keep the weight once we've put it on. Formulate your game plan now. Don't wait to start after January 1st. This sort of "look ahead" diet planning can cause you to "live it up" now before cracking down. Try shooting for maintaining your current weight through the holidays. This year, try a different strategy. A few include using smaller plates, waiting 15 minutes after finishing a plate before getting seconds, eating before you attend holiday parties, doing drive-by "recons" at holiday buffets before piling up your plate, and allowing yourself leeway for eating some of the good stuff. Think moderation, not denial!

Emotional Intelligence and Customer Service

You may be smart, but if you have an outstanding reputation as a customer service professional, it's probably your "emotional IQ" (EIQ) that deserves a lot of credit. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, describe, understand, and work effectively with emotion. You're what's known as a "people person." If you don't see yourself as a "people person," here's how to boost your EIQ: 1) Practice analyzing customer emotions. When you witness undesirable emotions, respond with a voice tone or statements that communicate your assurance that they will experience satisfaction; 2) Validate your customer's feelings by using empathetic language like, "I can certainly understand your concern about this matter"; 3) Practice "upstream thinking" by anticipating and acting on your customers' needs even before they recognize them; 4) Be aware of your body language. The way you stand, use your hands, or nod your head can send powerful messages of enthusiasm or indifference to customers, which they'll feel—and remember.



The *Holidays*



Many of us look forward to the holidays as a time to be with family and friends. They are a time of joy and good memories. For many others, however, the reality of the holidays doesn't match the idealized view. For them, the holidays are a time of family discord, disappointment, and painful memories. They represent a recurring challenge to "survive" rather than enjoy. For others, especially those going through or recently divorced or who have suffered the loss of a loved one the holidays may evoke sadness and grief. By recognizing that the pressure to be "happy" during a painful time may cause distress for some of those around us we can all be more compassionate and thoughtful. If you find the holiday time to be difficult for you, or someone you live with, consider contacting your EAP as a potential resource.