**IMPACT on Wellness Newsletter  March 2017**

**Using Your Breath to Manage Stress**

Controlled deep breathing is standard in stress management training, and knowing why it works can have you doing it more often. One reason deep, slow breaths work so well is brain physiology. When you deep breathe, you use a different part of your brain to control your chest muscles instead of the part of your brain experiencing the “fight or flight” reaction to stress: the amygdala. Your awareness of what’s going on with your body improves instantly. This calms you in addition to the stretching sensation in your muscles associated with the chest wall. The opposite state of stress is the relaxation response. This includes deep breathing, which is a direct intervention. This is what makes it more powerful than other relaxation methods that are often misperceived as effective, such as stress eating, smoking, plopping down in front of the TV, or drinking alcohol. Deep breathing is appropriate anytime, but especially when you notice that you are under stress. Monitor the frequency of your attempts at stress management breathing to increase the frequency of its use.

**Soft Skill to Know: Being Cooperative**

Are you a cooperative employee? It’s not a simple question. For example, are you able to hold back pointing out the flaw or spotting the shortcoming in a project or process and instead listen to others, join with the team, and play a crucial role in an activity at work? Right now may not be the best time to point out problems, but instead, wait for a more appropriate time. Can you check yourself, gauge the environment, see the larger purpose, and participate in an organizational effort where your work style matches the tempo of your team? If you are bright, keen on taking action, and a great organizer or leader, holding back may be difficult, but these skills in self-control are the sign of a mature employee. Skills at cooperation show others that you are also self-disciplined, empathic, self-aware, and patient. All these traits, which are linked to cooperation, help make being cooperative a highly valued soft skill for your career.
Workplace Cubicles: Civility and Courtesy Tips

Do you practice common courtesies with cubicle coworkers? Rules to consider:

1. Remember, you have neighbors. Be self-aware regarding speech topics, tone, and volume.
2. Cubicle workers often complain about disruptions. Minimize them by creating traditions that reinforce everyone’s role as a gatekeeper in maintaining an effective work environment.
3. Use staff meetings to discuss the cubicle environment and add to or amend your traditions.
4. Be sensitive to a coworker’s body language that may indicate annoyances, such as unannounced appearances at one’s cubicle to discuss issues.

If in doubt, ask. Cubicle stress must be managed and has been depicted in comic strips and feature films. Ironically, the inventor of the cubicle, George Nelson, became its fiercest critic.

Don’t Sit On Your Talents

Do you like dreaming up new ideas, spotting new business opportunities, imagining the possibilities, seeing unmet needs, and building a team? Do you take initiative on the job to undertake something new without being asked to do so? Are you the courageous sort, unafraid to think outside the box? These traits demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset. Share your awareness with your boss. Let him or her know about what makes you tick and then seek opportunities to match your desires within the work organization. Your organization needs your talents, and these strengths are assets that could propel your career where you want it to go.

“Stop the Bickering!”

Bickering is the petty disputes you experience with another person, especially a loved one like a spouse, partner, or best friend. To bicker is human, but a frequent pattern that sabotages the pleasures of a relationship you both value needs a fix. Try this intervention:

1. Accept that quarreling is a problem and that you want to dramatically reduce it. (Agree to avoid bickering about who is more at fault.)
2. Participate in a 10-minute exercise together, listing as many adverse effects of bickering as possible. Include both visible effects, such as negative effects on children, and invisible effects, such as coping methods, negative self-talk, isolation, reduced intimacy, wasted time, withdrawal, recuperation time, resentment, even your reputation as the “Bickersons.” Write fast, and get it all down.
3. Practice with a behavioral change log. After the next bickering event, record the topic, how long it lasted, what you did well to end the bickering, what you can do better next time, and especially anything you learned or insights gained.

After one week, share your experiences. Making major behavioral changes (new habits of communicating) will take four to six weeks. If things stay rocky, seek a counselor and bring your notes for a speedier counseling experience.
RESOURCES:

- **Resiliency Skills Training Series** consisting of 14 brief training modules designed to build up your resistance to stress
- **MoodGym** is an innovative and interactive web program designed to prevent depression
- **Relaxation Tools** including guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation and more
- **Assessment Tools** including depression, anxiety and mental health risk assessments

*Did you know...* IMPACT Solutions offers a Stress Less Center on your EAP website where you can find new tools and strategies for managing stress in one convenient location?

*Searching for stress free living?* That is a myth. However, we are offering you a chance to understand your personal relationship with stress and increase your control over unexpected stressful events. Doing so will improve your overall life at home with family and friends, at work with coworkers and customers and with people in your community that you deal with on a daily basis.

In addition to the numerous resources on the website, you can call IMPACT Solutions 24/7 at 800-227-6007. A mental health professional is available at all times to provide you with confidential, in the moment support, problem-solving, assessment and identification of resources that can include complimentary face-to-face counseling.


Remember to enter your organization's username.

Forgot your Member Login? Give us a call at 800-227-6007
Research into the power of positive thinking has shown that it helps reduce stress, fight depression, enhance coping skills, strengthen resistance to the common cold, and increase your life span. Maybe the best news about positive thinking is that it can be a learned skill. Learning to recognize negative thinking, participating in positive self-talk, surrounding yourself with positive people, and regular exercise are all ways to become more positive. Let your Employee Support Program help you to discover new ways to accentuate the positive.

ONLINE SEMINAR
Disrupting Negative Thoughts
It’s not negative thoughts themselves that are the issue; rather, it’s when we believe those negative thoughts. Learn how to gain control over negative thoughts and turn them into positive ones.

Available on Demand Starting March 21st
Online seminars can be found on your home page, or you can search for them by title.

TOLL-FREE: 800-227-6007
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Available anytime, any day, your Employee Support Program is a free, confidential program to help you balance your work, family, and personal life.