

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

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EAP NEWS

Mindfulness on the Move

The Mindful Awareness Research Center has opened at UCLA. It shows how mindfulness as an approach to health and wellness is quickly moving into health care.

Mindful awareness is paying attention to the present moment, staying centered, and improving self-awareness to manage stress by stopping, breathing, observing, and connecting with one's inner experience. It's a powerful concept largely influenced by meditation and the research supporting meditation's health benefits. Adding energy to the mindfulness movement is the need to manage stress in our modern age. Mastering this stress is not simply about taking a pill to manage anxiety and tension, it's about learning to use the body's and the mind's abilities to intervene and heal. Mindfulness is finding its way into cancer treatment, addiction treatment, and other programs that can benefit from a whole-person approach.

Learn more at marc.ucla.edu.



Soft Skills to Know: Be “Healthy Competitive”

The word “competitive” gets a bad rap in the workplace because it often describes pushy or manic or aggressive behavior. But there is another type of competitive employee—the one who champions reaching for the gold in healthy ways. Healthy competitiveness is a learned skill and an energetic approach to work that shows you are proactive, focused, and positive. You seek to top your best, not that of others. Employers are clamoring for employees with a healthy competitive spirit because they are engaged workers.

Grow your competitive spirit by:

1. Giving yourself permission to be competitive. Overcome any false scripts suggesting competitiveness means not being fair to others.
2. Identify strengths and skills that are unique to you. Spot opportunities to apply your skill set and establish goals that will add to your achievements while lifting up your employer.
3. Be a “conscious collaborator” by showing your ability to share work, elevate others, and share credit. Being competitive is an easily spotted trait, and you risk irking people if you do not demonstrate humility in this way.
4. Be confident about your skills, use hard work to achieve your goals, and avoid fear of failure.

(Be sure to acknowledge and share the final glory with those who lent a hand along the way.)

Plug In to Peaks of Productivity

Try this productivity booster: Draw a timeline and identify when you experience your high-and low-energy periods during the day. These normal cycles are based upon diet, exercise, and other factors. Do you experience an energy peak about two hours after arrival at work? What about a slowdown after lunch? How about a small peak in the afternoon? This is valuable data. Divide your work tasks according to these energy levels. Perform difficult tasks when energy is high and less-difficult tasks when energy is low. These are A, B, and C activities. Assign them to the right energy slots and you will work more efficiently and get more done!

Dog Ownership Brings Health Benefits

Is a senior citizen in your life a bit too sedentary but still able to walk and stroll? Consider striking up a conversation about dog ownership.



New research shows seniors who own dogs have more positive health outcomes. They include less frailty, better mobility, and lower risk for coronary heart disease. In the first study of its kind, these seniors also report less social isolation and say they feel more connected to their communities. They also get closer to the 150 minutes of exercise per week recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Senior dog owners must walk Fido year round, even in colder months thus maintaining an exercise regimen during that time of the year when non-dog owners may exercise less.

Chronic Pain and Substance Abuse

Opioid addiction and prescription drug abuse are national problems, and one research study discovered that 87 percent of opioid or related medication addicts are self-medicating pain.

Does this sound like you or someone you know?

Note these warning signs for needing help:

1. You are using the medication not just for pain but also to achieve a feel-good state.
2. Your prescribed dose seems way too low. It takes more to feel the effects.
3. Your pain has subsided, but your desire to use the medication you were given is growing. You say you're worried about the pain coming back, but the effect of the drug is really the motivating factor.
4. The medication has become part of your life, and you are planning and coordinating your life around obtaining and using the medication, even to the detriment of your family, things you enjoy, and parts of your life that you value.



Build a Stress Management Tool Kit

Do you have a personal stress management program—a collection of techniques to intervene when stress hits? Or when stressed, do you cope with the anxiety and tension without a strategic approach, searching for relief only when it all becomes too much? With a thoughtful approach to stress management, you can reduce the risk of harm from prolonged stress and avoid unhealthy ways of coping with it. To build your stress management “tool kit,” first identify factors central to your stress response pattern. When stressed, do you lose sleep, get headaches or neck pain, eat poorly, eat more, not eat, become irritable, head for salty snacks, or have GI problems? See the long list of stress effects at www.stress.org. Once you pin down these effects, focus on how to fight back. Research the intervention strategies, and try enlisting the help of a professional counselor or your [EAP](#).

How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?

By now you have probably heard about emotional intelligence, or EI. EI is your aptitude for perceiving others' emotions accurately, responding to your emotions in a reasoned way, understanding what other people's emotions mean, and controlling how you will respond to emotions as you interact with others. People who do these things well are said to have “people skills.” Many social scientists believe EI is at least as important as, and perhaps more important than IQ as a predictor of success. Be careful about online tests to grade your EI. Many are not authority-based, and others seek to market products to web visitors. The most rigorous research-oriented EI organization is the Emotional Intelligence Research Consortium. The most prominent EI experts are members of it. Learn more at: www.eiconsortium.org.