

FrontLine Employee

Wellness, Productivity, and You!

Overcoming Parkinson's Law

“Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.” That’s the observation made by the British author and historian C. Northcote Parkinson, writing for *The Economist* in 1955. The few who are able to overcome this productivity-killing phenomenon are able to work so efficiently that they seem to have magical powers. Here’s how to join this elite group: Shorten the amount of time required to complete a task and increase the urgency of completion by promising it sooner. You will develop more efficient work habits with this intervention, and you will find more free time in your life.

Source: *Parkinson's Law*, Ballantine Books, 1969



Increasing Risk of Childhood Stroke

“Kids” and “strokes” are two words that shouldn’t go to-

gether, but it’s a growing hazard among an increasingly overweight and out-of-shape

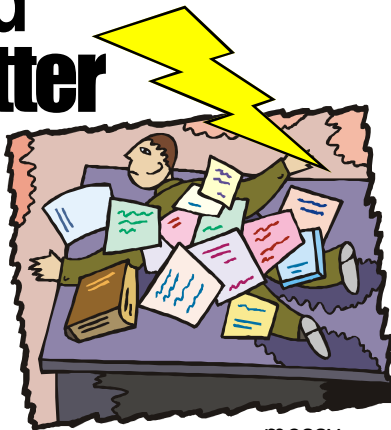
teen population. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, strokes are now one of the top ten causes of childhood death. Risk factors for stroke include high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, and smoking. All these are greatly influenced by lifestyle. A balanced, healthy diet and regular physical activity are the quickest, most cost-effective ways to lower your child’s stroke risk.

Source: tiny.cc/kid-strokes



Denial and Cost of Clutter

You may see clutter as a sign of creativity or a carefree lifestyle, but all that disorganization has hidden costs. Clutter creates stress by being a daily reminder of “unfinished business.” Embarrassment over a messy home may distance you from friends and neighbors. Disorganization eats up precious time by making simple tasks more difficult. To effectively fight clutter, start small and focus on organizing one area at a time. Keep that feeling of freedom from clutter with tidy-ups lasting just five minutes a day.



messy

Don't Be Short on Soft Skills?

Don't let a lack of “soft skills” hold you back from workplace success. Soft skills include self-motivation, demonstrating a positive attitude, punctuality, listening skills, timing (knowing when to act), patience, flexibility, high emotional intelligence, stick-to-itiveness, focus, planning, critical thinking, and a strong team-oriented mind-set. Acquire better soft skills by committing to discovering where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Keep a journal. Track achievements and challenges. Seek out those who display qualities you admire, and model your self-improvement after the things they do well. Ask for feedback or their assessment of you if you know them well, and you’ll fast-track soft skills for your career.

Source: <http://tiny.cc/soft-skills> (p.22)



Recognizing Gang Activity in Your Child

Children as young as 8 years old can become targets for gang recruitment. If you're living in an area with signs of gang activity (graffiti, loitering youths, drug dealing), your children may be slipping into this dangerous world. A key warning sign is sudden and radical changes in dress, behavior, friends, grades, and social activities. Trust your instincts. If new friends seem shady, they probably are. Ask for their names and the phone numbers of their parents. Evasive answers or a refusal to provide information are giant red flags. A recent disinterest in schoolwork and extracurricular activities is another signal that something is wrong. Be on the lookout for new slang, use of street language, strange hand signals, and a shift to an aggressive or menacing demeanor. Does your child suddenly have access to cash and expensive clothing? Start asking questions. Older gang members sometimes recruit kids by buying them gifts or paying them to do small tasks. Also, watch what your child puts on before leaving the house. Members display their gang affiliation by wearing one or two of the same colors. Finally, familiarize yourself with drug paraphernalia and lingo. Gang activity and drug dealing go hand-in-hand. You are your child's first line of defense. If you suspect your child is at risk for gang activity, contact your local law enforcement agency for resources on intervention and prevention.



Rediscover Your Living Room

Televisions, video games, and electronic gadgets are fun, but they tend to crowd out family quality time. Instead of just sharing space in your living room, try reconnecting with your family by choosing one evening per week to pick activities that encourage interaction, competitiveness, and fun. Board games are a perfect low-cost option. A deck of playing cards is even cheaper. Charades? Free. Other ideas: Build a giant LEGO® castle, have the kids put on a play, do a group puzzle, make paper airplanes and have a contest to see which flies the farthest. Connect your kids with their heritage by pulling out the family photo album and sharing stories about your childhood that they should pass along. Discover your living room again, and tune in to better relationships.



Trick Your Brain into Motivation

Combine something you love doing with the unpleasant task you've been avoiding and you may perk up your motivation and get more done faster. This tricks the brain into receiving the instant gratification it prefers along with motivation for the chore it rejects. Try it: Find an enjoyable activity you've been putting off as your motivator. Here are some suggestions: Read the latest novel from your favorite author while riding your exercise bike or elliptical, listen to a new CD while cleaning and organizing, watch a movie while folding laundry, listen to language-learning programs as you paint or do yard work, eat lunch at a new restaurant while catching up on paperwork, combine family quality time with thoroughly cleaning one room (and then the next) in your house. This technique will jump-start your motivation, create a feeling of accomplishment, and reinforce your "can do" attitude!



Keep Conflict from Coming Home

There's a reason to resolve workplace conflicts sooner.

They can produce collateral damage. Studies show that the longer personal issues at work go unaddressed, the greater the risk of adverse effects on loved ones at home. Don't let your workplace problems turn into sleepless nights, marital problems, a short fuse with your children, or an exacerbated health problem. Instead, 1) schedule private time with the individual you're having problems with; 2) tell your coworker in advance that you'd like to resolve the conflict; 3) calmly address your disagreement without laying blame; 4) take responsibility for your own role in the conflict; 5) work toward a mutually agreeable solution; and 6) shake hands, agree to put hard feelings aside, and move forward.

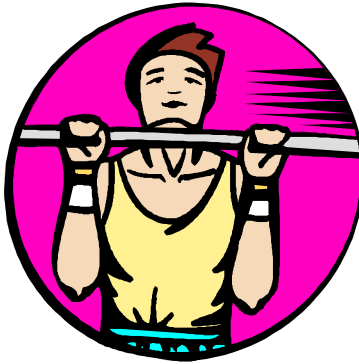


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“Go4Life” Program Will Get You There



If you're 50 years of age or over and planning to get fit, lose weight, and start feeling better next year, head to <http://go4life.niapublications.org>. The new service is from the U.S. National Institute of Aging at NIH (National Institutes of Health). *Go4Life* has bountiful resources and features to set course for a new you in 2012. Log in for free and create your personal goals, learn about exercise, get free resources, learn about health, get free exercise DVDs and virtual coaching help, and get all your wellness questions answered in one place. The website even has a section for family members and tips for how they can do a better job supporting you.

The Secret Is to Smile



Imagine the Rockettes not smiling or Disney World employees appearing grumpy. Would these businesses be successful today? Research shows a smile is a powerful lever with big returns, even financial ones. You can't fake a smile for very long, so it must be fueled by a positive disposition, a desire to serve, and a belief in what you are doing. To smile more often, an absolute must is reading what it will do for you. Start with <http://www.wikihow.com/Smile>. You'll quickly develop a smile-a-lot mind-set. Practice smiling using jokes or happy thoughts as anchors. You'll soon find yourself smiling more at work.

Behaviors that Burn More Calories

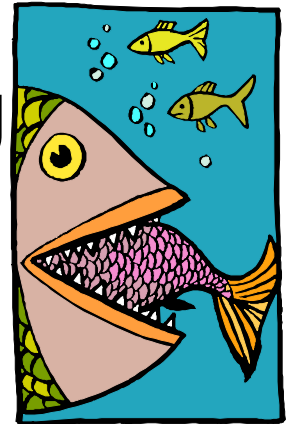


Lose 67 extra calories per day drinking tea? Yes. More proven metabolism boosters and calorie burners include: 1) Don't skip breakfast. 2) Eat smaller meals more often. 3) Add weight lifting to build muscle. 4) Drink ice-cold water throughout the day. 5) Get more sleep. 6) Break your exercise routine into two periods during the day. 7) Exercise first thing in the morning, and get your doctor's okay before starting an exercise routine. Learn more at <http://tiny.cc/tea-time>.

From the Blogosphere . . .

Tips on Avoiding Overeating

If “try again tomorrow” is your strategy to control holiday overeating, then you need a better battle plan. Helpful tips can be found on over 350 blogs. Example tips: 1) Know the weight you want to be and see that number in your mind as you eyeball any holiday food item you must resist. This strategy uses “opposing forces” to reduce desire. 2) Brush your teeth as soon as you want to stop eating. This triggers decreased desire. 3) Drink water prior to eating. It can reduce hunger. 4) Wait 20 minutes before eating a second helping of anything considered yummy. Delay can turn to distraction and save the day. Find ideas on other blogs by searching <http://www.google.com/blogsearch>.



Alcohol Use Prevention and Parents



No one can guarantee that your teenager won't be influenced by peers to consume alcohol someday, but you can reduce the risk. Communication is the key, not just for a direct message of disapproval, but also for its ripple effect on peers. Simply being firm and saying you do not want your child to consume alcohol reduce risk. Say nothing and risk will increase. The same goes for marijuana. Being a watchful parent can create a "repellent" effect, because alcohol-using peers who would otherwise call with invitations to drinking events may bypass your child. You may get a reputation as a strict parent, but the payoff can be immeasurable. Start early by sharing information about the effects of alcohol with your child. Do not omit risk of death from overconsumption. Tragic news stories easily provide testament. Many parents resist being firm about teen abstinence. They fear being seen as uncool or contributing to their child's decrease in popularity. Reject this thinking. It is not safe or legal for a teenager to drink alcohol. More steps: Be aware of what your kids are doing, where they are, where the phone numbers of friends' parents are, and who is accompanying them when they leave point A and go to point B. Some parents think this is too much "watching" or "helicoptering," or that it interferes with their busy schedules. Do you?

Disagree with Your Boss in Style

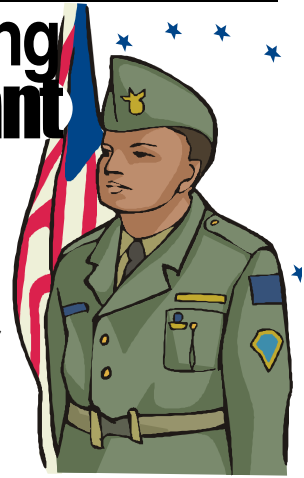
It's not about whether you can disagree with the boss, it's about how you disagree that counts. Most bosses want to hear from subordinates. To disagree with style, first understand your boss's outlook and try to analyze issues from his or her perspective. If you do that, your demeanor will demonstrate empathy and your approach to sharing differences will appear instantly "team-like." Lose the fear and don't stay quiet. Instead, develop a personal approach that you'll use now and in future boss situations. Don't make stark declarations about how you are right. Instead, formulate questions that are nonthreatening: "Just to clarify where we stand right now..." "As I understand it, the developments leading up to this point are..." "Let me make sure we're on the same page..." Follow these statements with your idea or thinking or with a contrasting point of view.



What Returning Veterans Want

You can make it easier for veterans returning to work by knowing more about the myths and misconceptions they face from many around them after they come home. For example, a straightforward "thank you for your service" is a meaningful statement for a vet. It needs no elaboration. Don't assume all veterans have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Likewise, do not speak to veterans as if they are fragile or "on edge." Treat them with respect like any other individual and do not relate to them as unfortunate or needy citizens. Be aware how the third or fourth month home for a veteran can be the toughest. This is when depression is most likely to emerge. Depression, not PTSD, is a more common post-war experience. Assist veterans in accessing proper health resources if needed, and remember that veterans want things to get back to normal as quickly as possible. Responding to them as normally as possible is what aids this process.

Source: National Organization on Disability



Self-awareness and Preventing Sexual Harassment

Have fun this holiday season, but realize that many opportunities for positive employee interaction beyond the workplace include a higher risk of sexual harassment. Employer-sponsored events characterized by less-formal communication, off-site travel experiences, and employee gatherings where alcohol is consumed are especially notorious. Examples include training events, intramural sports, holiday parties, and after-work mixers at restaurants. These settings require self-awareness and professionalism as guides for behavior. Negative consequences for your career and reputation can ensue from crossing social boundaries that are perceived by others to be sexual harassment. Know the difference between a coworker with whom you have a personable relationship and a personal friend. Different rules apply.



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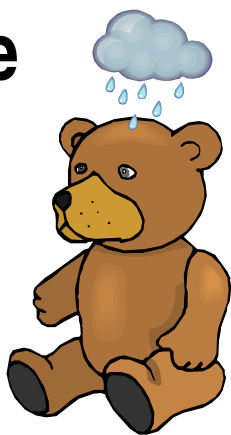
Winning with a Budget in 2012

Living on a budget is not easy for most people, but success is not determined by using simple willpower to avoid indiscriminate spending. Instead, the winning secret is acquiring the right attitude about budgeting. This drives your goal. Instill the attitude with new beliefs. Budgeting is control—you being in charge of your money instead of it controlling you, especially if you are chained to debt. Without a budget, you risk spending all the money and not saving enough. You also risk *not spending enough*. Yes, a budget actually helps you spend enough rather than unnecessarily living too financially restricted. The good news about budgets: In time, the determined budgeter acquires a new habit of living on a budget, and this lifestyle becomes self-reinforcing. What follows is the powerful feeling of freedom—and a better night's sleep.



Effect of Violence on Children

Children exposed to family violence appear to have changes in their brains similar to combat veterans, a new study finds. These changes may continue into adulthood, creating problems with anxiety. Violence need not be extreme to create this impact, and the signs won't be visible. The brain changes tend to be oriented to a heightened anticipation of pain and sensing of threat. Domestic violence has many victims, and there are big reasons for seeking help. PDF source: tiny.cc/child-harm



Exercise for Better Sleep

Most studies show a moderate connection between exercise and better sleep. One study showed that adults who were able to participate in the nationally recommended exercise regimen of 150 minutes a week indeed reported better sleep. There are many reasons for sleep difficulties, and an evaluation is in order when the problem persists. However, if you haven't tried exercise on a regular basis—about 30 minutes per day, five days per week—it's worth a try. <http://tiny.cc/shut-eye> Consult with your physician before beginning an exercise program.



Rapid Response to Customers

If you work directly with customers—internal or external—try an experiment to improve your job satisfaction: Give a rapid response to needs or requests, and do so with the next ten customers. Sure, you're busy and stressed. It is easy to choose delay over delivery, using an "I'll get to it later" attitude or coping strategy. Delay is often unavoidable but guard against it as a coping strategy. A quick response to a customer is one of the easiest ways to get a "Wow," and few things are more gratifying than an appreciative, praise-filled customer who can add to your positivity on the job.



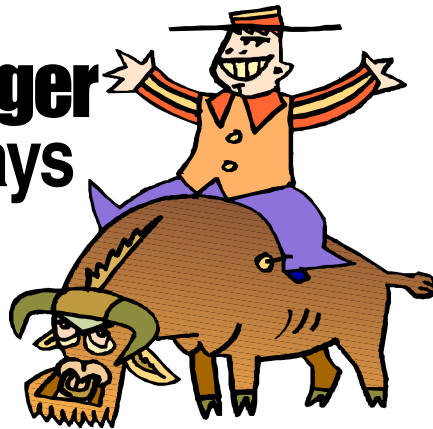
More Time with Loved Ones in 2012



A highly desired New Year's resolution that is right up there with the desire to lose weight—some studies report more so—is grabbing more quality time with loved ones. Sound good? If you are like most busy families, with everyone zooming off in different directions, you recognize that time can pass you by. Try combining things everyone should be doing, such as exercise, with an opportunity to be together. Thinking “dual-purpose” in this way can double your time together. But the payoffs don't end there. This type of strategizing permits a quality opportunity where those special talks about personal responsibility, work ethic, commitment, honesty, community service, or faith can happen more often. Give this buddy exercise chart a try by posting it on your refrigerator. It will help keep at the front and center the commitment to exercise together. Resource download: <http://tiny.cc/exercise-log>

Managing Anger in Healthy Ways

There are many myths about anger, including that it is “bad” or “immature” to get angry or it is better to suppress it. Trying “never to feel angry” is a harmful practice and a hopeless goal because humans are hardwired to feel anger. Another myth is “the best way to get over it is let it all out.” Rather than squashing the anger or running with it, anger management is the life skill of learning how anger works and how to control one's response to it. The key is learning how to identify feelings of anger when they emerge and then staying in charge and directing that anger toward a constructive purpose. There are many reasons people struggle with anger, the underlying issues associated with it, emotional pain, and control. Health issues may also contribute to problems with anger management. Guidance from a professional counselor who specializes in anger management is generally a speedier route to learning better anger management skills. Professional help is definitely recommended if you become explosive and demonstrate extreme expressions of anger to the point of violence. Your employee assistance program can offer you great support and referral to expert help. Don't stay frustrated with your inability to “will” yourself into better anger management practices. Anger mismanagement is one of the most common problems people experience, and it is one that can be successfully treated.



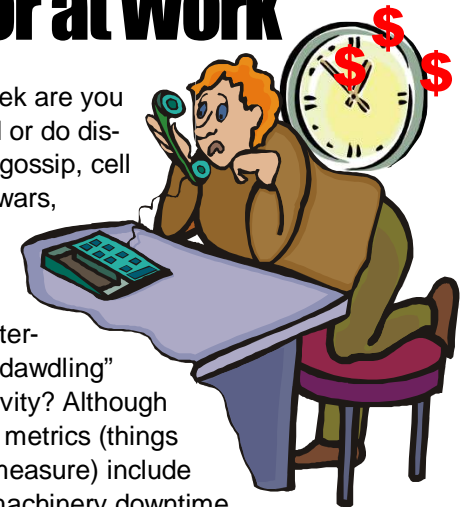
When You “Stand Corrected”

Facing a corrective (disciplinary) action meeting will test your composure and professionalism. The winning strategy in most cases is to turn the predicament into a learning experience that leaves you determined to change and achieve. Here's how to hit the reset switch and go from dread to determination. Understand that a corrective action or disciplinary meeting is an attempt to elevate behavior, not to punish an employee. It's an educational tool. If you adopt this perspective, you'll take a team approach with your supervisor and see *performance* as the issue of management's concern, not you personally. Ask for a follow-up appointment to discuss progress if one is not given, or send short periodic reports of your progress to your supervisor. Naturally, rely upon your employee assistance program for ideas, support, encouragement, and help in reducing anxiety and worry.



Countering Counter-Productive Behavior at Work

During the week are you fully engaged or do distractions like gossip, cell phone calls, email wars, election-year political discussions, kitchen conversations, surfing the Internet, or just simple “dawdling” affect your productivity? Although important business metrics (things companies like to measure) include waste, breakage, machinery downtime, absenteeism, and utility bills, these things are often far less than the cost of lost productivity from employees who don't focus. Distractions will always exist. But look beyond your valuable skills and abilities, and revisit your aptitude for staying focused. It's a New Year's resolution you can share with your employer, and it will pay handsomely in a tight economy where mission-focused companies win the day.



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Build Your Immunity to Criticism

Although eagerly welcoming constructive feedback, employees who accomplish a lot on the job know their successes will sometimes rub others the wrong way. Not everyone will be quick to praise your triumphs when you are cast into the limelight by others who recognize your achievements. Learning to detach from unhelpful criticism is a skill to help you stay motivated, adapt to change, and think more creatively about your job. Try these "inoculators" to beef up your immunity: 1) Remember that those who criticize don't know the real you. 2) See negative criticism as possible validation that you are "on the right track." 3) Accept criticism of your success as normal and part of life's challenges. 4) Search for the truth in the criticism, if any. Something about it may be helpful despite the style of its delivery. 5) Let criticism inspire you to work with even more vigor toward accomplishing your dreams, rather than forcing you into retreat.

Pay Attention to Accolades

Pay attention to moments of super satisfaction in your work expressed by customers and supervisors. Ask yourself: What skills, abilities, or personality traits did I exhibit to earn this praise for my work? These are what make you unique and outstanding as a worker. Tuck these gems away so that you don't forget them. Use these descriptions of yourself in resumes and cover letters in the future. In job interviews, you'll sell yourself with believability.

Adapt to Technology and Thrive

Don't be overwhelmed by software related productivity tools that seem complicated now—like web building software, software programs beyond MS Word, or discovering how to be effective with graphics programs. Learning these tools can only make you more desirable as an employee. Dependency on technology in the workplace is increasing, not decreasing, so remaining in denial rather than facing your diminishing ability to keep up will only increase workplace stress. As long as you get started, you will learn more each passing day.

Help Prevent Internet Harassment

Internet harassment or cyber-stalking is rapidly gaining attention as a serious crime in many states. Cyber-stalking is the intentional harassment or threatening of another person through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication. Online harassment is similar to real-world stalking in its ability to be extremely disturbing to the victim. Perpetrators take advantage of the anonymity of the online environment and its false sense of security to act anonymously and harass another person. These activities may include disturbing text messages, the sending of unwanted, abusive, threatening, or obscene e-mails or messages, or the use of Internet postings, message boards, or chat rooms.

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