



FrontLine Employee

UT Employee Assistance Program • (800) 346-3549

Chronic Pain in the Workplace

Do you have a coworker who experiences chronic pain due to a health condition? The number of employees with chronic pain will increase dramatically as the workforce ages. Often invisible, some pain-producing conditions can be easy to dismiss or overlook in our daily interactions. To



support a coworker with a pain condition, do not mistake slower movement for lack of motivation or mental ability. Do not associate chronic pain or conditions with unreliability on projects or team endeavors. Those with challenging health conditions are often highly adaptive and efficient, often have great ability to support other workers with special needs, and are experienced at creating solutions for themselves. Consider these special abilities as you learn from and team with them.

Water Safety for Children

Ten people per day drown in the U.S., and 20 percent are children under the age of 14. More children accidentally drown in



lakes, rivers, and oceans than in pools, with younger teen boys being most at risk. Don't underestimate drowning risk by leaving children in the water unsupervised, even if they *can* swim. If older children babysit, be sure they are not distracted by playful peers or other activities. No money for swim lessons? Start with free videos easily found online that show how to teach your child to tread water. Source: Centers for Disease Control

July Is Social Wellness Month

Social wellness is about building relationships so we have a reliable and healthy support network. As communication becomes increasingly digital and detached, and families remain small, social isolation becomes a greater risk as we age. Social isolation can shorten life the way cigarette smoking, blood pressure, and obesity do. Do you know someone who is isolated and lacking social support? Are you on a path of increasing isolation yourself? Get proactive or learn how. Refresh your engagement skills and see a counselor if needed. Start with the book *Lasting Love: The 5 Secrets of Growing a Vital, Conscious Relationship*.



Mind-altering Drugs on the Internet

There is a world of illicit drug selling online. No, not necessarily the dark web, but on open Web sites that offer hallucinogens like Spice/K2, psilocybin mushrooms, "bath salts," and other dangerous substances. Many drugs sold are manufactured compounds with formulas that avoid strict illegal definitions, but they can be even more dangerous. Salvia divinorum, which is illegal in only 29 states, can create a temporary psychosis so disturbing that non-users must be nearby to protect the user from self-harm. If you are a parent, insist on the ability to access your child's electronic devices, know what apps are on phones, track credit card use, and inspect packages that arrive at your home.



Making Decisions Is a Life Skill

We all make decisions, but making decisions is a skill with identifiable steps. Try not to muddle through on decisions, especially big ones. Small decisions, like what color socks to wear, are easy. But big decisions with big consequences can provoke anxiety or dread. There is a way to make big decisions easier and be happier with their result. With your next big decision, rather than ask others what you should do, procrastinate, or make a decision in haste to overcome the angst, try the following:

- 1) Don't delay the process of working on the decision. Dedicate focused time with a deadline for action.
- 2) Make decisions with a drug-free, rested, well-fed, and rational state of mind.
- 3) When making decisions, facts rule. Emotions and your gut feeling come second.
- 4) If neutral experts are available as resources, use them. This includes professional counselors. They can help you stay objective.
- 5) Before weighing options toward a decision, ask, "Do I have all the information to consider a decision?"
- 6) Think, compare, and evaluate options.
- 7) All decisions are associated with some risk. Know these risks before choosing an option in the decision path.
- 8) Make the decision.
- 9) Evaluate the outcome, effects, and consequences after implementing your decision.
- 10) Respond or adjust if possible or needed.



Should You Join a Support Group?

There are support groups for hundreds of problems, needs, and health conditions. Support groups are popular with investors, students, parents, the mentally ill, divorced persons, CEOs, and even Hollywood comedy scriptwriters. The power of support groups comes from the mastermind effect. This phenomenon typically produces a greater and more satisfying outcome with more speed than any individual group member could achieve on their own. The mastermind effect results from two or more people focusing on a solution to a problem. The dynamic has been the subject of extensive books and examination since the 1920s. Could you benefit from participating in a support group? Don't dismiss it too readily. Well-structured support groups can speed your education, recovery, or adaptation to almost any challenge you have in common with others. An online search for "find a support group" may lead you to many options, but a professional counselor can also assist you.



What Happened to Your Great Idea?

Chances are good that you had an amazing idea in the past but didn't act on it. Where would you be now if you had? Awareness of the common reasons people don't act on great ideas may empower you the next time your inner genius strikes. New ideas often challenge the status quo and, when examined, feel as if they are outside your comfort zone. To act with determination, decide to overcome

- 1) fear of failure – what you imagine will happen if the idea flops;
- 2) fear of success – apprehension about what will be different if you succeed;
- 3) procrastination – this postpones or avoids the pain of #1 or #2;
- 4) depression and anxiety – these conditions undermine excitement (seek evaluation/treatment if you suspect that they are holding you back); and
- 5) inertia – the tendency to do nothing or have things remain unchanged is its own force for inaction.



When Is a Loved One Ready for Treatment?

It's typically family members who motivate loved ones to enter treatment for health conditions. Unlike physical health conditions, motivating someone to accept help for a *behavioral health condition* like an eating disorder, addiction, and gambling, among others, can be a tough sell. Denial interferes with rational arguments to get help. Threatening and badgering are rarely successful and can make problems worse. Avoiding these behaviors is so important that it is worth getting counseling to help stop it. Untreated behavioral health conditions produce crises that result in brief awareness of the need to get help. Fright, embarrassment, arrest, an acute medical incident, or even a close call may create these short windows of opportunity. At these moments, acceptance of help is most likely. Move quickly when crises appear and repeat that intervention step until you succeed.

