Good Night to Sleep Problems

According to sleep disorder expert Brook Judd, MD, of Dartmouth Medical School, the most common cause of sleep problems is undiagnosed depression and anxiety. If sleep problems persist, talk to your doctor, but anticipate being asked a lot of questions so the root of your sleep problem can be identified. There are many helpful sleep medications, but if they mask a more serious medical condition, your sleep problems may not go away. Help your doctor treat you more effectively by keeping a sleep diary before your appointment. Record the time you sleep and wake-up, how long it takes to fall asleep, early morning awakening experiences, and other sleep concerns.

Adapted from www.healthysleeping.com

Don’t Let Rumors Rule

Harmful rumors and gossip about fellow workers are always going to be a possibility in the workplace, particularly large work organizations. But you can help shorten their life span with three interventions:

- Squelch It: Discount the rumor by refusing to listen to it.
- Suppress It: Supply correct information to end it fast.
- Body Block It: Refuse to let it get past you and take on more life by not passing it on to others.

Of course, the best prevention is personal self-control so rumors and gossip don’t start. To that end, it may be helpful to remember an old Turkish proverb: “Who gossips to you will gossip about you.”

EAP Health and Work Study Continues

The Employee Assistance Program, in conjunction with Harvard Medical School, is participating in a national health and work survey. The study explores the impact of certain health conditions on absenteeism and workplace productivity. The deadline for participation has been extended to January 31. All employees are invited to complete the survey. Upon completion, you will receive personalized feedback. Individual responses are confidential and will not be seen by the EAP or anyone at the State of Tennessee. The survey is available on-line at https://www.datastat.com/hs/ss.dss?pid=sg9M or call toll-free at 1.800.837.3142 to obtain a pencil and paper version of the survey.

Good News About Teens

Last summer the Horatio Alger Association conducted a national survey of 1,055 high school students ages 14-18, and found that 75 percent said they get along well, if not extremely well, with their parents or guardians. Only 3 percent said they don’t get along well with their parents. The survey also reported that teens would like to spend more time with their parents and family, and that teens put family members on the top of their list of role models — ahead of entertainers and athletes! Three out of four teenagers are optimistic about the future. Experts say the message in the survey is don’t underestimate the influence of parents over peers in affecting youth behavior. (The Horatio Alger Association provides scholarships and mentoring to disadvantaged students.)

Empathize with Customers

Any professional counselor will tell you that there is power in empathy. Empathy is the ability to communicate understanding and sensitivity to the feelings and experiences of another person. It is both an art and a skill in interpersonal communication. Being empathic helps the other person truly feel heard, and the more accurate the empathy, the better it feels. Empathy is useful in many professions, particularly customer service. Accurate empathy can shorten the time your customer feels disgruntled. It can enhance your, and your company’s reputation, and it can reduce customer service stress. Empathy is sometimes measured in “levels.” The goal is to respond with the highest level of empathy possible. Consider how you would respond to the following complaint. Then see the different responses below and their corresponding empathic levels. Did you ring the bell with a Level 5?

Customer complaint: “I am returning this television set. I took it home and discovered it is broken!”

Level 1: “Are you sure? It was working fine when you purchased it.”
Level 2: “I am surprised it’s broken.”
Level 3: “Wow. I am sorry it’s broken.”
Level 4: “That must have been frustrating. Would you like another one?”
Level 5: “The loss of time and the trouble you’ve experienced must be awful. Let’s get you another one right away.”

Divorce Stress and EAPs

As anyone who has experienced it could tell you, the stress associated with the breakup of a marital relationship comes in stages. Most divorced individuals report that their greatest level of stress occurred while considering divorce; the second most distressing period was when the decision was made to divorce; and the least stressful time was after the separation or divorce. Although employees often seek help for marital problems, fewer consider the EAP to manage the stress of divorce. The earlier you call the EAP, the more likely you are to reduce the effects of the divorce on your health and productivity. The EAP can help with finding support, depression, sleep issues, childcare concerns, financial and legal concerns, and more.

Subdue the Flu

It’s no news — this flu season is one of the worst. Here are a few more tips to help you avoid the virus:

- Wash your hands often, especially if you are shaking hands frequently in the workplace.
- Use disposable tissues instead of cloth handkerchiefs.
- Teach children how to cough to avoid spreading germs.
- As you exit a public washroom, use a paper towel to grab the door handle.
- If your doctor or health clinic runs out of flu vaccine, they may still have the nasal vaccine, FluMist®. Find the mist by zip code at www.FluMist.com.

Keep track of the rise in flu cases for your area at www.cdc.gov/flu/.

A Really New, New Year’s Resolution

New Year’s resolutions — they’re great. But are you so focused on personal change that you could use a computer spreadsheet to keep track of your New Year’s resolutions? This might be the year to add a New Year’s resolution to the list that really is new — accepting yourself as you are. With some imperfections and flaws, you really are okay after all. Indeed, healthy self-acceptance might be the key to helping you achieve many of the other goals on your list!