

BALANCE

Volume 7, Issue 2

Speak Up for Support

Don't struggle too long with problems you face on the job that are caused by things out of your control. If you are responsible for tasks that are made difficult or impossible by a lack of readily available resources, failure to follow through by others, broken equipment or insufficient training, speak up now. Don't find yourself in the awkward position, on the day of your performance review, asking for resources or explaining performance shortcomings. You may be the right fit for your job, but you also need the right tools. Many employees have to do more with less, but if you are unsure about your ability to perform a job or find it challenging to be assertive, you're less likely to speak up and discover if resources are available to you. Don't let these issues stand in your way. By far, most managers want their employees to be successful, but you must let them know your needs and what's keeping you from becoming a superstar.

Teen Abuse of Coricidin

LSD and PCP are illegal, but Vicks 44 and Coricidin-HPB—which can cause hallucinations, dizziness, loss of motor control and possibly death when abused—are not. The active ingredient in these two medications is dextromethorphan or DXM, a common cough suppressant frequently abused by drug-using teenagers. The medications attract young drug users because they are not illegal but can be abused to get high. Preventing abuse can be difficult. A key prevention strategy is making sure you know where your teenager is, and if he or she is visiting a friend's house, knowing that a parent is there.

Bouncing Back with Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from misfortune or change, and since 9/11, it's a topic that has gained increased attention from sociologists. It's a timely topic because we face an age of super stress, with many personal threats such as the effects of war, financial insecurity and family/social breakdown. Not everyone needs the same level of support when a crisis happens. And some, it appears, don't need much at all. They rebound like a foam pillow and just "keep on truckin'." These individuals are demonstrating *resilience*. What creates resilience? And how can others get it? Here is what resilient people do and what you can do to bounce back faster from the toughest experiences life has to offer:

- 1) Foster social support and close "give and take" relationships.
- 2) Take care of your health, have a daily routine and ensure structure and purpose in your life.
- 3) Detach from harmful influences, people or events that interfere with or distract you from recovery after a crisis.
- 4) Have a forward-looking view of your life and lock onto personal goals that you hold dear.
- 5) Have a plan to "fall back on" or at least a solid idea of what you'll do if the worst happens.
- 6) Cultivate a positive view of yourself and your life while maintaining a hopeful view of what the future will bring.



Using Your EAP

Question: My attendance at work has been really awful lately because of my struggle with chronic depression. I am worried about being fired. Should I tell my employer about my depression?

Answer: You should speak with your doctor and your EAP professional about your circumstances so they can advise you about how to proceed. Sign a release so that these two professionals can talk with each other. Stigmas associated with mental illness are changing, and today most employers earn high marks for compassion. How much and to whom you disclose information about your health is something you should discuss with a trusted, supportive professional.

Question: My supervisor referred me to the EAP, and she asked that I sign a release. Signing a release is voluntary, right?

Answer: Signing a release, like participation in an EAP, is voluntary. EAPs operate under a doctrine, universal to the helping professions, called “client self-determination.” That’s a technical way of saying, “It’s your life, you decide.” A signed release only provides for specific information to be shared with specific people—usually information that you have visited the EAP or have agreed to some recommendation (but not specifically what that recommendation is). Releases aid communication, and they are first and foremost beneficial to employees. While working on your improved performance, would you like your supervisor to know that you accepted his or her referral to the EAP? A signed release lets that happen.

Question: My brother lost his job two months ago and moved in with us at our invitation. Everything is going well, but he is drinking more often and much more than he once did. He recognizes this change and is willing to get help. Can my EAP help him?

Answer: When issues arise with a family member, from depression to substance abuse, your EAP can help. The EAP is a safe way to vent your anxiety and get constructive ideas for what to do next. It can guide you and your family member to community resources that can provide information, treatment and support. Remember: It’s fine to visit the EAP for personal issues that have nothing to do with work.

Avoid the Dark Side of Moonlighting

Financial stress means that instead of heading home after hours, many employees go to a part-time job. If you moonlight, stay on your employer’s good side by avoiding these no-no’s:

- 1) Loss of productivity. If you are tired from working too much, then tardiness, lack of enthusiasm and absenteeism are risk issues for you.
- 2) Increased risk of injury. If you are tired, your risk of injury goes up, and so does the risk of injuring others.
- 3) Conflict of interest. Sharing customer lists, borrowing tools, taking equipment and supplies—these are all common moonlighting offenses that anger employers.
- 4) And from the “never try this” list: filing a worker’s compensation claim against your employer for an injury sustained off the job, during your part-time employment. If you are facing financial stress, contact your EAP.

One Drink May Be One Too Many

Moderate or “social” drinkers insist that they can consume a cocktail and drive safely—that they know “when to say when.” But new research indicates that they may be wrong. Even with blood-alcohol levels well below the legal limit—from just one strong drink—you can still fail to see threats in your field of vision when driving. A single alcoholic beverage can divert your attention and dull your alertness. After finishing a drink and driving, you may concentrate so intently on your speed that you neglect to notice road hazards and pedestrians. It’s one more reason to pass up any alcohol before you get behind the wheel.

Source: Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology, June 2006

Squeeze the Most Out of Every Gym Workout

After obtaining your doctor's approval for an exercise program, avoid wasting time, effort and money with a few tips. Avoid following the same routine every time. Variety in both aerobics and weight training provides your body with a more dynamic, challenging test. Rotate which machines you use for aerobic exercise, and choose different circuits for muscle toning and strength building. Ask a gym employee for suggestions on how to vary your workout; keep incorporating new equipment and approaches all the time. Better yet, change your daily intensity. Be careful not to push yourself to the limit. You may feel sweaty, exhausted, and satisfied, however, your body appreciates a mix of longer, less taxing workouts—where you don't necessarily burn a lot of calories—along with shorter, more demanding ones. By going all-out only some of the time while prolonging low-level blood flow to exercise muscles at other times, you will enhance both your cardiovascular health and your stamina. If your goal is strictly weight reduction, then choose the type of aerobic equipment that you enjoy the most and stick with it—at least at first. Once you bond with that machine, branch out and try others. Note the difference between pushing to a safe limit and going overboard, where you experience joint or muscle pain. If anything hurts, stop and seek expert advice. Learn more at <http://bodybuilding.about.com>.

Office Politics Here to Stay

Choose better strategies for coping with office politics.

- 1) Practice compartmentalization—be totally professional at work and rely less on work for your most important social needs. This will help you detach and stay out of the political fray.
- 2) Maintain your employer's perspective—put your employer's needs first.
- 3) Think win-win. It will cure almost any bad habit associated with negativity, criticism, defensiveness, provocation or the inability to be assertive with coworkers.

Negotiate Like A Champ

Being assertive, managing conflict, improving your marriage or dividing up chores around your home can all benefit from understanding a few things about how to negotiate. When you want to reach an agreement or develop a plan with someone, try these negotiating skills:

- First, decide that you won't demand anything.
- Next, decide on your bottom line. For example, what won't you give up? Is a vacation to the ocean instead of the mountains your bottom line, or is it simply visiting the ocean sometime this summer?
- Next, completely understand the needs and wants of the other person with whom you are negotiating. What is their bottom line?
- Mutually understand each other's bottom line. They may not really conflict at all.
- Make an agreement that the bottom lines, not the paths leading to them, are the important issues between you.

Agree to avoid anger and emotionalism to prevent your negotiation from falling apart. If you reach a stalemate, take a break and start over.

Early Smoking: Trigger for Trouble

There is nothing new about teen smoking and its known role in facilitating the use of alcohol or other drugs. But what is new is that teen smoking may be more than a "gateway drug." It may actually groom the brain for susceptibility to alcoholism and other drug addictions later on. That's the conclusion of a recent study showing that teens who begin smoking before age 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related disorders by the ages of 18 to 21—compared to their teenage peers who also drink, but who started smoking only a couple years later.

Source: Dec 2006, Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research



Big Shoes to Fill

Being hired to replace a high achiever who left for greener pastures is always a challenge because some coworkers inevitably struggle with letting go and accepting the new coworker. You can't take away their feelings of loss, but if you recognize that super performers are often liked as much for their ability to establish meaningful relationships as they are for their skills, you'll be more easily accepted by your coworkers, while helping them cope at the same time. Don't react with anger or impatience to those who too frequently mention your predecessor. Instead, recognize that these references by your coworkers are steps toward letting go. Ask about your predecessor's special abilities and talents, and qualities. There is power in this approach because coworkers will quickly recognize that you want to achieve the same level of success as—but not replace—your predecessor. It will give them hope that they will have someone of whom they can once again feel proud. Your coworkers want you to know how good they had it with your predecessor, and you need to let them share this with you. With this approach, you will discover that there is much to learn that will add meaning to your job, and it won't mean giving up plans for creating a legacy of your own. In fact, it might make your success happen sooner.

Smart Steps to Prevent Cancer

Because almost half of all cancer deaths are preventable, choosing low-risk behavior promotes good health. Aside from the obvious culprit—smoking—your nutrition and exercise habits also play a key role. By maintaining a proper weight (staying within your recommended body mass index or BMI), you guard against colon, breast and prostate cancer. See www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi to compute your BMI. Also, ask your doctor to set a timetable for scheduling cancer-related screening tests. Examples: A colonoscopy can catch colorectal cancer in its early states, and a qualified doctor can conduct a skin exam—and remove potentially cancerous moles—to protect against possible melanoma. You should also use sun block (even on overcast days) and inspect your own skin monthly for new moles, freckles or blemishes that change in size, shape or color.

To speak with an EAP professional,
please call: **800.765.0770**

