

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Mental Health and Media News Stories

Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, hearing voices - these psychiatric terms have become part of everyday news. Do you know what they mean? A mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. Having a better understanding of these conditions can reduce fear, help you play a role in reducing stigma, and allow you to act and intervene more quickly to help a friend or loved one exhibiting sudden or acute symptoms. Mental disorders are common worldwide, but they're treatable and manageable conditions. An estimated 26.2% of Americans ages 18 and older—about one in four adults—suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year, and over a lifetime, 50% will experience a mental health diagnosis. The National Institute of Mental Health can help you learn more. Visit <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>.



Aggressive Driver? Take a Quiz

More than 50% of traffic deaths result from aggressive driving according to the American Automobile Association. "Road rage" incidents are the most shocking views of aggressive driving, but racing, tailgating, failing to observe signs and regulations, and seeking confrontations with other drivers all qualify as potentially aggressive behaviors. Speeding is one of the most prevalent aggressive behaviors and is a factor in one-third of all fatal crashes. Are you an at-risk, aggressive driver? Ask yourself if, under certain circumstances, such as being cut off, tailgated, or bested on the road by a speeding driver, you feel angry - especially when you allow another driver to get his or her way after cutting you off. Take the "[Aggressive Driving Quiz](#)" and learn more information about being a safer driver by visiting [AAA-Aggressive Driving](#).



Talk to Your Supervisor

Neglecting to raise concerns about the supervisor-supervisee relationship is a common complaint of managers. Chances are your boss sincerely wants to know what's on your mind if it relates to your productivity. Issues and problems employees typically hold back sharing—even at a private meeting—include: 1) lack of clarity in instructions provided by the supervisor regarding assignments; 2) perceptions of favoritism or non-equitable distribution of work; 3) absence of feedback and constructive criticism and little praise; 4) unsure about duties and essential functions of a position; 5) micromanagement; 6) need for an introduction to key players and key management officials with whom the employee must interact; and, 7) checking email or not giving full attention to an employee in a private meeting. Hint: When bringing a complaint to your supervisor, always connect the concern to its impact on customers, quality of work, productivity, teamwork, and finances. It's a good practice refrain from speaking negatively about your supervisor to other co-workers.



Frontline Employee

Say Good Night to Technology

Could using Facebook, a smartphone, or other bright electronic device just before bedtime explain your poor sleep? Bright light is known to disturb sleep, so try keeping your last hour before sleep “technology free” to see if you notice a difference. The research is still unclear, but 95% of adults admit to using technology devices in the hour prior to going to bed. The National Sleep Foundation says 50-70 million Americans complain of not sleeping well in any given week. Is there a connection? While you sleep, your immune system rejuvenates, fights stress, and even becomes a cancer-fighting machine. Don't mess with it. Many online articles link lack of sleep to increased risk for cancer. So, seek restful and restorative sleep.



Do Coworkers Think You're Friendly?

Being friendly facilitates relationships and productivity, reduces stress, and creates a more reciprocal and happier workplace.

Build a friendly reputation with these civility tips: 1) When you approach or speak with coworkers, always insert a greeting or salutation before making a request of them; 2) Show enthusiasm to your coworkers so they know you're pleased to interact with them; 3) Remain conscious of your smile and display it, even under stress; 4) When unsure, reach out to greet others first; and 5) Make it a practice to remember something unique about the interests or hobbies of a person you meet. As a powerful relationship development technique, it's unmatched.



Take Charge When Feeling Down

Fight the blues with behaviors that lift you up. It's a strategy proven to help a person overcome feelings of sadness when those feelings aren't caused by clinical depression, which could require additional assistance. The earlier you act to behaviorally change your mood, the more successful you'll be. Anniversaries, bad weather, disappointments, media news, boredom, or even a movie can trigger sadness. Take charge of your thoughts and decide “not to go there.” Then take action. To influence a positive mood, do something you like: dress differently, seek humor, alter the day's schedule, get sunshine, take a brisk walk, or go fishing. What works for you?



Should You See a Professional Counselor?

Knowing when to see a professional counselor can help you stop a problem from growing into a crisis. If you're hesitant, remember that professional counselors help by providing objective feedback and work with you to achieve resolution at your own pace. Counseling might be a good idea if you: 1) struggle with unrelenting feelings of sadness; 2) suddenly experienced personal loss; 3) can't resolve sleep difficulties; 4) feel hopeless; 5) experience worry that interferes with daily functioning; 6) have relationship, parenting or other issues. If you're uncertain, a consultation can be helpful. There may be other ways to resolve your issue, but speaking with an experienced professional is often the quickest way to finding the solution.

Don't See Teen Drug Abuse as “Normal”

Although your teen may tell you “everybody's doing it,” don't view teens or adults smoking pot (marijuana) as “normal” or a “rite of passage.” When teens are using pot while suffering from depression, there are associated increased suicidal thoughts, plans, or attempts ([2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings](#)). You haven't lost your legitimate authority as a parent if you used pot in the past. What you as a parent believe is right, right now, is what matters. The alternative is accepting risk and hoping for the best. According to the Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), 20% of parents don't believe they have any influence over their teen's decision about drug use. Their study shows teens think just the opposite. What a parent says does matter. Collect facts and use them to beef up your parenting resolve to prevent drug abuse. More information: [SAMHSA](#)