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Family Meals Make for Healthier Kids

There has always been the assumption that family meals are a good thing for everyone, especially kids, but research with 1,492 children conducted by the University of Montreal documented high returns from the practice. Children were studied over a four-year period, starting at age 6. Those who participated in more family meals had higher levels of general fitness and lower levels of soft drink consumption, less physical aggression, reduced oppositional behavior, fewer incidents of nonaggressive delinquency, and less reactive aggression at age 10. Information was gathered from parents, teachers, and the children themselves on academic achievement, social adjustment, and lifestyle habits.

Source: http://journals.lww.com [search "family meals"]

Make Brainstorming More Effective

Brainstorming is a technique for generating a solution to a problem by using a group of participants who offer any idea without hesitation or regard for its plausibility or likelihood of being effective. Even absurd ideas are not judged. No analysis is made until the end of the session, when all ideas are examined for the most ideal solution. Here's how to improve brainstorming. Always record everyone's input, allow no discussion or interruptions during the brainstorming, and be provocative if your group is too sedate or serious. Strive to choose a group diverse in talent and background to produce the most imaginative ideas.

Exercise and Your Memory

Exercise can improve your memory. Scientists found that six weeks of intense exercise—short bouts of Interval training over the course of 20 minutes—produced significant improvements in memory, specifically something called "high-interference memory." That's the type of memory that allows you to identify your car and distinguish it among others that look just like it and to remember its location. (Talk to your doctor about exercise, but now you have another reason to get moving!)

Source: www.dailynews.mcmaster.ca [search: "memory exercise"]

Don't Fear Conflict Resolution

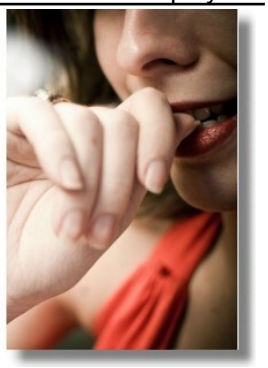
Many employees resist conflict resolution for fear it might not work out in their favor! Unfortunately, the fear is based on the belief that conflict resolution is win-lose—that it seeks to discover who is right. The art of conflict resolution, however, is anything but win-lose. Conflict resolution is about producing satisfaction for both parties. Fifty percent of successful conflict resolutions entail two things: listening to the perspective of the conflict partner and acknowledging it. What follows is the art of compromise. You can find do-it-yourself conflict resolution outlines online, work with your EAP, or buy a book. Simmering and unresolved conflict is like a drain on a car battery—but in this case, it's draining your ability to be happy on the job.

Information in *FrontLine Employee* is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health or legal professional. For further help, questions, or referral to community resources for specific problems or personal concerns, contact a qualified professional. Add "http://" to source links to follow. Link titles are always case sensitive.

Functioning Well Under Pressure

Periodically, everyone experiences work pressure. When working under pressure, you experience a force (often a deadline) that requires you to accomplish more work at a speed that strains your ability to cope. With a faster-moving economy and downsizing, work pressure is more likely. Therefore, employers view employees who manage pressure well as valuable workers. Managing work pressure is a learned skill. Assuming the quantity of work can't be reduced, the dominant success strategy for managing work pressure lies in attitude—seeing work pressure as a challenge rather than an inescapable trap. This view of work pressure coincides with the old adage that "stress is between the ears." Although this may not be completely true, what you think does affect your ability to cope. Why does it matter? With a positive attitude, your focus changes. You notice task completion and mini successes and fewer painful results of work pressure like drudgery, wear, and exertion. Work pressure becomes more bearable with a positive attitude and less bearable without it. No coping strategy will make you immune to the stress of work pressure, but experimenting with an attitude change as a resilience strategy when you have no other option can make it more bearable to get through another day of work. Learn more: "Performing Under Pressure: The Science of Doing Your Best When It Matters Most."

Getting Help for Anxiety



If worries feel excessive and out of your control, it's time to call an EAP or a mental health professional and get relief. Anxiety is a common complaint among employees of all ages, particularly younger workers. You know it's time to get help if you feel worries consume too much of your waking hours, interfere with sleep, affect your happiness and ability to relax, and perpetuate feelings of general dissatisfaction. Don't be fooled; disruptive anxiety can still affect you despite your life accomplishments, IQ, smarts, or financial security—even if everything is going great in your life. Feeling you should not be worrying because your life is "just fine" can prevent you from getting help, while you also feel guilty for not being happier. Anxiety is not in your imagination, and resolving it is not about "snapping out of it."

Believe In Your New Year's Resolution

There are many reasons for not accomplishing a New Year's resolution, but one you may not fully appreciate is a lack of belief in your ability to be successful. You may *want and hope* to be successful with your goal, but a barely noticeable, negative self-talk script doubting your ability will make your goal elusive. Fight negative self-talk scripts, which you can assume will creep up on you, by practicing affirmations that inoculate you against them. An affirmation is a positive statement that you declare to be true and that you rehearse frequently in a manner that allows it to sink in. Think of affirmations as "software for your brain." Assertiveness, determination, feeling that success is inevitable, quickly dismissing setbacks, and ignoring others' negativity are critical skills in achieving any goal. A gut belief in your anticipated success, made possible by affirmations, allows these skills to carry you to the finish line.

Emotional Intelligence with Customers

Research shows stress for those in customer service often results from dealing with the adverse emotional reactions of customers. You can influence reactions for the better and reduce your stress. Try this emotional intelligence (EI)-boosting exercise to observe this dynamic up close. For the next couple of days, observe the emotions of your customers. Notice how and when these emotional reactions change and whether they are positive, negative, or neutral. Consider your role in influencing these changes. Spend another three days attempting to influence your customers' emotional states so they remain positive. *Then analyze*: Did you experience less stress over those three days? If yes, you have increased your EI because you have discovered and consciously used your ability to identify emotional states in others, and you can determine how to improve the quality of relationships with this information.