

Spring
2015

FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

MIIA Employee Assistance Program

Confidential Counseling

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

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- Legal
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Stress Management

- Personal Concerns
- Professional Issues

800.451.1834

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This issue:

- Stress in America Survey 2015
- Overcoming Fear of Change
- The Mindfulness Movement
- Making Diversity Work for You
- Have an "I-Thou" Conversation

Stress in America Survey 2015

Every year since 2007, the American Psychological Association has commissioned a "Stress in America Survey." And, just like each of the previous years, money stress tops the list in 2015. Seventy-two percent of Americans say they worry about money at least some of the time, and twenty-two percent say they worry about money much of the time. Emotional support is what most people report as helping them cope best with money stress—specifically, having someone they can turn to, such as family members and friends. If you're stressed about money, support is crucial, because it has positive ripple effects. For example, those who had emotional support were likely to worry less, participate in fewer sedentary and unhealthy coping behaviors, make more life changes, and be less likely to have their stress levels become worse. Get guidance and help from a counselor on how to find emotional support if you are suffering from money stress problems—even if there appears to be no immediate solution to increase your income. Source: www.apa.org (search "stress America 2015").



Overcoming Fear of Change

When faced with upcoming organizational change, fear is one of the most significant hurdles to overcome. To face change with determined fortitude, accept that fear of change is normal, and don't deny your concerns. Try "moving your fear to paper" by writing down your worries—even small things like losing an office, giving up a pretty commute or coming home later count. See if you can identify exactly what the change will bring, then consider each concern's potential solution. Find supportive friends or a counselor with whom you can discuss concerns. You'll discover solutions and coping strategies for virtually any problem or issue. Resist buying into rumors at the water cooler that can stoke more fear. Instead, bring concerns to your boss and compare them with official information sources. Read about how to cope with change. The field of literature on this topic is huge, and reading may be the fastest way to feel empowered. Staying on top of your fear by remaining proactive and planning your approach to change will help you stay positive. You are no stranger to change, so consider any past experiences where you successfully overcame major changes that occurred in your life. Ultimately, coping with fear of change is about taking control of your attitude and using a personal set of adaptation strategies that will help you benefit from new experiences that are coming your way.

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The Mindfulness Movement

Have you seen the term “mindfulness” online, off-line, and in the health news? Mindfulness is



an approach to well-being and health that entails learning how to pay attention in the moment and how to improve one’s self-awareness. Techniques like slow breathing, focused concentration and meditation are used to relax, gain control over anxiety and depression, deal with fears, reduce stress and pain, and improve concentration. Mindfulness helps you feel centered, helps you slow down, makes you less reactive to the stresses of life, and helps you be more productive. Mindfulness is gaining mainstream acceptance in medical school training as professionals begin to understand its use in supporting the treatment of many medical conditions. For more information, check out the just-released book *Mindfulness for Dummies*.



Have an “I-Thou” Conversation

Workplace conflicts are quite normal. However, they deserve speedy attention because they are easier to resolve early-on. Don’t fear conflict. View it as an opportunity to advance your relationship. Learn the “I-Thou” approach when engaging to resolve differences. The idea is simple: use an attitude that views your coworker as a whole person, with a desire equal to yours to have compatible, mutually beneficial relationships at work. Seeing him or her as a unique and valuable person with hopes, dreams, strengths, and fears just like you turns conflict into an opportunity for deeper understanding of each other. You’ll easily resist becoming workplace foes. Twentieth century philosopher Martin Buber first wrote about this idea in human interaction. He saw it as the most meaningful way humans can interact and value each other. It works beautifully in the 21st century workplace, and your organization will reap the benefits of it.

Making Diversity Work for You

When solving problems and searching for new ideas among your workgroup or team, take advantage of the problem-solving capabilities of every team member, but especially those who bring unique perspectives based on diverse life experience, background, gender, race, culture, or worldview. This strategy is based on a principle called “standpoint theory.” Standpoint theory means that each person possesses a unique perspective, but the more divergent from the norm the background, life experience, or cultural orientation of the employee is, the more diverse that perspective is likely to be. Standpoint theory can better leverage the talents of your team. It also recognizes in practical terms the inherent capabilities of your group’s diverse makeup. Another key value of standpoint theory is its ability to prevent “groupthink,” a situation in which everyone from the dominant or similar background within the group tends to believe the same thing. This unwittingly walls off the group from the opportunity to see the best solution. Who we are and where we’ve lived and what culture, race, or life orientation we experience all contribute to our individual perspectives. This greatly determines how we view problems and set out to solve them. This is what makes diversity in the workplace so valuable, and why it is a resource that can advance the mission of your organization.