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The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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Employee Newsletter

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Better Work-Life Balance with Micro-Moments



Surprisingly, better work-life balance is less about finding more hours in the day than it is about making better use of the minutes you already have. Many employees assume they need vacations, elaborate family activities, or large blocks of free time to feel connected to loved ones. Not true! Small daily interactions often have the greatest impact. A 10-minute conversation over coffee, a short walk with a spouse, a thoughtful text, or completing a chore together can relieve the guilt of not doing "enough." The key is being intentional — finding opportunities and making them happen. Look for naturally occurring moments when paths cross and you'll quickly spot connection opportunities. Consistency is key. You're going to discover how easy meaningful contact actually is rather than waiting for the perfect moment to make a big event happen.

Learn more: Search online for "micro-moments in relationships."

Social Wellness Month



July is Social Wellness Month, building awareness of the importance of quality relationships. Loneliness is a growing concern as damaging to well-being as are other chronic illnesses. It is a worldwide problem linked to increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, depression, anxiety, dementia, and earlier death. The fix is to increase social engagement and make it a regular part of your life. Do you have friends or relatives who remain isolated? Help them and yourself with this low-pressure approach: Text or call one person this week. Put one recurring social activity on your calendar. Spend time with other people, even if you do not talk much. Repeat weekly until connection becomes a habit. Make avoiding loneliness a life skill you continuously develop.

Learn more: cdc.gov/social-connectedness/risk-factors/index.html

Starting to Exercise When You're Out of Shape



If you haven't exercised in a long time — or ever — starting fresh can feel overwhelming. Motivation fades when the gap between where you are and where you want to be feels too large. Here's the hack: Make your first goal just 10 minutes of easy daily effort, which research shows is enough to gain health benefits. Get to the point where you're putting on exercise shoes with little mental effort. Fact: You're making health gains if you can get this far. Once momentum exists, reward yourself and set rewards for additional mini-milestones — now you have real leverage for change. See your physician for approval first. Hint: Research shows sharing your goal with others will nearly double your chances of success.

Learn more: learningstrategies.com/article-share-your-goals-to-boost-your-success

Bullied by the Customer?



Most employees know they should not be verbally abused by customers. However, during difficult encounters, the desire to satisfy the customer can overshadow awareness that their behavior has crossed into mistreatment. Professionalism does not require tolerating personal attacks. A harsh comment or insult can reverberate as you replay the encounter in your mind — a normal stress reaction, but one that keeps the interaction alive long after it ends. Does your work unit have a policy for managing abusive customers? Follow your organization's procedures and involve a supervisor when appropriate. Consider a team approach to developing such a policy, including personal wellness strategies for customer service workers and a role for the employee assistance program, which can help you avoid bringing the customer's behavior home with you.

Learn more: batestech.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Frontline-De-Escalation-Training-Master-Copy-PDF.pdf

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.

Three Sentences to Save a Workplace Relationship



Workplace conflict is often not about practical issues or performance but about how people treat each other. An example is a coworker who makes a negative remark that causes you to feel hurt or offended. You are stuck with that gnawing reaction and festering anger. Here's the hack for stopping resentment before it takes root. It's called the "three-part assertion." It's a decades-old technique taught in couples counseling, parent education, and other venues. The rule for its use is to wait a day to cool down and then follow these steps before two days is up. Meet with your coworker in private and share: 1) "What I observed/ heard." 2) "Here's how it landed." And 3) "What I'd like instead." Here's an example after an offensive comment. "In the meeting yesterday, when I didn't know the answer, you said with everyone present that you were surprised — that's what I observed. It made me feel embarrassed and a little undermined in front of the team — that's how it landed. Going forward, I'd appreciate it if feedback like that came to me privately — that's what I'd like." This three-part assertion formula works in many contexts at home and at work. It's specific. It lets you own your experience. It requires “I” statements that reduce defensiveness. It doesn’t take much time. You stay calm. And it has real impact to create change.

See Me about Your Performance



A classic cause of workplace anxiety: a note from the boss that says, "Talk to me about your performance." This heart-stopper needs a simple strategy — go prepared and turn it into an opportunity to demonstrate professionalism and self-awareness. Beforehand, take a breath and honestly review your recent work. Identify positives, negatives, and any issues that may have affected your performance. Take the attitude that this is a positive intelligence-gathering event — even if feedback is negative or somewhat unfair. At the meeting, take notes and listen more than you talk. Don't become defensive but instead ask for clarification of anything unclear. Be clear on what's expected going forward. Everything you hear is data — learn from it and use it to your advantage. Afterward, follow through immediately on changes without being reminded. It will be noticed. Check in regularly to show progress and get feedback. Don't wonder what your boss is thinking — ask. Still rattled? Process the experience with your EAP, not coworkers. The EAP offers confidentiality, stress management, objectivity, and a plan going forward.

How Self-Awareness Can Save Your Job



When job performance problems surface, the easy response is to look at external factors—a difficult boss, an unfair workload, coworkers who don't pull their weight. Those factors are often real. But if you consistently struggle, receive critical feedback, or find yourself on a performance improvement plan, you may share a common blind spot: trouble acknowledging your own role in the problem. Attitude, tone, resistance to direction, chronic tardiness, or subtle interpersonal friction can quietly undermine your career while you remain unaware. Self-awareness is not a personality trait; it is a skill to develop. If feedback from more than one supervisor shares a common theme, it's time to look at your own behavior. You can do this. Consider asking a trusted colleague for candid input. Journaling about workplace frustrations is powerful. It will produce insight and point out behaviors, or ways of interacting with others that you can target for healthy change. Turn to your EAP for help. Together, you'll discover how to turn self-awareness into your greatest advantage.

Stress Tips from the Field:

When Every Priority Is a Priority



Competing demands become stressful when everything feels equally urgent. When several people want something at once, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by juggling every request simultaneously. The results are frustration, distraction, and a growing sense of falling behind. A better approach is to stop managing all demands at once. Instead, identify the next most important task and focus on that alone. Remaining tasks aren't ignored — they're queued for later. This simple shift reduces mental clutter and restores a sense of control. You may not be able to reduce your workload, but you can reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed by it. When priorities compete, remember that not everything can be first. Clarity helps you regain focus, make better decisions, and move forward one task at a time.