

FrontLine Employee

WELLNESS, PRODUCTIVITY AND YOU!

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STOP *the* DOWNWARD SLIDE

Even if you pride yourself on being an optimistic employee, workplace negativity can still affect you in ways that you may not like.

Negativity tends to be as contagious as a cold virus, and it can be a self-perpetuating force. The good news is that negativity in the workplace can be beaten. It has weaknesses, the most important of which is refusing to participate in it. This isn't easy, of course, and it requires education and individual employees willing to be change agents.

Here's how:

Speak up when you spot negativity, not by criticizing but by educating about its impact and suggesting a different approach to communication. Team up with a co-worker to practice this same change-agent role. There is nothing more powerful than peer influence, and you have the right action on your side.

Note: If you feel affected by negativity, turn to Continuum EAP for guidance and support. An EAP professional can help to build your resilience so you don't succumb to the limiting pattern around you and instead can be a positive force that influences others.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN A BREAK

Be more productive at work by taking breaks. Here's your motivation if you are inclined to skip breaks: a neurologic discovery called "voluntary" and "involuntary" attention. Each type of attention engages different uses of your brain.

When you focus on work, whether it is a computer or car engine, you are purposeful, intense and focused; this is voluntary attention.

In contrast, involuntary attention occurs when you walk down a sidewalk; you are not focused, but you are "attending" to the environment as it appears — clouds, traffic, trees, wind, sunshine, sounds and sensations. This process of allowing your brain to engage the world this way (being "pulled" along rather than "pushed") is what relieves your stress and refreshes you neurologically. The payoff is improved memory and attention back at work.



Learn more: Google "how nature soothes involuntarily."

DON'T USE THE INTERNET as a doctor

With internet access at our fingertips, using online resources for answers to your health care concerns seems like a fast, reliable and cheap solution. From the rash on your leg to the swelling in your neck, “answers” to medical questions seem to be only a click away. But are they the right answers right now? If not, a delay in the right treatment could mean tragedy.

With online self-diagnosis and treatment recommendations comes big risk. Does that odd-looking red spot really match the image on Google? Talk to your doctor, and don't let fear be a roadblock to making the call. Doctors are trained in more than just examinations; they are trained in medical history, decision-making, pharmacology, psychology, prognostic indicators, and dozens of other factors. Many or all may be necessary to help you.

PARENT PREVENTION of teen dating violence

Don't have “the talk” about healthy relationships, mutual respect, manners and appropriate behavior an hour before your teen's date arrives. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that these discussions begin when your child is in middle school, before dating begins.

Modeling also helps young teens practice relationship health. Parents or guardians play a key role, so consider whether physical or verbal abuse poses a roadblock to your ability to communicate a credible message to your teen. An EAP counselor can help. If your child is already dating and you have not talked about healthy relationships, now is better than never! Learn more at healthychildren.org.

Be a networking PRO

Most of us will naturally develop a network of supporters, allies and potential helpers over the years who can play valuable roles in enhancing our careers and magnifying our influence. Although this is usually a scattered and undefined process, consider making a conscious effort to accelerate this as a practice.

Become more “socially aware.” See engaging with others as not just a pleasant social interchange but also an opportunity to consider how you can be of service to them and they to you, now or in the future. The positive benefits of a professional network are, of course, reciprocal.

Realize that your address book and professional friends in a membership association or other groups are a virtual gold mine. The hottest tip is to make annual contact with your network by mailing a short postal note or holiday card with personal news, achievements and good wishes. Several years of these “touches” will produce tremendous leverage and top-of-mind awareness among your contacts, and you will experience a surprising number of opportunities to help others and be helped by them.

Try a winter garden to IMPROVE MOOD

No need to wait for spring to experience Mother Nature's greenery; savor the rewards now with an indoor garden. This mood enhancer and positive distraction is easy and inexpensive to create. Winter, with its shorter and grayer days, can be a difficult time for those who have symptoms of depression. If that's you, the delight of a small indoor garden and watching sprouts go from trough to table may be an uplifting experience. A Google search of “indoor winter garden ideas” can help you get started.

