

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Suicide Prevention: Three Myths You Should Know

The death of comic-actor Robin Williams was a call for education about suicide. Approximately 100 people commit suicide per day in the United States. Dispelling myths is job No. 1. Myth 1: If you ask someone if they are having suicidal thoughts, you might prompt them to commit suicide. Fact: Asking about suicidal thoughts is the first step toward help. Myth 2: Life is precious, so being suicidal means you're psychotic or out of touch with reality. Fact: Suicidal persons are in a state of "being overwhelmed" or in pain that is caused by depression, grief, despair, trauma, or other life circumstances. Typically, suicidal persons can state the reasons they feel suicidal. Myth 3: Persons who talk about committing suicide are trying to manipulate others. Fact: Suicidal persons want the pain to stop, and most who do commit suicide said or did something prior to doing so that indicated their need for help.



Would You Make a Good Boss?

Don't shy away from becoming a supervisor because you don't possess every required skill. Are you good at explaining things to new coworkers or those learning something new? Do you have good ideas and a way of expressing them in a convincing manner? Do you stay unruffled by politics and frustrations of a bureaucracy? Are you motivated to learn new skills that give you the business acumen necessary to be effective in a managerial role (technology, finance, etc.)? If you believe in your organization's purpose and don't fear accountability, and you naturally engage with others and communicate well, then seize your next opportunity to become a supervisor!



Trust in the Workplace: You Have One Second

You don't have three seconds to make a good first impression. You only have one! A study published recently in the Journal of Neuroscience found that the human brain decides whether a person is trustworthy or not almost instantly. To thwart this unfair biological response and be considered trustworthy in the world of work, appear confident, relaxed, and knowledgeable; use a firm handshake; greet others with a smile; and make eye contact. Listen slightly more than you speak, and always practice the most important piece of advice to instill trustworthiness: Be genuine—be yourself.

Assertiveness: Learn to Say "Yes"

Learning to say "no" is a common assertiveness skill, but also learning to say "yes" and asserting yourself is key to taking advantage of opportunities and experiences you want in your life. Assertiveness is about being aware of your needs and aligning your thinking to match them. For example, is work-family balance an important value to you but you're always too busy to achieve it? If yes, use assertiveness to grab opportunities for fitting in a family picnic, an evening family card game, or a day together with your family at a farmer's market. It's easy to avoid the stress of juggling priorities by simply not doing things like this, but assertiveness can help you behave more opportunistically so things you truly value don't pass you by, leaving you to regret later what you didn't do.

Plan a Surprise



We all love pleasant surprises. Research shows they play a strong role in our assessment of what makes life happy and meaningful. It turns out that pleasant surprises give life that extra “zing,” which makes it satisfying. The catch—it’s

not so easy to surprise yourself, but it’s easy to surprise others. Remembering this life dynamic can lead to improved relationships. It’s that simple. Recall the 1980s “random acts of kindness” craze and the more recent “pay it forward” fad—sometimes experienced at a drive-in window when you are surprised to learn the customer ahead of you paid for your coffee. Whether it’s buying flowers or surprising a customer with a token gift, research now points to the power of a pleasant surprise to add “zing” to everyday life. Use it!

Heads Up! 2014 Injury & Fatality Statistics

The National Safety Council recently released Injury Facts 2014, a report that details safety statistics and trends across the U.S. Among the more surprising statistics: Poisonings, including those from unintentional opioid prescription painkiller overdoses, were the leading cause of death in 18 states and Washington, D.C. The increase in fatalities corresponds with the increase in deaths from drug poisonings nationwide, including those involving prescription painkillers. Cell phone use is now estimated to be involved in 26% of all motor vehicle crashes—up from 2013. An estimated 5% of crashes involve texting, while 21% involve drivers talking on handheld or hands-free cell phones. In 2012, the number of teen motor vehicle occupant deaths decreased, but motor vehicle crashes remain the number one cause of death for teens. Motor vehicle deaths in 2012 were at their lowest level during the month of February and at their highest in July. The three-day period around New Year’s Day sees the highest percentage of alcohol-impaired driving deaths. With baby boomers growing older, the number of elder adult deaths from falls has risen 112% in 15 years. Approximately 15 unintentional deaths occur every hour throughout the year in the U.S. Avoid becoming a statistic by following workplace safety rules and thinking safety at home, at work, and at play.



Could Sunlight be the Secret?

More sunlight in your daily routine may improve your mood, cause you to be more engaging at work, produce clearer thinking, and make you more positive and productive. Cornell University researchers found that acute-care nurses exposed to more sunlight at work were happier, laughed more, had lower blood pressure, and were more effective in caring for patients than those who were not exposed to as much sunlight. For people with high-stress jobs, communication and laughter are important coping mechanisms and attribute to better work performance. Seek the sun. Researchers believe the benefits of sunlight will be advantageous to employees in any job setting.

Stopping Sexual Assault on Campus

One out of every five college students will be a victim of sexual assault—a serious crime. Research shows that 75% of these victims are incapacitated at the time of the crime by alcohol and/or drug use, and a victim is eight times more likely to be incapacitated by alcohol than by a “predatory drug” such as Rohypnol slipped into a drink. The risk of assault is lowest during the freshman year and rises each subsequent year. A 1972 federal law requires nearly all colleges receiving federal tax dollars to report, investigate, and resolve sexual assault incidents vigorously. Victims have rights to be protected while any investigation ensues. Best prevention tips: Monitor your behavior, maintain situational awareness, and be a friend willing to interrupt a risky situation. A few words may be all it takes. See helpful resources at the new federal website www.notalone.gov, which puts a renewed focus on campus sexual assault prevention and help for victims.