

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Holiday Stress-Relief Tips Worth Trying

If your family holiday get-togethers are often stressful with personality clashes, try these ideas to help you enjoy the season more and look forward to getting together next year. 1) Begin with the right mind-set—decide that you will detach from slights and snubs, and refuse to allow your “buttons to be pushed.” Mentally rehearse new responses to predictable interactions. Commit to a different response so you will remain cool. If Aunt Bernice criticizes your choice of a serving spoon for the cranberry sauce, instead of reacting with the usual anger reflex, thank her for the tip. 2) Let go of leftover resentments from last year’s dustup by beginning with a clean slate. 3) Visitors in your home can be tiresome no matter how much you love them. Consider taking a break (“me time”). Plan these regularly. 4) If you have a vision of a perfect holiday, use this vision as a guideline, not a litmus test for a successful get-together. Decide it is okay to settle for having a positive and memorable time together, but avoid measuring your success by degrees of perfection. 5) Consider taking 2016 election politics off the table.



Gratitude: A Predictor of Marital Stability and Satisfaction

A key ingredient of improving couples’ marriages might just be gratitude, according to new University of Georgia research. “We found that feeling appreciated and believing that your spouse values you directly influences how you feel about your marriage, how committed you are to it, and your belief that it will last,” said study researchers. The study asked 468 married individuals questions about their financial well-being, communication, and expressions of spousal gratitude. The results indicated that spousal expression of gratitude was the most consistent significant predictor of marital happiness.

Have You Read Your Company’s Employee Handbook?

Ask any HR or top management representative, and you’ll discover one of their key frustrations is employees who do not read the organization’s employee handbook. Do so and you will 1) discover benefits and opportunities that may have been only briefly mentioned or that you forgot; 2) avoid embarrassment from asking questions clearly spelled out in rules, policies, etc.; 3) learn about the work culture so you can align with it; 4) learn about the chain of command so you use it properly; 5) understand management’s values so you speak in their language; 6) learn about organizational priorities so you hone political instincts; 7) feel more engaged knowing the full scope of the organization’s purpose; and 8) as a bonus, impress management because you actually read it!



Frontline Employee

Be Healthier and Love Your Job More

Focusing on personal well-being can help you feel more engaged at work. Researchers associated with the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) demonstrated improved job satisfaction and that workers became better engaged (fewer days absent and less coming to work sick and/or feeling miserable) if they spent time after hours on improving wellness. Anything that helps you achieve a more positive sense of yourself can help, including learning something new, adding goals to your life, taking stock of your accomplishments and achievements, or making other personal changes to get out of a rut. If low energy is an issue, seek a professional screening for depression. It takes minutes. Eighty percent of people who experience depression are not being treated—and 1 out of 10 people is affected. Could that one person be you?

Criticize Yourself Constructively

There's nothing wrong with self-criticism. After all, you can always improve. But don't confuse self-criticism with self-punishment. Engage in self-criticism that elevates your skills and abilities with a forward-looking approach. Start by reviewing the successful elements of your recent project. Next, divide your assessment into meaningful parameters that you will critique. If your job was to prepare an annual report on widgets for your employer, consider quality, timeliness, use of resources, format appearance, or even self-imposed stress, if you suffer from procrastination, etc. You can divide any project into similar parameters. Rate each one on a scale of 1 to 7 to judge degree of accomplishment. Identify areas for improvement, and review your critique just before your next assignment. Now, attempt to beat your score as you begin working on the new project.

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Don't Feel Fooled by FOMO

If all those happy faces and exciting photos on Facebook are causing you to think “Is everyone but me having fun?” you might be a victim of a phenomenon called “Fear of Missing Out” or “FOMO.” FOMO is characterized as a strong sense of apprehension that others are having more fun and more exciting experiences than you. You're missing out! FOMO is especially associated with millennial adults who are more vulnerable to high expectations made worse by their attachments to social and instant communication with peers. FOMO is peer-driven and can place you at risk for anxiety or cause you to feel extreme dissatisfaction with otherwise worthwhile endeavors to which you have committed—a college, trade, job, business venture—anything that requires self-discipline and the postponement of gratification essential for success. Fear of missing out is nothing new, but a fast-paced and high-tech society accompanied by a modern culture where instant gratification is also marketed to those most vulnerable to this syndrome can make FOMO more acute.

Are You Social Security Savvy?

The Social Security Administration has been keeping track of your eligible wages to determine retirement earnings ever since your first job. If you are a young worker, you may not know that you can log in to its web site and use calculators to determine your future payments, even if you won't retire for 50 years. Other calculators on the site address other topics. Think about retirement planning now. There is much to learn about securing your future. Did you know delaying the date that you draw on Social Security until age 70 may increase your retirement by 8 percent per year?