

Employee Assistance Program

Faculty & Staff Living Newsletter

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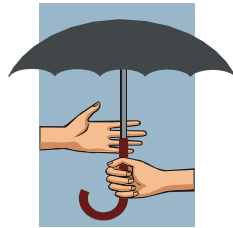
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September, 2009

Wellness, Productivity, & You

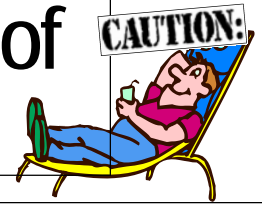
Douglas R Adams, LCSW, EAP Clinician
Cathy Connors, Psy.D. EAP Clinician

Choosing to Get Along



Getting along with coworkers is a lot like dealing with family. There are bound to be occasional squabbles, flare-ups, and coworkers who remind you of relatives you try to avoid visiting. Certainly, you don't always have to love each other, but the truth is that you are best served by adopting the attitude you are "obligated" to get along at work. One powerful strategy for doing so is improving your "other-awareness" skills. Unlike the more familiar self-awareness, other-awareness is the degree to which you are tuned in to the environment and what others are feeling or needing. Simply asking is the fastest route to finding out, but the real world doesn't always work that way. You can't be a mind reader, of course, but you can practice reading the signals. Is your coworker tired, frustrated, rushed, or experiencing anxiety? There will be an increased number of people dealing with these as the impacts of the furloughs take effect. Is he or she avoidant and non-talkative, in need of space and privacy? If they are now withdrawn when they used to be talkative, this often indicates stress or other factors are having an impact. The social skill of "other awareness" takes practice, but the degree to which we possess it enables us to build better relationships. Ask yourself, "How are my other-awareness skills?" If you could use some skill building, take a day to notice the signals others send without spoken words. Be aware too of the effect our own behavior can have; a smile or a kind word can have a very positive effect on another person, altering the entire course of interaction. As we enter this new phase of increased stress and work demands with less time and less people to accomplish them, we all can benefit by contributing some positive awareness of others.

The Hazard of Inactivity



As many as 50 million Americans are living sedentary lives, putting them at increased risk of health problems and early death, says the American Psychological Association. In a long-term study of more than 40,000 adults, 16 percent of deaths were directly related to sedentary living. This percentage did not include deaths complicated by other illnesses such as obesity, smoking, high cholesterol, or diabetes. Plain and simple, a lack of exercise was the culprit. Men with moderate levels of exercise on average lived six years longer than sedentary men. Close examination of more than 14,000 women showed that active women were 55 percent less likely to die of breast cancer than women who were not in good shape. This was after researchers had controlled for Body Mass Index, smoking, family history of breast cancer, and other possible risks. In addition, physical activity/exercise is one of the most effective strategies to combat stress. And given the current situation here on campus we all are likely experiencing increased stress. So look for opportunities to be active; walk at lunch, take the stairs, park a bit further away.

Source: www.apa.org/releases/sedentary-lives.html.

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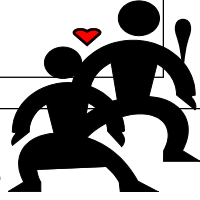
Visit the EAP webpage!

www.csus.edu/eapprogr

Self-help web links

Community referral information

Toxic Relationship Troubles



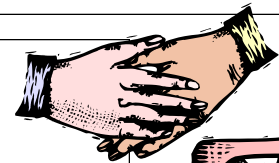
A toxic relationship is a relationship that doesn't work. It produces negative physical and mental health consequences for its partners. The relationship is not simply a pattern of repeating disagreements, bickering, or periodic feelings of incompatibility. Instead, toxic relationships fuel worsening self-esteem and negative views of oneself. Fear of the other person because of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse is not uncommon. Toxic relationships are not characterized by reciprocal "give and take" or "I/you" conversations. Interactions in which each party feels respected and supported, heard, and valued are sporadic, rare, or nonexistent. Feeling shackled by patterns of dysfunctional behavior that leave you feeling drained is more common. It can be difficult to come to terms with the fact you are in a toxic relationship, and it can be even harder to determine what to do. You can, rarely, address the issue directly and alter the pattern. However this generally doesn't work due to the nature of a toxic relationship. Attempts to address specific content in a disagreement or conflict are unsuccessful, as is any attempt to identify the related feelings. This is because nearly all toxic relationships involve another agenda at work besides the immediate issue. One, or sometimes both parties, are engaged in an exchange where the goal is to exert power, create guilt or blame for the other, or to have control over another. The issue at hand is only an opportunity to achieve these unstated goals. That is why attempts to listen and rationally "solve" the problem are not successful. One person is not looking for a solution; only to win (however they have defined winning). All attempts to reach an understanding will fail as the unstated goal is to "win"; by exerting power, creating guilt, etc. For the unsuspecting person in a toxic relationship, the effects of this pattern of interacting are detrimental. They experience constant "failure" as problems are never resolved and it is always their fault or inadequacy that is blamed. Self esteem can suffer as well as their confidence. The longer a person remains in such a relationship the harder it can be to get out. If you recognize yourself or someone you love in this, reach out for assistance.

Become an Expert at Using Waiting-Time



How many months or years do we spend waiting? From DMV lines to doctors' office waiting rooms, some social scientists figure it could be up to three years. You can't get your time back, so get even. Start with a new attitude about waiting time. View it as a gift or unexpected opportunity to get something done to increase your personal productivity. One approach is to decide what types of tasks you want to do or complete while waiting. From adding phone numbers to your cell phone address book to creating a grocery list to listening to a self-development course on your iPod, waiting time can be your secret friend. To find the best activities, consider which tasks you are most likely putting off right now. They may be the best time-gap fillers with the highest returns, and may produce the best feelings for finally getting them knocked off your to-do list. Another option is to use the time to clear your mind and allow yourself to experience relaxation. By giving yourself the gift of time and appreciating the absence of worry and stress you can use the time spent waiting to refresh and recharge yourself. Brief meditation, visualization, or even positive day dreaming can all be beneficial. It is rare for us to allow ourselves to just experience the present. So whichever approach you choose, adjust your attitude and experience the positives of waiting.

Time to Talk to the EAP



EAPs help employees with personal problems that may affect job performance. But what if you don't have a personal problem and just want to talk confidentially about what's "going on" in the office—worries about workplace trends, internal politics, and related frustrations—or perhaps a work idea that you want to bounce off of a good listener? Is it appropriate to call the EAP? Can these discussions also be confidential? Answer: Yes. You, or your eligible family member can talk with EAP on any subject. It can be work related, or something having nothing to do with work. Your participation is confidential as is what you talk about. Outside the clearly stated exceptions in law, your right to privacy is respected and protected. A family member may utilize the EAP benefit without the employee having to be present.