Employee Assistance Program

Faculty & Staff Living Newsletter

(916) 278-5018

SACRAMENTO STATE

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Wellness, Productivity, & You

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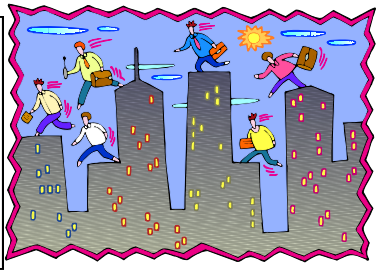
Take Charge of Morale!



Everyone wants high morale, but when morale suffers, help often arrives too late. Whose job is it to "improve morale"? Most people would shout, "Administration!"; but this is frequently not the case. Instead, *you* may be the first line of defense. The danger signal is a deterioration of your or your group's commitment to the mission of your department or unit, or a loss of faith in the importance of your work. If you detect these signals, it's time to gather your group before rumors and backbiting begin. What can the group or its members do to intervene and improve morale? Poor morale decreases the sense of teamwork within a group and increases tension and discord among employees. This meeting must not be a blame session, but a strategy session. Do not ask, "What's wrong with us?" Ask instead, "What works to improve morale?" This strategic tip removes conflicts from your discussion. Assign a monitor to keep this rule and hold everyone to it. If the conversation drifts toward "blame", redirect it back to "solutions". After all, everyone has something they can contribute towards a solution. Now ask, "What works to 1) make communication between us more effective, 2) improve our ability to feel recognized for our contributions, 3) help us feel more control over what we do and how it is done, and 4) improve positive feelings we have toward each other?" You may generate suggestions for your supervisor, but don't drift away from your primary goal of improving morale. Hold a follow-up meeting and repeat the process. At some point it may be appropriate for the manager/supervisor to be a part of the discussions, but frequently, people are more open to share and discuss options when they do not feel "the boss" is present.

Working after Retirement a Plus!

A new national study shows that retirees who transition from full-time work into a temporary or part-time job experience fewer major diseases and are able to function better day to day than are people who stop working altogether. And the findings were significant even after controlling for people's physical and mental health before retirement. The coined term is "bridge employment," defined as employment during the period of time between one's career and complete retirement. This can be a part-time job, self-employment, a temporary job, or volunteering. The notion people often have going into retirement is they will just do "whatever I feel like". It sounds appealing, but tends to get boring and unfulfilling rather quickly. Likewise the idea of "I'm just going to travel and visit the kids" wears out after you've made the rounds once or twice. Work provides challenges, social interactions, and other benefits that are important to replace as one moves into retirement. By making plans ahead of time you can transition successfully into the next phase of your life.

Source: American Psychological Association, Press Release, 10-13-2009

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Visit the EAP webpage!

www.csus.edu/eapprogr

Self-help web links

Community referral information

Important Notice: Information in Faculty & Staff Living is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further help, questions, or referral to community resources for specific problems or personal concerns, contact one of our EAP professionals at (916) 278-5018

Financial Stress and Lost Sleep

If financial worries keep you awake, you are not alone. A study in June 2009 found that 69 percent of Americans are experiencing this problem to some degree. You can be penniless or an over-extended millionaire and still lose sleep due to financial stress. It is an equal opportunity problem. It is also a problem made more salient due to the financial impact of furloughs. The top worries include lack of money for retirement, followed by health care expenses and concerns over the ability to make a mortgage or rent payment. Under the current conditions, simply making monthly bills may be a challenge. Talk to your doctor to rule out a sleep disorder. Avoid alcohol as a sedative to put you to sleep. Your nervous system will rebound and you'll wake up, or your deep sleep cycle will be disturbed. Make sure you are allowing yourself adequate time to unwind before going to bed, and enough hours in bed to be well rested. Most adults require about 8 hours of sleep a night (though many of us "get by" with significantly less). Check sleepfoundation.org (the Web site of the National Sleep Foundation) for plenty of

Source: GfK Research and CreditCards.com.

Internet Addiction Can Sneak Up on You

When you limit your time on the Internet, do you notice yourself becoming restless and uneasy? Does relief come only when you are able to get back online? Think back over the past several years. Were you involved in hobbies and pastimes that today you no longer spend time doing, like gardening, woodworking, shooting basketball, meeting friends at the park, or fishing with buddies? If yes, it may be time to intervene and overcome an Internet addiction. There is a lot at stake, especially if you have relationships, educational plans, and career goals that are not getting the attention they deserve because you're online so much. Decide what is "necessary" for you to be online for, and set specific times for these to be accomplished or handled. Choose to do things away from the computer and talk to trusted people about your desire to make a change (talking with others helps us follow

Better Relationships with coworkers

Be proactive and meet with coworkers to fix a difficult relationship. This workplace stressor can get tougher to repair down the road. Gain clarity by defining the real issue first. Your goal is an improved relationship, *not finding fault*. Have you played any role in the development of a difficult relationship or have communication problems added to it? Accept the universal principle that each party in conflict plays a role in maintaining the conflict; otherwise, you won't get very far. It doesn't matter if it is "50/50" or "95/5", both people have something they can contribute towards a solution. At the meeting, explain your concerns in unemotional language. Use "I" statements. "I've grown concerned…" "I sometimes feel we…". "You" statements ("you're always in a bad mood", "you're rude to me") tend to elicit a defensive or angry response. Be positive—look towards the solution and not back at the cause of the conflict. The longer the tension has existed, the less likely the parties will be able to agree on the cause or who's to blame. Always let him or her respond and have the last word. Listen to both the words and feelings expressed and respond in a manner that conveys you hear and understand. By keeping in mind your goal is to improve the relationship and to decrease the tension you can make the effort to lead the way in making the situation different as you will directly benefit. Later, have ongoing contact and put into practice something you identified you could do (such as smile first in the morning). Commit to changing the part you have control over. Sometimes it takes change on one persons part to facilitate change on the others. Don't give up in the absence of immediate results.

This past month has been especially trying for the Sac State community. The tragedy at ARC, of course stands out. It will impact some forever. In addition, the ongoing challenges the budget situation is imposing on us, with increased work demands, decreased staffing, furloughs and an uncertain future can create additional stress for many. Look for opportunities to acknowledge someone's positive contribution. Make an extra effort to be thoughtful to another. We never know when a small action on our part may make a difference in the life of another.