

Winter  
2016

# FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

## MIIA Employee Assistance Program

### Confidential Counseling

- Addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Family Issues
- Grief/Loss

### Resources & Referrals

- Legal
- Financial
- Child Care
- Elder Care
- Work/Life

### Stress Management

- Personal Concerns
- Professional Issues

**800.451.1834**

To take a free,  
anonymous mental  
health screening,  
go to:

[www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/miiawellness](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/miiawellness)



### This issue:

- Soft Skill: The Ability to Listen
- Seasonal Affective Disorder: Light Boxes or Counseling
- Easier Management of Difficult Customers
- Have a Plan to Manage Worry
- Domestic Violence and Job Performance

## Soft Skill: The Ability to Listen



Listening well isn't just about hearing information; it also builds relationships. Remember this crucial role of communication, and you may be motivated to do away with some of the common annoyances that sabotage relationships: 1) Distracting yourself—texting, picking up or straightening things—when someone is speaking. 2) Interrupting because you are suddenly reminded of something “more important” to say. 3) Showing impatience by responding to the speaker before information has been completely conveyed. 4) Listening only enough to grasp the nature of a problem, and ignoring the speaker's need to tell the story. 5) Asking the speaker to hurry up and finish. 6) Ceasing to listen when you hear something with which you disagree, and instead starting to think of how to respond.

## Seasonal Affective Disorder: Light Boxes or Counseling?

Millions of people suffer with seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a mood disorder associated with depression and related to seasonal variations of light. Discovered 35 years ago, the condition affects over 4% of the population in the United States at some point in their lives. Use of a light box (easily purchased online) to increase the amount of daily exposure to light has been a recommendation of the American Psychiatric Association for some time now, but don't rule out talking to a counselor. Counseling works well too, and possibly better, according to the first ever comparative study of the two approaches. Researchers at the University of New Hampshire found that cognitive-behavioral therapy (a practical counseling approach to personal change) helped defuse and overcome negative thoughts that fuel depression. Counseling teaches problem-solving skills and different ways to think, and it can prepare you to act and respond to similar problems in the future. A light box does help about 70% of people overcome SAD, but if you don't get the relief you want, don't rule out some old-fashioned talk therapy.

Source: [www.uvm.edu](http://www.uvm.edu) (search “talk outshines” and Mood Disorders Association of Ontario).

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## Easier Management of Difficult Customers

Difficult customers are easier to manage if you use simple typologies to understand them. Consider these five types of customers: Aggressive, Uncommunicative, Entitled, Know-it-all, and Complainer. Manage aggressive customers by remaining calm and politely offering solutions. This extinguishes their volatility. Uncommunicative customers expect you to read their minds. Know your product, and ask questions to determine their needs. Entitled customers want you to see them as special. Respond to them as an attentive agent and you'll earn their admiration. Know-it-all customers enjoy thinking they are smarter than you. Don't fight them. Instead, ask permission to show them what they may not know. They stay in control this way, and will praise you as a professional. Complaining customers have a simpler model. Win them over by apologizing first, then fixing the problem, and lastly explaining what happened. Your role in handling these five typologies is the key to successful outcomes with each of them. Responding effectively takes practice, but it will allow you to work well under stress, feel more in control, and enjoy your job more.

## Domestic Violence and Job Performance

Ninety-six percent of employed domestic abuse survivors say domestic violence affected the ability to do their job. If you are a victim of domestic violence, you may be inclined to minimize the abuse, hope for the best, or hold on to a definition of abuse that perhaps doesn't include your situation. Experiencing little or no physical abuse may contribute to this "comparing out" of the definition. The key question: Does your partner exercise power over you and control your life, or have you *seriously* wondered whether you are in an abusive relationship? If so, talk to a counselor, the EAP, or the police, and take that very first step toward a happier life.

Source: <http://workfamily.sas.upenn.edu> (search "domestic violence fact sheet").

## Have a Plan to Manage Worry

Studies have shown that worry can take years off your life. Lack of sleep, for example, can be a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. Personal strategies for managing worry are therefore as important as diet, exercise, and not smoking. Cope with worry by taking action with questions and exercises that help you gain control of the target issue. 1) Talk about what's worrying you with a significant other, spouse, partner, or trusted friend. 2) Get sound facts about the "what ifs" so worry does not cause your imagination to run away with you. 3) Jot down your worries on paper so you can clearly see what they are. 4) Consider how realistic or unrealistic each worry really is. 5) Write down a strategy or intervention step for each worry. 6) Decide on a timeline for implementing each strategy. 7) Repeat the steps above, daily if needed, to feel relief and gain better control over your worries. Use these skills when worries overtake you, and make them a part of your life management play-book. If you continue to struggle with worry associated with past events you can't change, seek professional counseling.

