

FRONTLINE



MEMORANDUM

MIIA Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

A Confidential Counseling & Referral Service

800.451.1834

Tackle the Thief of Time

It's been said, "Procrastination is the thief of time." It's usually not the task you are avoiding; it's the size or pain linked to the task. Reduce the pain and you will start moving forward. Divide any task into three to five steps. The first step can be small and no longer than five minutes in duration. Once you get started, subsequent steps will probably follow immediately or shortly after. If you procrastinate at step two, apply the formula again to that step.



Intervene Early with Coworker Conflicts



When conflict with a coworker begins, *intervene early*. You could save yourself years of anguish, and potentially turn the relationship into a beneficial one. Avoid denying or suppressing your feelings of anger as a coping strategy. As conflict worsens, the risk that you will act irrationally in response to a provocative moment increases. When this happens, management will often hold each of you equally accountable in the conflict and equally responsible for its resolution. You will feel frustrated if you see yourself as the victim.

Managing conflict is a life skill. Avoid the mad dash for a book on "dealing with difficult people" once it's too late to rediscover harmony with your coworker. To reduce problems: 1) let your coworker know you are sensing conflict at the time it occurs; 2) share your feelings in response to an issue or concern and 3) ask for the change you want. Success comes by getting the change in behavior that works for you, not by making a coworker feel punished or blamed.

Call 24/7 to speak to an EAP consultant ready to assist you

Your First Appointment with a Professional Counselor

If you have made a decision to see a professional counselor (therapist), you may be wondering what to say when you get to your first appointment. Usually there is some necessary paperwork, and then your counselor will help guide the interview. If you think about the following issues prior to your appointment, you can maximize the time you spend in your first session. Don't worry—you won't have to share your deepest thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams with this "stranger" in the first session. (cont.)



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Your counselor wants to mostly listen at first because you are the expert on your life. Your main concern is determining if he or she has the skills that are a good match for your needs. Knowing what prompted you to come, what difficulties you are facing, what you think caused the problem, and what you think might help resolve it are very important. Include what you are currently experiencing, what's bothering you, what things you want to be different in your life, and what you've already tried to change. Now you are ready for a great learning experience through professional counseling.

Good is Sometimes Good Enough

Stress Tip: Perfectionism is dedication to the details rather than attention to a goal. Many projects, tasks, and products do not require perfection, so ask yourself whether good is good enough. If the answer is yes, go forward and make changes later with the feedback you will receive. Chances are you will produce a superior result faster with this approach. Put feedback before perfection to enjoy work, reduce stress, and have better outcomes more frequently.

Put Green Where It's Seen

Don't just think green—*do* green! Unless workplace rules or conditions make it impractical, consider bringing plants into your workplace. Plants release oxygen, and their foliage absorbs pollutants and carbon dioxide. Plants also have psychological benefits—so much so that many hospitals involve patients with growing and taking care of plants as a way to help improve psychological health. We are happier with plants. If you are looking to reduce stress, and you have a streak of light at work, fill the space with a plant or two, and see if you don't reap the benefits.



Bouncing Back with Resiliency

How well do you respond at work to frustration, or disappointment? Would you give yourself high marks for the speed and strength at which you bounce back from these difficult experiences? This ability is called resiliency. Resiliency doesn't mean that you ignore your feelings, and it doesn't mean that you're in denial. Resiliency means that you have developed the ability to temporarily put aside these emotional events so you can apply yourself to the problem or crisis being experienced right now. Resiliency develops with practice, and it's a clue to your leadership potential, because responsibility and accountability produce many opportunities that require applying this skill. If you're resilient, you are probably a high achiever in your personal and work life. Develop and practice resiliency and you'll discover a valuable life skill.

Creating Life Improvement Habits

Can anyone create a new life improvement habit in 30 days just by repeating the desired behavior each consecutive day without skipping a day? Although this strategy is still largely considered a myth with a dose of truth packaged as wisdom, the idea of creating a new habit in 30 days (21 days is also a commonly cited number) has been exhaustively recommended by leaders in self-improvement psychology. If you try it, be sure to include two important factors beyond your desire for success. The desire to be successful is less important than planning and then implementing the repetitive plan. Wanting the change badly enough is of course important, but action is the key. The other factor is the ability to "recover" quickly from a setback or a straying from your plan. These two factors in combination predict how successful you will be with the "30 days to a new you" strategy. Now get going!