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The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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Employee Newsletter

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Gam-Anon: Help for the Family or Friend of a Compulsive Gambler



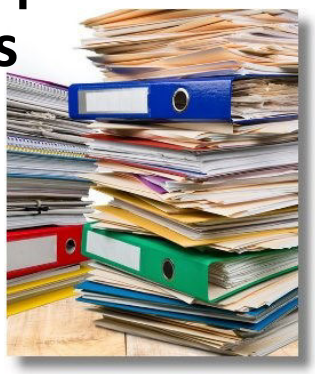
Those in relationships with compulsive gamblers are overwhelmed and feel powerless to help. Initial focus is naturally on tactics for managing the gambler's behavior, but the path to mental stability for loved ones is self-care. This means protecting oneself physically and emotionally, placing a priority on one's well-being, and setting boundaries. This is the purpose of "Gam-Anon," a 12-step self-help group modeled after Alanon (for loved ones of problem drinkers). When loved ones set boundaries, understand skills of healthy detachment, and prioritize their own well-being, then compulsive gamblers often quickly recognize the true impact of their behavior, become motivated to seek help, and ultimately accept it. Gam-Anon meetings are found nationwide. If you are affected by another person's gambling, talk to the EAP to discover more about this powerful source of help.

Credit Education Month:
Get a Grip on Impulse Spending



We often tell ourselves that spending is based on necessity, but emotions play a major role—which is why big ad agencies devote all their efforts to influencing them. Unplanned, emotionally driven purchases of things we don't really need, triggered by some desire but with little thought, are called impulse purchases. Intervene with impulse purchases by increasing your awareness with two personal interventions. 1) Wait 24 hours before buying to see if you still want it. 2) Set a meaningful goal for the money you'd otherwise spend. This creates a strong incentive to skip the impulse purchase in favor of something more valuable later.

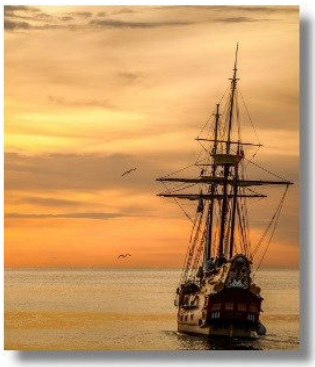
Stress Tips from the Field:
Declutter a Small Space to Manage Stress



Spend 15 minutes decluttering a small space within your living area as a stress management technique. Decluttering gives you a win, but there is more to it. Your brain sends a signal that there can be order and control at a time when you're not feeling much of it. This positive state of mind has ripple effects when you benefit from a feeling of accomplishment and well-being. A small release of dopamine occurs when you declutter, and cortisol, the stress hormone, lessens. This then elevates your mood. Some studies have demonstrated improved sleep quality, too. So, the next time life feels chaotic, take a few minutes to declutter and get the calm, control, and renewed energy back into your day.

Research: https://extension.usu.edu [search "declutter mental benefits"]

Fresh Perspectives:
'Your Job Finances Your Journey'



You need your job for income, but it's also a tool for achieving your life's dreams. Consider this perspective to manage stress: "Your job finances your journey." This mindset makes workplace challenges easier to handle and helps you find more purpose and motivation in daily tasks. Staying focused on what truly matters—your personal journey—also brings other benefits, like better work-life balance. By creating emotional distance between work and personal life, you can worry less and enjoy your time off more.

Information in *FrontLine Employee* is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health or legal professional. For further help, questions, or referral to community resources for specific problems or personal concerns, contact a qualified professional. Add "http://" to source links to follow. Link titles are always case sensitive.

Your Inner Voice Can Prevent Workplace Miscommunication



Pay attention to your inner voice when you sense a need to follow up, clarify, or check in with others concerning projects, events, and deadlines. You'll prevent misunderstandings, delays, and unnecessary stress. By acting on this intuitive sense, you will hone a skill that helps you avoid costly problems while increasing workplace productivity. This week, try identifying passing thoughts such as "Should I double-check that deadline?" or "I wonder if she heard me say how many people will be at the meeting." These kinds of thoughts are so fleeting that they are easily dismissed or forgotten in a busy day until the consequences of not acting on them appear. The skill is to recognize these cues—often felt as a gut instinct—to follow up, pause, assess, or take action to prevent a problem. The next part of the skill is to act promptly and dismiss the temptation to avoid acting because of the hassle it may entail. Ask experienced employees and managers and they will tell you this skill is honed from hard experience. Understand that your brain can process thousands of thoughts, but your intuition will capture the gaps and potential pitfalls, which are prompts for action. Avoid the last-minute panic and distress that come with "I should have..." or "I knew this would happen…" Doing so will surprise you with smoother workflows, fewer crises, improved morale, and happily avoided stress.

Building Resilience:
Mastering Composure Under Fire



Negative interactions at work sometimes happen, so why not develop the art and skill of preventing them from throwing you off your game and derailing your mood? You'll stay productive and maintain a better sense of well-being. Call it "staying composed under fire" or "workplace emotional resilience." It takes practice, but you should start by understanding these four principles: 1) The key to staying in control is realizing that your reaction is a choice. It may feel like pure reflex, but with practice you'll see how this can flip. 2) Be aware by identifying emotions like frustration, anger, or stress that appear in response to everyday interactions. 3) Practice pausing before reacting. This gives you a mini-time gap to respond more thoughtfully rather than impulsively. 4) And here's a reframing trick—when you witness negativity on the job, don't personalize it. Instead, see it as a reflection of the other person's stress or struggles and focus on solutions, not drama.

Do Highly Processed Foods Contribute to Depression



You may get drowsy after eating burgers, fries, or pizza at lunchtime. It's annoying, but eating ultraprocessed food often can also contribute to health problems like diabetes and possibly depression. A recent study discovered that among 32,000 participants, those who ate ultraprocessed food the most often, including artificial sweeteners, had the highest rates of depression. Do you frequently consume ultraprocessed foods? If you suffer from depression, is your diet a contributing factor or making it worse? If you're being treated for depression, is your diet undermining wellness? Talk to your doctor about a diet that supports your health or request an assessment from your employee assistance program to learn more. Below is a list of ultraprocessed foods and healthier food choices. You might be surprised to discover that some foods labeled as "healthy" are ultraprocessed and unhealthy.

Study: https://jamanetwork.com [search "ultraprocessed foods depression] List of ultraprocessed foods: http://knowablemagazine.org [search "ultraprocessed foods"]

Create an Action Plan for Your Well-being



Don't wait for healthcare problems to suddenly appear in your life but instead create a personal action plan to thwart illness and chronic disease. It's been said that 80-90% of health problems are associated with lifestyle and failure to prevent them, and research consistently supports this observation. Of course, genetics and the environment play a role in health, but lifestyle far outweighs these factors. Put these six pillars in your personal plan: 1) nutrition; 2) physical activity; 3) stress management and mental well-being; 4) sleep quality and recovery; 5) avoid toxic and environmental assaults (excessive screen time, too much negative news, noise, and chemicals/additives, etc.); 6) personal growth/creativity/self-improvement/joy.

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