

FrontLine

Wellness, Productivity, & You!

Employee

St. Luke's Employee Assistance Program (319) 369-8152

The Answer's in the Group



If you are struggling with a personal crisis or mental health issue in which you feel misunderstood, unable to communicate, or totally alone, then group therapy may be an effective treatment option for you. Group therapy is a therapeutic technique that uses small group interaction as a means of changing negative mental and behavioral patterns. Group members are expected to be honest and open in their communication with one another, which is generally done through talking around a theme determined by a professional counselor. Things go slow at first, but once group members trust and bond with each other—look out—you can make big changes in your life, and fast. You can find therapists who offer group therapy through your employee assistance provider, mental health association, or health insurance plan.

Developing a Safety Culture



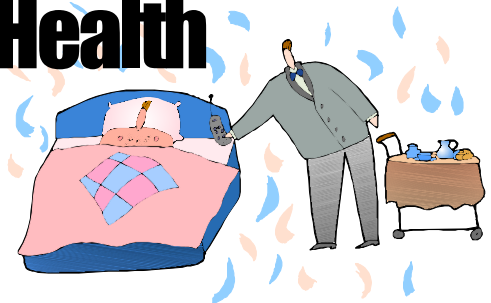
Preventing accidents is more than hanging up a warning poster or avoiding a shortcut that ignores an important safety rule. The safest organizations have a *culture of safety* where employees naturally resist violation of safety practices—a major cause of workplace accidents. You feel personal ownership in maintaining a safe environment and no one needs to remind you to “think safety” because you’re living it. When safe behaviors and thinking safety seem to be on autopilot, you’ve got it.

Battling Against Sleep a No Win



If waking up and getting out of bed is a daily “chore,” a tardy arrival at work usually follows. If there’s no medical problem, a likely cause is an improper attitude toward sleep. Like exercise, you may see sleep as a nagging inconvenience—something getting in your way. You have to sleep, but you wait for it to force itself upon you. Like exercise, you may not incorporate sleep into a routine that allows the necessary amount of time—somewhere between seven and nine hours. Give up the battle against sleep. Make it part of your routine to reap its benefits and avoid the side effects of deprivation.

Being Sick Can Be Bad for Your Health



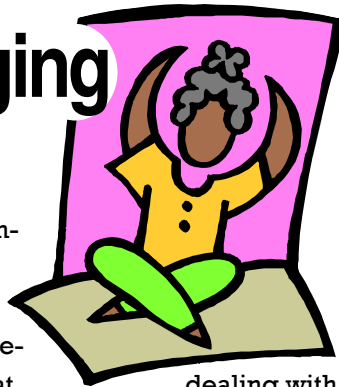
Too much work stress can affect your health, but so can no stress. If you are on sick leave for a long period, monitor yourself for depression symptoms and slowly emerging negative thoughts about your self-esteem. Work has huge psychological rewards from social interaction, even with coworkers with whom you sometimes have conflict. You can get a list of depression symptoms from a counselor or health care provider. You may be recovering from a physical illness, but it’s the “whole you” that needs to come back healthy.

Was It a Panic Attack?



If you use an “I can take it” approach to managing stress, you may be building *cumulative* stress, especially if you don’t exercise, get a break from work, or seek balance with some fun. A fast-paced, high stress society with conflicting work and family demands, combined with greater financial risk and insecurity about the future, may make your body respond with anxiety or panic-like symptoms. The term “panic attack” can conjure up an image of extreme agitation or franticness. Although many people with anxiety and panic symptoms experience this type of attack, many do not. Instead they suffer a host of disturbing and puzzling, but less acute, symptoms such as heart palpitations, sleep disturbances, rashes, breathing difficulties, or other problems. There are dozens of symptoms related to panic and anxiety. Discovering the cause may not happen until an acute attack forces you to seek medical attention. Prevention of anxiety and panic symptoms is not a test of your willpower. Instead, learn about panic and anxiety symptoms from your doctor, employee assistance professional (EAP), or health care provider. A quick search on the Internet will lead you to many sources, but be cautious of scam “cures” and misinformation on Web sites. The leading organization for information is the nonprofit Anxiety Disorders Association of America at www.adaa.org.

Attitude-Changing Secrets



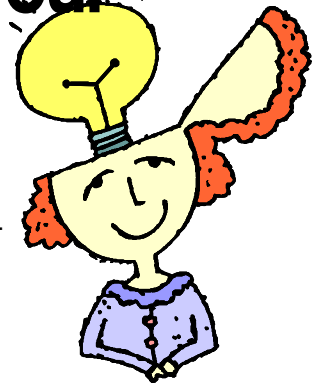
Scott Hamilton, the famous Olympic skater, once said: “The only disability in life is a bad attitude.” His extraordinary life of achievement and adversity convinced him that dealing with life’s challenges is something no one escapes. How well we master this task is reflected in how we behave and interact with others. Our attitude says something about how we are doing with our most important job—living. To fire up a new attitude, practice thinking and believing things that support the attitude you want. The more you practice this “refurbishment,” the faster change comes. Try this “cloud seeding” technique: Each night, fall asleep mentally ticking off all that you have done well that day. Focus on what went right. As a new attitude unfolds, you’ll notice new opportunities and feel and act more positive. Others will notice too, and they’ll say so.

Families Fighting to Fit It All In



Late night school practices, fast-food dinners, cramming for tomorrow’s schoolwork, music lessons, sports events, errands, housework—now repeat. If this routine rings familiar and you can’t give anything up (right now), how do you reduce family stress? Those who’ve done it say the trick is to implement “family management rules.” 1) *The Huddle*: Organize a family meeting to discuss how to make the week less stressful. 2) *Map It Out*: Agree on the weekly routine. Include completing homework and getting ready for school (the night before); doing chores—who, what, and when; what times activities happen; and when the lights go out for bedtime. This organizing effort will reduce stress; it won’t turn you into robots. Live by a master calendar. 3) *Recharge*: The weekends are busy too, but find several hours of family alone time and just have fun. If it can’t be all day, try only a few hours. 4) *Weekly Summit*: Meet to analyze and make adjustments for the following week. Pass out kudos (and cookies).

Nurturing Your Creative Juices



You have probably discovered that your best ideas—your real rocket launchers—come while you are not at work.

They pop into your head while driving, walking, taking a shower, or participating in nonwork activities. How can you use this awareness to effectively inspire creativity? Plan for opportunities where you can be stimulated by a completely different environment. Include new sounds, sights, places, conversations, people, and open space to free up your thoughts. Factor in undistracted “alone” time. When ideas come, have a way to capture or record the inspiration. Newton was alone under a tree when the apple hit him on the head.