



# Front Line

aspirus.org

an employee assistance program newsletter

## Develop the Habit of Active Listening



**A**ctive listening is the practice of engaging with a speaker using techniques of listening that maximize understanding. The goal is more complete communication. Active listening is conscious and purposeful. The skill is often taught in couples counseling because it reduces misunderstandings, conflicts, and frustration; increases closeness; and helps people solve problems faster. Obviously, active listening has immense value in the workplace. Do you know how to actively listen? To practice active listening, decide to be neutral and nonjudgmental when the speaker begins. Don't interrupt. Periodically reflect back your understanding. Don't "fill the silence" when the speaker pauses. Use nonverbal behaviors to show you're listening and engaged. Finally, ask for clarification if needed, and summarize what you heard.

## Can Exercise Prevent the Worst of COVID-19 Illness?



**H**ere's another reason to exercise—surviving COVID-19 or a similar illness in the future. A study of nearly 50,000 people hospitalized for COVID-19 examined those who were consistently physically active, especially with regard to the officially recommended 150 minutes per week. Patients who *were not* consistently active had a greater risk of hospitalization and death. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of systemic inflammation. It's this inflammation that makes the lungs more vulnerable to damage caused by COVID-19. Exercise also improves heart health, lung capacity, and chest wall strength! Result: Reduced risk for the worst outcome.

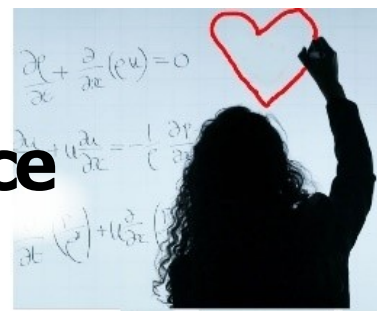
Source: [www.bjbm.bmj.com](http://www.bjbm.bmj.com) [search: physical inactivity covid].

## Caregiving Apps Make It Easier



**B**eing a caregiver is about more than grocery shopping and providing companionship. It's a constant stream of issues, concerns, interruptions, and crises related to medications, surgeries, rehabilitation, appointments, and dozens of personal care issues. It can equate to an exhausting second job. If you're a caregiver, discover apps that can help you reduce the stress of keeping up with it all. Start by taking a look at six such apps at [www.caring.com/caregivers/caregiver-support](http://www.caring.com/caregivers/caregiver-support). You will find more caregiving apps by Google -searching for "list of all caregiving apps."

## Finding Your Emotional Intelligence Gap



**E**motional intelligence (EI or EQ) is your ability to identify, understand, and "regulate" or control emotions. This includes the ability to respond to feeling states in ways that are helpful or constructive. The result: You communicate more effectively, demonstrate empathy, and solve problems more successfully. As with IQ, it's possible to measure EI, but the score is not as important as discovering areas where you can make improvements to help yourself personally and professionally. Many EI tests are job-specific for leadership, teaching, caregiving, and even dentistry! Questions are usually very similar. Discover these EI tests online, but add "pdf" to your search to discover one you can print. Example: "EI test PDF".

[www.nodc.org/images/stories/2018/Handouts/EI-ASSESSMENT.pdf](http://www.nodc.org/images/stories/2018/Handouts/EI-ASSESSMENT.pdf).

# Equity in the Workplace: What's Your Role?

**W**orkplace equity means having a workplace where everyone feels valued, is treated fairly, and is empowered to contribute and to pursue happiness in their job. Workplace equity is a goal that requires everyone's participation so opportunity for all becomes reality. What's your role? Here are five ways that you, as a coworker, can help bring equity to your workplace.

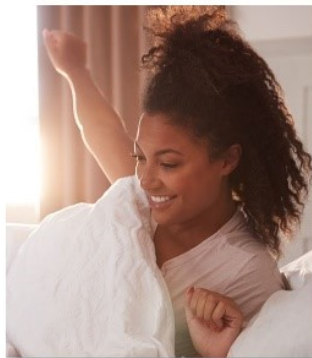


1) Value diversity. Diverse workplaces enhance businesses and help them compete in an increasingly diverse world-of-work that expects and rewards workplace equity. See diversity as a plus for any organization. 2) Value inclusion. Inclusion means that differences among employees aren't cause for discrimination—people feel equally welcomed and valued for their contributions. 3) "Step in." When you witness values of inclusiveness, equality, respect, or equal opportunity being overlooked or dismissed, be the one who says, "Can we talk about \_\_\_ in this situation?" 4) Don't turn away or dismiss slights or unintentional (indirect) discrimination against others. Those who are victims of discrimination often brush off or set aside these micro-aggressions. 5) Know your biases and mind your language. Everyone has biases, but consider how these biases are demonstrated in private conversations with close friends, and how they may emerge within the workplace and community at large. Workplace equity is an evolving value and area of study for employers and work organizations. The misconception among many employees is that the responsibility for equity lies solely with management and the organization's policies. Ultimately, however, it is the employee-to-employee interaction level that determines whether the goal is realized. This is the business case for understanding and promoting workplace equity. Awareness Challenge: Examine this resource and discuss it with your workgroup:

[www.sph.umn.edu](http://www.sph.umn.edu) [search "micro-aggression examples"].

# Morning Grogginess? Try Avoiding the Snooze Button

**I**t may sound like too much to bear, but giving up the snooze button as you struggle to get out of bed might help eliminate the morning grogginess and excessive daytime sleepiness you experience. Snooze buttons can create a condition called "fragmented sleep," as they interrupt REM sleep, which is the restorative part of your sleep cycle. Research shows fragmented sleep can produce grogginess that might linger for hours. Also, consider visiting your doctor to rule out a sleep disorder.



Learn more: [www.newsroom.clevelandclinic.org](http://www.newsroom.clevelandclinic.org) [search "snooze button"].

# Diagnosing Compulsive Buying- Spending Disorder



**A** lack of international consensus by experts on the diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying (spending) disorder led to research, with findings released in May 2021. The American Psychiatric Association still does not consider compulsive shopping an addiction or a behavioral disorder. Still, after interviews with experts in 35 countries, at least two characteristics were described as "universally accepted": excessive purchasing of items without using them for their intended purpose (think unopened boxes of deliveries, loads of clothes in a closet with price tags still attached, etc.) and shopping as a means to positively affect or elevate one's mood. It is hoped that this international consensus will lead to more studied and accepted criteria, lessen denial, and increase self-diagnosis by those who suffer with a shopping addiction. Do you or a loved one experience these behaviors? Not sure? Start with your EAP or a professional counselor to explore more.

Source: [www.news-medical.net](http://www.news-medical.net) [search: compulsive buying].

# New Stress of Going Back to Work

**H**ave you been asked to return to your job on-site after working at home remotely for the past year? Perhaps you kept your fingers crossed hoping your remote job would be the new normal into the future with newly established family routines, no commute, a home office that started to feel ideal, and a feeling of independence you cherished. Many employees are excited about returning to work, but not everyone feels this way. Talk with your EAP about how to cope with the stress of change and disappointment and how to reconnect so you can become your most productive self and experience the job satisfaction you want.

