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FRONTLINE
Employee

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Did you know?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) currently contracts with over **45** mental healthcare professionals in over **25** cities throughout Washington State. Click here to see a complete list of EAP locations. To schedule an appointment with a counselor in your area, please call the EAP's headquarters in Olympia at 360-407-9490 or toll free 1-877-313-4455.

EAP Service Locations

Stress Management Technique: Reframing

Proper diet, sleep, exercise, and pursuing work-life balance are important for managing stress. Less often considered is how to think differently about stressful incidents in order to reduce their emotional impact. Your perception is reality, so intervening here goes to the heart of matter. One such intervention tool is "reframing." When you practice reframing, you decide against being overwhelmed. You aggressively view your distressful circumstances differently—reducing their perceived importance, meaning, urgency, possible harm, long-term impact, or significance. The goal is detachment. A friend who says to you, "Hey, look on the bright side …" is suggesting that you use reframing. Practice reframing faster and more reactively and you will manage stress more effectively. You will retain more energy for bigger problems. Getting a $150 speeding ticket going 38 mph in a 25 mph zone is stressful. Deciding on the spot that the event is now out of your control and maybe there's a lesson learned can instantly free you from panic and anguish. Reframing takes practice, but you will reap extraordinary returns from it.

Bullying in School: Two-Month Checkup

The risk of being bullied is a bit higher during transitions from elementary to middle to high school. Symptoms you may see since school started could include aggression, symptoms of withdrawal, and lower grades than usual. Only one in ten victims will inform an adult about abuse from a bully, primarily because of fear of retaliation. Feeling embarrassed or ashamed of being "the one" the bully has decided to target also contributes to denial. The self-talk script is, "There must be something wrong with me if I am the target." Girls are twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying. Also, survey research indicates 25% of students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning their sexual identity have experienced harassment at school or online.

Be a Solution-Oriented Employee

You can drop a problem in your boss's lap and let him or her figure it out, or you can be a solution-oriented employee. Here's how to be the latter and win your boss's heart: 1) Identify the issues associated with the problem needing attention. 2) Ask why these issues exist. This "why" is generally the problem, but asking why again often leads to a more defined root cause. 3) Seek information and reactions about the problem from those most affected by it. 4) Formulate possible solutions, reflecting on the information gathered in #3. 5) Consider the pros and cons of each potential solution. 6) Make a selection, write it down, and present it along with the problem.

When Work Stress Comes Home

Job stress can affect anyone, but if you have job authority, higher skills, or decision-making latitude, then you are at higher risk for job stress following you home. Contrary to popular belief, it isn't simply talking about work with a spouse/partner that creates the real stress. Instead, it is lack of emotional availability that adversely affects your relationships. "Being there" emotionally is your goal, and structure is the way to achieve it. To stop the home invasion, establish a support system—a mentor or reliable group of friends—to process stress and solve work problems. Establish home-life routines you stick to—changing clothes when you arrive home, setting a regular family hour for building bonds, and making sure activities inhibit distraction by work. A more efficient separation of job stress from family life will soon follow.

"Microaggressions" in the Workplace

Are you familiar with the term "microaggression" in the workplace? It refers to the often-subtle uncivil and inappropriate communication and interactions, verbal or nonverbal that causes others who are members of a minority group (gender, race, disability, etc.) to feel that they have just experienced a snub, slight, derogatory comment, or negative message. Microaggression is often unintentional or accidental. Research shows these subtle negative interactions, frequently rooted in false beliefs and stereotyping, have cumulative adverse effects. They interfere with workplace productivity. And they also undermine an inclusive workplace. Common examples of microaggression include making traditional gender role assumptions ("Do we have any ladies willing to make potato salad for the company picnic tomorrow?"), sexist jokes, saying someone looks clean-cut, or making assumptions about the inferiority of others that prompts social invisibility or overlooking their interest in an activity or work function. You can learn more about the negative impact of microaggression from the book, "Microaggressions in Everyday Life" by Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D., 2010. To assist coworkers and others in reducing unwitting microaggressions, consider asking the question, "Can you explain what you meant by that?" This can lead to improved awareness about biases and stereotypes.

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