



# FrontLine Employee

UT Employee Assistance Program • (800) 346-3549

## Stick to Your New Year's Resolution

**I**t's February—are you sticking to your New Year's resolution? Most people are slacking off. Don't let that happen to you. None of us works toward challenging goals consistently and without speed bumps. This is especially true when trying to break unhealthy habits or establish healthy ones. Note what happened to get you off track, and make adjustments. Then, avoid those circumstances and start again. It doesn't matter how many times you start over as long as you reach your goal. To energize yourself, look at your life's previous successes and keep going. Rule #1: Never let a setback become evidence that you can't do it. Look at your previous successes, and keep going.



## Exercise and Osteoarthritis

**R**esearchers recently concluded a study and found the minimum amount of exercise per week necessary to help persons suffering with osteoarthritis (OA) in their lower limbs. The minimum is 45 minutes per week. Because OA sufferers experience pain, some resist exercise and struggle with maintaining the 150 minutes of exercise per week broken into a minimum of 10-minute periods as recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. This discovery of a new minimum time period to help improve functioning gives OA sufferers a more reachable goal to sustain



Source: [www.northwestern.edu](http://www.northwestern.edu) [ search: "older adults arthritis" ]

## Tips for Better Performance Reviews

**Y**our performance review is your time to shine. To increase the odds of a positive review with fewer unpleasant surprises, meet with your supervisor to discuss specific goals you would like to accomplish over the next year. Write them down. Find time every three months to meet with your boss for 15 minutes to discuss performance, the goals you're working toward, and three key performance measures—quality of work, quantity of work, and initiative. Ask for feedback, and note concerns. At each meeting, discuss progress, especially any concerns discussed at the last meeting.



## Real Power in a Smile

**I**f you are on the front line of customer service, you've heard it a thousand times—"Smile!" What you may not know is the effect of smiling. Smiling is not just about looking inviting to customers. It is also a tool to help influence their attitude to produce a state of agreeability. Customer service is about pleasing the customers, of course, but engaging them in an atmosphere of positivity reduces your stress, minimizes risk of conflict, improves the bottom line, transforms your attitude, and allows you to go home at the end of the day more satisfied with your job. That's a lot of power from a smile.



## Valentine's Day Tip

# Improving Couple Communication

**C**omplaints about a partner being “too controlling” are common in couples counseling. Whether you are too controlling or too passive, each of these behaviors is usually learned in our



family of origin. Try this exercise for improving communication to see whether it does inspire better communication, improved assertiveness, less passivity, and more excitement in your relationship.

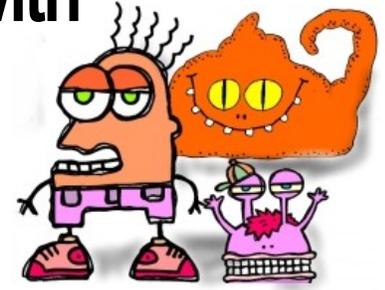
(1) Observe your communication for a week, and notice when you are passive and nonassertive or overly controlling and uncompromising. (2) Challenge yourself to step back when you feel a need to control, or if you notice your reluctance to be assertive or remain passive, act to communicate your needs earlier. Keep a personal diary of observations and insights. (3) Stop blaming. When you blame, you become the victim. If you are the victim, then your partner must do all the changing. This is a recipe for no change at all. (4) Identify “triggers.” These are things partners do that trigger an unpleasant emotional response. If you do any, try eliminating them. (5) At the end of the week, share your notes and triggers, and discuss observations and your reactions to controlling or passive behavior over the past week. (6) Be sure to discuss insights and new awareness, what’s working better, changes each of you would like from the other, and how to keep progress moving in the right direction. (7) Decide upon a special reward for participating in this communication challenge.

## Soft Skill to Know . . . Critical Thinking

**A**re you a critical thinker? Critical thinking is your ability to make decisions or judgments based on thoughtful steps taken to produce more answers that are accurate and reliable. Critical thinking isn’t just an expression suggesting one think through a decision. Critical thinking is also a learned skill and a large field of study that includes examining techniques for describing and analyzing a problem and knowing how to evaluate potential solutions, reason through the data, and use sound evidence to arrive at a conclusion. Knowing how to apply the principles of critical thinking can make you a more valuable employee because you will have the ability to solve problems and devise solutions for your employer that are more likely to succeed. To learn more, you can join the Foundation for Critical Thinking at [www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org). It’s free. You’ll discover plenty of inexpensive resources to build your critical thinking skills.



## Stress Management . . . Dealing with Difficult People



**“D**ealing with difficult people” is one of

the most queried topics in workplace wellness. There are 92 titles on Amazon.com that contain this phrase. Virtually all guidance focuses on changing yourself, not on changing others. Coping falls into three broad personal intervention categories: actions to take, attitude adjustments to make, and interactions that you can make with those who rub you the wrong way. These three prongs of coping include options ranging from accepting the quirkiness of a certain personality style to seeking psychotherapy to better understand your reaction to the behavior of another—behavior that to trusted peers may seem perfectly benign. To find the best intervention for any difficult behavior, first isolate the specific thing that prompts your unpleasant response—isolate the annoyance. Make this, not the personality, the target of coping. You will get a more efficient result that is faster, permanent, and less emotionally stressful.

## Having More Fun at Work

**F**un at work improves employee engagement, morale, and productivity, according to numerous research investigations. Fun is not games and jokes, as you might first imagine. According to researchers, fun at work means fun activities, coworker socializing, and manager support for fun. All three are interdependent. There is a direct link between an improved bottom line and fun at work. That link includes increased energy, motivation, and employee willingness to naturally go beyond their regular responsibilities to take on additional roles and make more contributions to their job and the work organization. How do you come up with “fun at work” ideas? Check out the latest resource on workplace fun, “The Funomenal Workplace” (2016) by Tony Brigmon.

