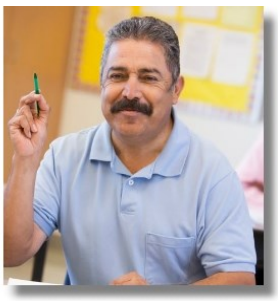
PATHWAYS
January 2022

Ghosting at Work (Abandoning Communication)

You may have heard of "ghosting" by now. It means someone has quit communicating with you entirely without apparent cause or reason. You might phone, email, or text, but no response is received—you've been ghosted. Ghosting has been associated with the dating app scene, but this behavior has noticeably crept into the workplace. Essentially, ghosting is abandoning communication to avoid conflict, responsibility, or accountability. What fuels ghosting is using denial to cope with the anxiety or awareness that you should be doing something else to face the conflict constructively. Poor workplace communication is universally the #1 workplace complaint, thus, ghosting is the ultimate poor communication maneuver. Avoid ghosting by recognizing it as a coping strategy with serious consequences for your reputation. There's no better way than ghosting someone to be remembered for the wrong reasons.

Avoid "Procrastination with Awareness"



Have you started on your 2022 goal(s)? Or are you procrastinating with the best of intentions? Procrastination has many cousins. They all lead to having your motivation fizzle out. Waiting for the right time to start, still getting prepared, waiting until after the next holiday, or trying to get everything in order and just right—this procrastination "with awareness" requires its own intervention. If you are waiting for just the "right moment," it's arrived! Take an action step today.

Is Your Team Too "Teamy"?

Workplace teams periodically struggle with problems that interfere with their performance. Lack of leadership, unresolved conflicts, and of course, communication struggles are part of team growth. But what about *lack* of disagreement, no debate over ideas, or no constructive arguing that can lead to better solutions? Inability to challenge each other is referred to as "groupthink." The term reflects on Orson Wells' book, "1984." Groupthink makes team harmony more important than productive work and sees cooperation as the ultimate value. Solutions then take a back seat. To be a solution-producing group, value the creativity, uniqueness, and independent thinking of your group members.

Seek Support Early in a Crisis

All of us will experience crises in our lives from time to time. A crisis is a serious problem beyond our ability to resolve them by using everyday coping skills and resources. It overwhelms us. The irresolvable nature means we must apply new resources or skills to intervene and return to normalcy. This is crisis intervention. There is usually an opportunity for positive change and personal growth in resolving a crisis. However, help should not be delayed, because the crisis may resolve itself out of your control in an unfavorable way. Use the employee assistance program to explore options or to obtain the help needed to help manage a crisis. If you do it without delay, you will more likely arrive at the most desirable outcome.

Facing an Anniversary of a Traumatic Event

Do you experience anxiety, depression, or sadness during the anniversary of a personal loss or traumatic event? This is an "anniversary effect" around the date or season when a loved one passed, an assault occurred, or an accident happened. Local or national tragedies may also prompt anniversary effects. As an employee, you may find it challenging to work or you may lack the motivation to complete your assignments during such a time. If you experience a difficult time when a painful anniversary comes around, ease your emotional distress with an action plan: 1) Don't deny or ignore the upcoming date of the event in an attempt to suppress a reaction to it. 2) Identify relationships that feel supportive, and plan to socialize with these people during this time. 3) Consider engaging in a symbolic gesture of healing—for example, planting a tree or adding a special plant to a garden if the loss is a significant personal loss, like that of a loved one. 4) Avoid news stories during the anniversary period that may prompt unnecessary flashbacks or feelings of reliving the event or incident. 5) Take care of yourself. Make healthful decisions, and do some self-nurturing during the period of the anniversary to help you ensure a proper diet, sleep and rest, stress management, and leisure time. 6) Visit your EAP for guidance on implementing any of these tips, self-care strategies, and other support you might need.

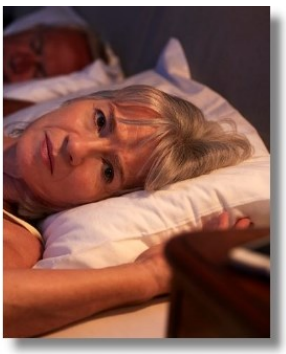
Getting Help for Post-Holiday Financial Stress

You knew the bills from holiday spending would eventually arrive, and now they are here. One out of five families goes into debt during the holidays, Has debt grown over the years with your inability to get a handle on it? Consider using a consumer credit counseling agency for help. Wait! Suspend all preconceived notions about consumer credit counseling agencies. They won't scold you, fuss, or tell you only things you already know. They have tips, resources, knowledge, relationships with creditors, credibility to help you communicate with debtors, counseling, education, and budgeting tools that will excite you about the future again and give you the relief you've only dreamed about until now. Ask your EAP about local resources, or visit the nearest credit counseling agency location online.

Maintaining Morale in the Hybrid Workplace

"Hybrid workplaces"—those with on-site and remote workers—have grown dramatically in the COVID-19 era. They can be a win-win for employees and employers, but be mindful and avoid "remote worker bias." This is the tendency to view remote coworkers as inherently less worthy. This form of workplace classism based on perceived level of contribution or importance can lead to morale problems and decreased productivity if unhealthy competition for resources, benefits, awards, and information becomes part of a "we versus them" culture. To prevent slipping into remote worker bias, 1) avoid participating in biased "water cooler" gossip about remote coworker performance, 2) share information and opportunities with remote workers to elevate and value an inclusive workforce, and 3) meet with off-site workers to you see the "real person" frequently or whenever possible. This reality check will help keep a wall from growing between you and your coworkers.

When Worry Wakes You Up



Anxiety and stress are different things, but people often are confused about their meanings. Both can contribute to wakefulness at night, night sweats, and nervousness as well as sleepiness during the day. Both can also affect the part of the brain responsible for our fight-flight or freeze response. While examples of stress might be driving to work in the rain, arriving late for a presentation, and forgetting a thumb drive you need for the presentation, anxiety is a true mental health disorder that fuels nervousness, worry, and apprehension. Are you one of the 40 million people who suffer from anxiety, or is stress the culprit? Talk to a medical, mental health, or employee assistance professional to discover the right intervention and get relief.

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