

EMPLOYEE COUNSELING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Daytime: 410-366-1980 x 278/279



Eve./Holidays: 1-800-285-1537

Practice Safety with Your Peers

Establishing a culture of safety in your work unit or organization does not happen simply by hanging safety posters and trying to remember to "think safety." Everyone must pitch in. Try this strategy: add peer reinforcement to improve safe workplace practices. Spend a few minutes in staff or team meetings giving feedback to your peers on how well they practice safety, discussing unsafe work conditions needing attention, and pointing out unsafe work practices when you see them among peers. The peer influence that results may prevent an injury or save a life, and remembering to practice safety may have more staying power.



Make Happy a Health Habit



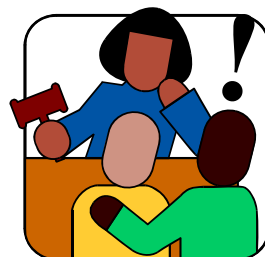
Add "participate in an activity that makes me happy" to your to-do list of managing stress, exercising, eating well, and getting enough sleep. Research from the University College London says happiness leads to a healthier heart. Levels of cortisol—a stress hormone—were 32 percent lower in people who reported having more happy moments during the day, and a chemical marker for artery damage (fibrinogen) was also lower. The study accounted for other factors that could have explained the phenomenon.

Source: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk> (News/April 19)

When Personal Meets Performance

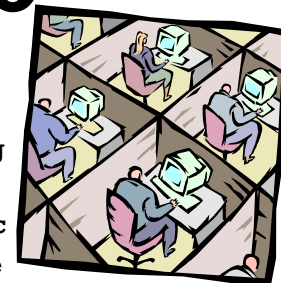
Q I was referred to the EAP because of a legal problem off the job that came to the attention of my employer. Is this appropriate?

A Remember, a supervisor referral to the EAP is designed to be helpful. A personal experience outside work that reflects upon the employer, your job, your qualifications, or the job's essential functions may make a supervisor referral to the EAP appropriate, and possibly help prevent a recurrence.



Avoid Cubicle Crisis

Although the stress of working in an office cubicle has been the substance of Dilbert comic strips and much office lore, it can be less stressful if you make your space efficient and personal. Best ideas: (1) Use a large, clear plastic desk pad with frequently needed information handily slipped underneath it. You'll manage information more effectively, which is key to reducing cubicle stress. (2) Add a small bulletin board for those small pieces of paper you need, but frequently shuffle around on your desk. (3) Add greenery (small plants), trophies, certificates, or cartoons. (4) Add or frequently rotate photos of family, friends, and your last vacation. (5) Manage information by making it available at your fingertips. (6) Get rid of the dust!



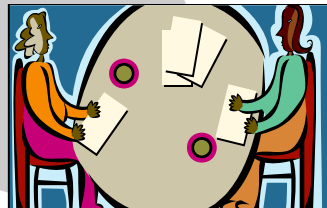
Cross-cultural Cohesiveness



Learning how to communicate effectively across cultures is becoming crucial to success in business. The coworker in the next cubicle may see the world differently from the way you do. So, how will you increase your understanding of others' views (and vice versa) and avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings that can inhibit efficiency and productivity? Here are a few keys to cross-cultural cohesiveness:

- *Understand the mechanics:* All of us have "filters"—values, life experiences, traditions, and beliefs that play key roles in how we interpret experiences and events and that influence our perceptions. How people perceive matters can differ greatly among other cultures.
- *Look out for cross-cultural differences:* Although it is helpful to understand another person's perspective and world view, you may not have the luxury of discovering it or having it explained prior to a misunderstanding. Knowing that cultural views may differ can instill more patience, a healthy sense of curiosity, and a willingness to learn from a coworker rather than invest in conflict.
- *People are the same, it's the rules that differ:* We want to understand and be understood. Rules differ among cultures about how to talk to and act toward others—whether to look someone in the eye while speaking, express feelings openly, or show emotions to those we don't know. Be slow to be offended by difference, and quick to consider whether a cultural rule is in play. People from different cultures work better together when they share rules of communication, but it may take some time before new rules are adopted.

Taking Apprehension Out of Appraisals



Reduce the anxiety of performance appraisals by taking these steps: (1) Review the goals and standards of your position, and the expectations and outcomes since your last performance appraisal. Know what you will say about each one. (2) Be able to discuss what you do well in your job. Share insights about improvements that you would like to make. No one is perfect, so identifying these personal work goals shows you are invested in your job and your personal growth. (3) Suggest what you would like to work on in the coming year that adds value to the work unit. *Smart moves for next year:* Keep notes of your ideas during the year so you don't forget them, then discuss those ideas during your review. Periodically discuss your job performance with your boss. Don't wait for her or him to approach you first.

High Time for Drug Abuse



With summer comes a higher likelihood that teens and preteens will first experiment with illegal drugs—more so than at any other time during the year, according to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Key contributing factors remain less adult supervision and lack of structured time. The recommendation is to keep children involved in summer activities, know where they are, and know who they are with. Make drug use unacceptable and say it won't be tolerated. The average age of first use of cigarettes is 12.8, marijuana 13.9, and alcohol 14.6. The peak months of first experimentation are June and July. (Exception: First-time use of alcohol is more likely in December and January, but only slightly.)

Source: U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Youth's First-Time Use of Marijuana, Cigarettes, or Alcohol, 2004

Turning Off Online Porn Addiction

Cyberspace includes millions of web pages that are dedicated to pornography. They are creating significant life problems for millions of computer users who use them compulsively to meet their sexual needs. Along with an awareness of this problem have come many sources of help (also online). Your EAP is a good place to turn for help because information online is often confusing and may not take into account your personal circumstances. To find out whether your behavior is out of control, ask yourself if you experience significant consequences from Internet or computer sexual behavior, and whether you are continually thinking about using the computer for pornography, even when you don't want to.

