May 2008

rEAP the Benefits

State Employee Assistance Program 1-800-308-4934

When teamwork is not your thing

If you like working alone, and you're not excited about the idea of working on a team, remember that shuttle astronauts, who obviously must function as a team, didn't begin their careers that way. Competing for the top jobs they now hold took individualism. But they made it, and so can you. Your strong individualistic style may include honed skills that could make you shine on a team. They may include self-discipline, creative thinking, personal accountability, self-motivation, initiative, and the ability to organize. Many team members struggle with these skills, and modeling them may help others. Are you interested in being a leader? This could help you gain back a bit of the control that you must give up to be on a team!

Next time, you'll be assertive

Don't kick yourself for not being assertive. The next time you'll be ready for it. Before an event occurs, make a decision that you will demonstrate assertiveness. Then visualize yourself carrying out your response — sort of a "mental rehearsal." When something happens, take a few minutes to examine your feelings about how you responded. Your feelings give clues to your success. But do you feel guilty for being effective? If so, you may need a bit of coaching and support to get comfortable with assertiveness. Talk with a close friend, professional counselor, or employee assistance professional to get that person's perspective. If you didn't respond the way you hoped, decide what alternative response or responses you will make the next time. Keep going and repeat the process. This "staircase technique" to achievement works with other life challenges, too.

National employee health and fitness day

The third Wednesday in May is National Employee Health and Fitness Day, sponsored by the National Association for Health Fitness. To get off the couch and get moving fast, find out how much inactivity is costing your business organization, work unit, office — even your whole community. The East Carolina University Department of Health Education and Promotion has developed an Economic Cost of Inactivity Calculator. The easy-to-use tool, which is available online, provides an estimate of the financial cost of physically inactive people to a particular community, city, state, or business. It also provides companion resources and information to help plan for healthier workplaces and communities that are more supportive of physical activity. Find the calculator at http://www.ecu.edu/picostcalc.

Bouncing back with resilience

How well do you respond at work to anger, rage, frustration, or disappointment? Would you give yourself high marks for the speed at which you bounce back from these difficult experiences? This phenomenon is called resiliency. Resiliency doesn't mean that you ignore your feelings, and it doesn't mean that you're in denial. Resiliency means that you have developed the ability to temporarily put aside these emotional events so you can apply yourself to the problem or crisis being experienced right now. Resiliency develops with practice, and it's a clue to your leadership potential, because responsibility and accountability produce many opportunities that require applying this skill. If you're resilient, you are probably a high achiever in your personal and work life. Develop and practice resiliency and you'll discover a valuable life skill.

Important Notice: Information in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

Good is sometimes good enough

Stress Tip: Perfectionism is dedication to the details rather than the goal. Many projects, tasks, and products don't require perfection, so ask yourself whether good is good enough. If so, go forward and make changes later with the feedback you'll receive. Chances are you will produce a superior result faster with this approach. Put feedback before perfection to enjoy work, reduce stress, and have better outcomes more frequently.

Put green where it's seen

Don't just think green — do green! Unless workplace rules or conditions make it impractical, consider bringing plants into your workplace. Plants release oxygen, and their foliage absorbs pollutants. Plants also have psychological benefits — so much so that many hospitals involve patients with growing and taking care of plants as a way to help improve psychological health. We are happier with plants. So if you're looking for less stress, and you have a streak of light at work, fill the space with a plant or two, and see if you don't reap the benefits.

Planning against gang recruitment

If you live in a gang-ridden area, preventing your children from ever joining a gang is probably one of your key concerns. If so, know how to counter the inoculation technique of gang recruitment. The inoculation technique is a "presell" message. It seeks to warn prospective gang members that parents or parent figures will tell them not to join a gang and will offer persuasive reasons to refuse. This strategy prepares prospective gang members to resist gang avoidance education.
The counter-approach is to educate children about this psychological recruitment technique and to do some inoculation of your own. Let children know that gang recruitment includes this approach to inoculate them against parental warnings. Later, if or when children are approached by gang members, they will be more resistant to this seduction. Forewarned is forearmed.

March EAP Month Award Winners

The Employee Assistance Program held a special recognition and awards celebration on April 30 to honor participants in March EAP Awareness Month. Awards were given based on written reports submitted that described activities sponsored during the month of March. The top award winners were:

Most Outstanding Creativity and Participation

- TN Department of Children's Services

Most Outstanding Participation

- TN Department of Correction

Continuous Outstanding Participation

- TN Department of Health
- TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Creativity Award

- TN Regulatory Authority

Best Collaboration Award

- TN Department of Finance & Administration
- TN Department of General Services

EAP Supervisory Training Award

- TN Technological University

Outstanding Participation

- Division of Mental Retardation Services
- East Tennessee State University
- Southwest Community College
- TN Department of Environment & Conservation
- TN Dept of Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities
- TN Technology Center at Crump
- University of TN Health Science Center

New Rising Stars

- Rutherford County Adult Activity Center
- TN Department of Transportation
- TN Housing Development Agency
- Tipton County Schools

Certificates of appreciation signed by Governor Bredesen were presented to other participating agencies, departments, schools and the TN State Employees Association. The EAP "Staying Connected and Grounded" winner was Joyce Munda of the Division of Mental Retardation Services. She received a weekend for two at a state park of choice. This year's promotion was extremely successful in attracting participation from all segments of state government.