Concern Connection
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Temptation Bundling: Exercise You Can't Refuse



Exercise—for many it feels like another chore requiring loads of discipline that is bound to fade. Try "temptation bundling": pairing exercise with something you really look forward to and can't wait to repeat. An example might be saving your favorite audiobook or podcast for a daily walk, then choosing a route that ends at your favorite coffee shop. You get fresh air, entertainment, and a treat to look forward to.

The walk takes you somewhere you want to be. Exercise comes with it but does not overwhelm you. Miss a day? Resume at the next opportunity. Notice what makes you eager to repeat the experience and build around it. Challenge: How many desirable activities can you combine into one event that flips the script and motivates you to exercise? Learn more: faculty.wharton.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/TemptationBundling.pdf

Holiday Guest Stress Tips You Missed

"Never again!" is a common outcry after holiday guests leave. A little planning can help you enjoy their company instead of counting the hours until they leave. Try these tips: 1) Set a hosting budget for food, outings, and extras, including impulse purchases. Plan meals ahead, make one night a potluck, and let a relative treat everyone to dinner. 2) Give guests specific jobs from day one. Most want to help but need direction. Instead of waiting for offers, ask, "Can you handle Saturday's salad?" 3) Plan recovery time. Leave yourself an easy day before returning to work and avoid important commitments the morning guests leave.



Feeling anxious about visiting relatives or difficult family interactions? Contact your Employee Assistance Program for help planning boundaries, managing expectations, and responding to situations you anticipate.

Avoid Caregiver Denial

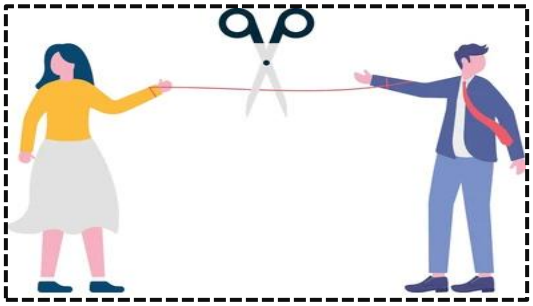


Family caregivers play an important role, but responsibilities typically grow more strenuous. Self-awareness is key to wellness so you have time for your health, rest, and relationships. Denial is common among caregivers in the beginning.

Do you drive a parent to appointments? Sort pills for another? Call nightly to check on things? If so, you're a caregiver. Naming the role helps you plan for expanding responsibilities before you're missing work, losing sleep, or feeling overwhelmed. Telling yourself you're "just helping out" or can handle everything just fine may delay asking for support. Exhaustion, stress, and resentment can follow. So, recognize the role early so you plan on sharing responsibilities and protecting your well-being. Contact your Employee Assistance Program for guidance, and explore education, tips, and others' shared experiences at www.caregiveraction.org/.

Managing Productivity After a Workplace Breakup

Workplace romances happen, and so do breakups. If working with a former partner becomes difficult, tell your boss about specific work problems: unanswered messages, delayed assignments, or disagreements that disrupt meetings. Avoid criticizing your former partner's personality or assigning blame for the breakup. Try saying, "Since our relationship ended, coordinating assignments has become difficult. Could you help clarify communication and responsibilities?" Share enough information to address work concerns without sharing intimate details or asking your boss to settle personal disputes. Clarify expected conduct and agree on next steps. Report unwanted contact, threats, or harassment promptly through workplace channels. Contact the Employee Assistance Program for help managing lingering emotions so you can move forward with confidence and focus at work.



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Workplace Soft Skills: Developing Greater Self-Confidence



You can build greater self-confidence on the job, but it takes intention and action. Confidence means trusting yourself to respond effectively, learn from mistakes, and recover when criticism stings. Confident employees contribute ideas, accept feedback, and handle uncertainty better, so your employer benefits.

Try these steps: 1) Complete what you commit to. Following through builds pride and gives you evidence that you're dependable. 2) Prepare for meetings and challenging conversations. Preparation helps you contribute and increases your chances of success. 3) Speak up—at least once—during meetings. "Sitting back" or avoidance in a group can reinforce self-doubt. 4) Avoid any language that discounts your ideas. For example, replace "I'm not the expert here, but what about this idea?" with "Here's an approach worth considering." 5) Keep a "wins" log. It can have serious impact. Look for and record one success daily, and review your progress. 6) Notice what's working. Learn from setbacks and block self-critical thoughts. Learn from mistakes; don't ruminate on them. Give more attention to your accomplishments. 7) Accept manageable challenges when offered or presented. Each stretch of your abilities beyond your comfort zone builds another layer of discovery and self-confident thinking. Confidence follows action steps. It's not something you "psych" yourself into but accomplish along with each experience and opportunity.

"Letting Go" to Help a Loved One Change

"Letting go" means stepping back from rescuing so the person you care about faces the natural consequences of their choices, which often motivate change. Letting go isn't abandoning someone, withdrawing love, ignoring danger, or giving the silent treatment. It means you stop making excuses for their behavior and allow them to take full responsibility for their own life. Sounds simple enough, but in practice it can be one of the hardest things in the world when you care for someone deeply. Making the change often requires support, counseling, and guidance so letting go does not become an "on and off" behavior that reinforces the very problem that you are trying to solve. Letting go is a powerful dynamic, but overcoming fear, guilt, and old habits takes immense courage and patience.



This is where your Employee Assistance Program can help, and professional or group support can help you set boundaries and hold firm. Has the on-and-off-again cycle of letting go and enabling got you stuck in a loop of exhaustion, convinced that "they'll never change"?

If so, you're ready for the next step in healing: starting with yourself so you stop standing in the way of progress and your goals, whatever they may be.

Men's Health Awareness Month: Confronting Your Buddy's Use of Alcohol

"Where did you say I could get help?" That call from a friend may come when you least expect it, but only if you've started talking to him about his drinking. Addictive disease is chronic, so another alcohol-related incident is almost guaranteed: a missed shift, a fight, a close call driving home. Each incident temporarily lowers his defenses and opens a window to urge counseling or treatment. That window closes quickly, and the next incident is often worse. Start now. Talk privately when he's sober. Stick to what you've seen and why it worries you: "Last night you couldn't remember how you got home. I'm worried. Will you talk to someone?" Expect denial or digs at your own drinking. Don't take the bait. Each conversation adds to the last, so when the crisis comes, you're the one he calls. Call your Employee Assistance Program first. A counselor can help you plan what to say and line up help, so you have an answer ready. Learn more: niaaa.nih.gov/health-professionals-communities/core-resource-on-alcohol.



Managing a Tough Customer Experience



Customer service employees become more valuable with experience, so managing stress helps you stay longer and find meaning in your work. Still arguing with that difficult customer in your head? Frustration can sneak into your tone with the next caller or coworker. Change gears after tough interactions. Take a slow breath, loosen your shoulders, stretch, or step away briefly if work allows. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to give the next customer a fresh start?"

Don't play tough and dismiss your reaction. Ignoring stress can let it build toward burnout. Develop a personal routine that helps you keep one upsetting experience from driving your next interaction. Still stewing? Speak privately with your supervisor. Connect with coworkers for mutual support and use your Employee Assistance Program for confidential help and stress management tips.

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