

WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

Carilion EAP Work / Life Newsletter for Employees and Their Families

Antagonism & Artery Health

Hostile and competitive behavior can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attacks, and strokes, according to a recent study, by contributing to a thickening of the artery walls in your neck. Research participants who were considered hostile and competitive under stress showed a greater thickening of the artery walls in their necks compared to those who were more agreeable, more understanding, and able to go with the flow. Being cynical, distrustful, manipulative, and quick to anger is a health risk, according to the study. The recommendation is to reduce stress and also to examine our personal reactions to it as a key strategy in reducing its potential to cause lasting harm. Take charge of your reflexes in response to stress and you may ward off cardiovascular problems while increasing your ability to handle more stress.

August 16, 2010, *Hypertension Magazine*, Trait Antagonism and the Progression of Arterial Thickening



Is Your Music Player Making You Deaf?

A recent study by the Center of Advancing Health has shown that listening to a personal audio player at high volumes for extended periods of time may cause significant hearing loss. The 24-year-long study observed over 8,700 girls between 1985 and 2008. A tripling of hearing problems occurred among these girls over this period of time. Of those who experienced increased hearing problems, 99.7% had used audio players.

Source: Health Behavior News Service, Research News, Health Behavior News Service, Press Release, August 31, 2010.



Are You Nuts for Salt?

Reduce your sodium intake and your heart will thank you. Although salt is a vital mineral and required in your diet, too much of it can contribute to hypertension, stroke, heart failure, kidney problems, and osteoporosis. Food labels often list "sodium" instead of salt, which is actually sodium chloride. The Food and Drug Administration says you should not exceed a teaspoon of salt per day which is about 2300 mg. Most people unwittingly use far more. An instant soup packet contains 40% of the daily recommended limit. Many fast foods contain 50% of this amount. Try herbs and spices instead to flavor your meals.

Source: FDA.gov, "salt in diet"



Military Website for Psychological Health Helps

The U.S. Department of Defense operates a website dedicated to psychological health. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury website (www.dcoe.health.mil) "assesses, validates, oversees, and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Department of Defense meets the needs of the nation's military communities, warriors and families." If you are active duty, a concerned person, or a professional, look into this rich resource of help whose key purpose is helping service personnel with "invisible" wounds of war like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



Could Family Therapy Be a Fit?



Family therapy is an approach to professional counseling that involves the whole family or at least a few members. Participants meet with the family therapist to resolve problems they share. A family is a system, so when one member struggles with a problem, others are naturally affected. This systems approach to therapy is very effective, possibly more so than if individuals were treated separately. Family therapy allows participants to discover new insights about how they influence each other's psychological health and to acquire skills they can apply to future problems. If you think family therapy might be worth trying, talk to your employee assistance professional or seek a referral from your insurance provider or an association of family therapists. A key aspect of family therapy is the therapist viewing the entire family as the client, not just one family member. This helps prevent one family member from being pointed to as the one with the problem. The benefits of family therapy can be numerous and lead to a happier life for your family in the years ahead.

Planning for Successful Performance



Don't undermine your success following an energizing discussion with your supervisor about this year's coming performance expectations. Avoid these common syndromes: 1) "*Head-in-the-Sand*": Weeks or months into the year, an employee feels uncertain about work expectations. A reluctance to ask for clarification leads to a larger problem. Solution: Communicate early on with the supervisor to get clarity on tasks, if necessary, and continue so you know you're on the right track. 2) "*Letting a Tree Grow Between*": Slowly, estrangement grows between the employee and supervisor. A once-close relationship becomes distant. Frequency of positive communication dwindles. Solution: Pay attention to your gut. When you sense that you and your supervisor are growing apart, discuss this awareness and get a reality check to recapture a better working relationship and a feeling of cooperation. 3) "*One-Way Street*": The employee expects the supervisor to initiate all communication. If it doesn't happen, the employee remains silent, hoping for the best. Solution: Silence is not golden in the workplace. If your supervisor does not provide feedback during the year, ask for it. You'll avoid unpleasant surprises at year-end.

Getting Comfortable with Public Speaking

Try these tips to feel influential as a public speaker: 1) After being introduced, don't dive into your notes too fast. Instead, begin with an engaging and authentic story about your topic while making eye contact with your audience. You'll establish a "presence" and a connection that your audience wants with you. 2) Don't be afraid to raise a provocative or controversial opinion. Doing so will cause your audience to feel the time spent was worth it. 3) Visit YouTube.com and search "speech tips." Watch a few pros and spot a few things great speakers have in common. These are teachable tactics. Model them in front of a mirror, and you will multiply your effectiveness at your very next presentation.



Stopping the "Us vs. Them" Mentality

Does an "us versus them" mentality exist in your workplace? This mind-set can undermine productivity and job satisfaction. To reclaim a more harmonious workplace, get agreement to 1) interrupt the limiting pattern once and for all; 2) stop using words like "you guys," and "your department". These phrases divide you into warring "camps." Instead, use "we" and "our" in your discussions; 3) focus on a shared "threat," such as the need to increase sales, improve efficiency, and decrease stress. Use this as the mutual focus of concern rather than each other; 4) meet regularly to discuss your progress in overcoming the "we versus them" mentality, and don't stop discussing this issue until lasting change is achieved; and 5) ask plenty of "what" and "how" questions to help brainstorm ways to create harmony. Caution: Avoid "why do you"- or "why did your group do this or that"-type questions. Such questions can rekindle distrust.

