Ready for the Group?

If you are thinking about professional counseling, you probably have a one-on-one relationship with a therapist in mind. Don’t rule out group therapy or group counseling as a possible approach to achieving your goal. The skilled facilitation of a group of patients or clients seeking to conquer similar issues can be a powerful and exciting approach to personal change. Group therapy is typically less costly, and meetings usually last for an hour and half versus an hour for individual therapy. There are many types of therapy groups. Not every personal issue is suitable for group therapy, but the EAP can help you decide if a group is the way to go.

Depression Medication — Get the Instructions

When anti-depressant medication is prescribed, about 75 percent of physicians say they tell their patients to take the medication for at least six months. However, when asked, more than half of these patients say they were not given instructions on how long they should take their anti-depressant medication. Anti-depressants can be lifesavers, but they don’t work overnight. If you and your physician are talking about medication for depression, be sure to discuss the period of time you will be taking the medication, its effects, and when you should anticipate results. Patients who don’t have such a discussion are more likely to stop using medication that otherwise may have been helpful.

Is That Sexual Harassment?

Can you interact with a fellow worker and make polite comments about their dress, what they did over the weekend, or even participate in mildly flirtatious interactions without having to worry about such acts constituting sexual harassment? Before taking the first step, think, and ask yourself, “Would a reasonable person object to this?” After this consideration, three rules will eliminate most chances of something you say or do being sexual harassment: 1) Use common courtesy and common sense. 2) Pay close attention to a person’s reaction to what you say and do. And, 3) if it appears unwelcome, don’t do it again. Know your organization’s policy on sexual harassment.

Last Year’s Stress Lessons

A study found that 17 percent of U.S. residents living outside of New York City reported symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder two months after 9/11 last year and 6 percent reported symptoms six months later. Looking deeper, researchers found that persons who did not cope as well with the event were more likely to “pretend it didn’t happen,” “think of something else,” or “stay distracted.” The larger lesson on coping with distressful events is to be proactive in coping with them rather than “give up.” Struggling to understand or make meaning of a traumatic event — even if there is none — may prevent negative effects on health down the road.

JAMA Longitudinal Study of Psychological Responses to September 11.; Univ. California Irvine; Lori Brandt.; lbrandt@uci.edu


Important Notice: Information in FrontLine Employee 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.
Wise Moves for Night Owls

If you have been a shift worker for awhile, you have probably discovered ways to balance your work and personal life. No one has to tell you that your stress is unique. If you are new to shift work, it is important to know that adapting to night work while keeping a harmonious personal life is possible, but it takes a conscious effort to achieve your goal. Whether you are new to shift work or not, consider whether the following five life-stress warning signs are continuing: 1) Since starting shift work, a family member complains that “everything” is now on his or her shoulders. 2) You continually feel “guilty” about your job and its impact on your family. 3) You are drinking in the morning after getting off from work with the following rationale, “This is like coming home from an evening job and having a drink.” 4) You are not able to sleep, and those in your home “don’t care.” 5) You are still waiting for quality time with family members to happen naturally. Consider the EAP as a source for trouble-shooting these or other issues.

Fatigue Fighting Food Facts

There is a lot to know about food and its relationship to the prevention of fatigue. Because chronic fatigue illnesses are common, nutrition research is plentiful. Here are a few key tips if you are looking to fight the “three o’clock energy droop”: 1) Try vitamin C. Vitamin C is essential for adrenal gland functioning. Under stress, these glands emit hormones that fight fatigue. Try supplements and natural foods. 2) Drink more water. Fatigue can be an early symptom of dehydration. Drink water periodically during the day, even if you aren’t thirsty. 3) Go easy on the coffee in the morning. It can reduce your desire to eat breakfast. By lunchtime, it could be 18 hours or more since your last meal - definitely an energy zapper. You need most of your calories during the day when you are most active. Appetite suppression can also contribute to overeating at dinner. 4) Snacking in the afternoon is good, but think fruits, vegetables, low-sodium juices, and foods with whole grains.

Don’t Let the Holidays Get You Down

While the holiday season is a time of joy, the extra pressures and stresses of preparations and gatherings can cause stress and even bouts of depression. Follow these suggested tips from your EAP to help your holidays be successful:

• Keep expectations reasonable and manageable. Don’t take on more than you can handle. Get help with holiday chores.
• Plan activities ahead of time. Schedule. Don’t commit yourself with too many parties, activities or family obligations. Know your limitations.
• Avoid or keep drinking to a minimum. Alcohol and other drugs may improve your mood in the short term, but they are actually mood depressors.
• Get proper sleep and rest to avoid exhaustion and irritability.
• Participate in some charitable activity. Doing for others bring feelings of satisfaction and fights loneliness. You’ll feel good about yourself.
• Exercise and avoid excessive eating. Do not skip meals. You need the energy.
• Let go of the past! Don’t expect the holidays to be perfect. You can’t change others. Accept that and avoid wishful thinking.
• Practice relaxation exercises. Meditation, breathing exercises, relaxation tapes and laughter are good stress relievers.
• Plan pleasurable activities for the future. The end of season drop in activity can also trigger feelings of depression.
• Spend time with people who are supportive and care about you. Don’t force yourself to be with family/people you do not like or get along with. Pay your courtesies briefly and depart.
• Find time for yourself! Do things that you enjoy. Spend time alone or with mate without children.

If there is a feeling of hopelessness, helplessness or sadness, call your EAP at 1-877-237-8574. For a free, confidential, anonymous, telephone depression screening, call 1-800-433-4468 or go on-line at www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening. Keyword is tnscreen

Adapted from Eat to Beat Fatigue by Joan Slage Blake, M.S., R.D.