



Front Line

aspirus.org

an employee assistance program newsletter

Don't Forget about Flu Season

With all the attention on COVID-19, don't overlook getting a flu shot. Flu season usually starts around October and can run until the following May. It peaks in December and January. Fact: 35.5 million people got sick with influenza in 2019 and 34,200 died. 188 were children. You can discover locations and organizations that offer free flu shots by visiting www.health.com and searching "free flu shot."



Source: CDC.gov [search "the flu season"]

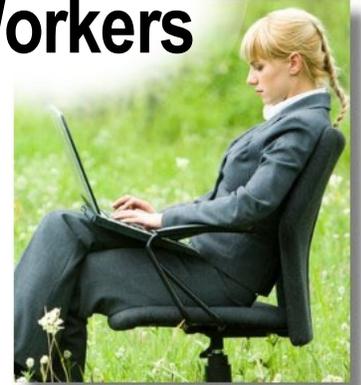
Should You Lend Money to a Coworker?

Should you lend money to a coworker? The question has many considerations, but the most cited axiom is, "Don't lend money to a friend unless you expect it not to be repaid." A request may indicate a more serious personal problem. If so, loaning money then equates to enabling. Does your friend need other help? Consider these steps: 1) Show empathy. 2) Don't be judgmental. Eliciting defensiveness will shut down willingness to accept help. 3) Discuss concern for your friend. Use "I" statements: "I'd like to help, but I'm just not in a position to lend. Can we talk about the situation?" 4) Have a source of help/number available, and offer it. 5) Offer to accompany your friend to the source of help. (Note: If your friend does not accept help, you will increase the likelihood of doing so in the future with this supportive strategy.)



Hidden Stress Hazards of Remote Workers

If you work remotely, reach out for help before you begin "adapting" to potential stressors of your position in unhealthy ways. Don't let frustrations drag on. Research shows remote workers can face many unique challenges, including loneliness, inability to process stress with peers, irritability from interruptions at home, go-it-alone technology issues, worrying about completing tasks correctly, resentment from being unable to "switch off" from work to non-work, feeling frustrated at being unable to relax because of unfinished work only steps away, and parenting conflicts with guilt at being unable to attend to child needs.



Source: www.academia.edu [Search "psychological, teleworking"]

Boredom and the Pandemic

Boredom may be the least discussed experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The international response has affected where we go and what we can do, who we can be with or even hug. Restaurants are closed or stark and bare, and more movie theaters shutter every day. Boredom is normal, but pandemic-related boredom is a bit different. Research shows it can have health effects, as it did during the 1918 Spanish flu. These can include behavioral issues, relapse of health conditions, worsening of compulsive-behavior disorders, negative thinking, depression, and even suicide. (Suicide rates increased during the 1918 Spanish flu.)



Source (1): www.news.columbia.edu [search "why being bored"];

Source (2): www.academic.oup.com [search "covid suicide"]

National Caregivers Month

November is *National Caregivers Month*. It's a time to recognize, support, and empower family caregivers. One of the most comprehensive sources of help is www.caregiver.org, the website of the Family Caregiver Alliance. It is an online service that provides quality information, support, and resources for family caregivers of adults with chronic physical or cognitive conditions such as Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's, and other illnesses. Sixty-eight percent of caregivers are women (aarp.org) who spend an average of 20 hours per week caring for a loved one. Whether you are a caregiver or in a relationship with a caregiver, do you know the signs and symptoms of caregiver distress? These symptoms may include feeling overwhelmed or constantly worried, feeling tired often, getting too much sleep or not enough sleep, gaining or losing weight, becoming easily irritated or angry, losing interest in activities you used to enjoy, feeling sad, having frequent headaches, bodily pain, or other physical problems. These symptoms can also give way to burnout. Caregivers need physical help with tasks, decisions, meal prep, errands, and chores. They especially need emotional support to help them deal with the stress of caring for an elderly person or other loved one with special needs. Most people do not know that caregiving is one of the toughest and most stressful jobs. This is because it is characterized by high levels of "job strain." Job strain includes having high levels of stress with low levels of control over how much, how often, and when caregiving will next be required.

Source: www.unhealthywork.org/job-strain/definitions-and-formulations-of-job-strain/

Alcohol and Prescription Drugs Don't Mix

Do you take medication for a medical condition like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, migraines, anxiety, arthritis, sleep problems, or a heart condition? The Centers for Disease Control is growing more concerned about the risk associated with drinking alcohol while taking prescription medications. More people are aging, many are taking more medications, and thousands of the new drugs have adverse effects if you use them in combination with alcohol, even a little bit. Pay attention to warning labels about alcohol. Hundreds of medications do not mix with alcohol. Over 22 medications for high cholesterol may cause liver damage if combined with alcohol. Discover whether the medication you are taking has a side effect with alcohol at www.niaaa.nih.gov. [Search "harmful interactions pdf"]



Source: www.nih.gov [search "despite risk benzodiazepine use"]

Leading a Meeting with Impact

Lead a meeting with these proven but unfortunately forgotten tips so you get more done, stay on topic, wander less, get more participation, reduce confusion, end on time, and have participants walking away with a "thumbs up." Before any meeting, mentally rehearse what the meeting is about, why it's needed, what should be accomplished, and who the vital attendees are. Double the impact by telling/reminding everyone the purpose of the meeting, what the results should be, and what time you are ending. Many meetings grow sluggish with discussions between two or three members not relevant to other participants. Intervene by maintaining awareness so your meeting marches forward, while directing these smaller discussions to outside the group. Don't end a meeting without a plan of action for any unfinished business. These tips will make you a leader who raises productivity.



Thanksgiving Safety—Yes, It Is Possible

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, you can still have a meaningful Thanksgiving celebration with family and friends. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has released some suggested guidelines and social interaction ideas. They've also created a "degrees of risk" section so you can determine whether activities you've planned are low, medium, or high risk. Even better, they give you some workarounds for how to engage, yet still create memories rather than sour your event with boredom or the tragedy of a loved one becoming ill. Examples: Celebrate at the home of the person least likely to have been exposed to the coronavirus at work or within the community. Host your gathering outdoors, and if not, make sure the room or space is well-ventilated (for example, open a window). Discover more at www.cdc.gov.



[Search "holiday celebrations" and "social gatherings"]