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# The Frontline Employee

## **Getting the Most Out of Online Counseling**

Online counseling and coaching have gained popularity worldwide, but a few challenges exist compared to in-person sessions. These few tips will maximize the benefits of your experience: 1) Be sure to select a quiet and private space for your sessions so your confidentiality is ensured. You're likely to be more open about issues of concern. 2) Choose the video option so you can see your therapist. This facilitates better bonding necessary for the counseling process. 3) Remember to communicate openly. It's easier to hide feelings, thoughts, and reactions online, so try to be fully present—show the real you as you engage with the professional. This includes your tone of voice and emotional state. 4) After a session, journal issues you want to address next time while they are fresh in your mind.

## **Renewing Intimacy for Long-Term Couples**

The spark of intimacy may need a gentle rekindling if you have weathered years in a relationship. Consider dedicating quality “intentional” time—purposeful and deliberate actions taken with the specific goal of bringing you closer together. The idea is to not wait until you “feel” like sharing time together, but engage in activity to rekindle the type of relationship you want. It follows the adage “bring the body and the mind will follow.” Note: Intentional activities involve conscious choices, communication, engagement, and a focus on building closeness.

## **End Your Day with a Transition Ritual**

If you have struggled with work-life balance, try creating a “transition ritual”—a symbolic approach to ending your day that prompts a mental shift from your professional responsibilities to your personal life and responsibilities at home. For example, at each day's end, routinely turn off lights, straighten your desk, close the laptop, write tomorrow's to-do list, and/or take a short walk. You may soon experience a faster and healthier mental separation between work and leisure so you gain the full benefits of your time off.

## **Seek EAP Assistance for Tardiness**

Employees being late to work are one of the most frustrating experiences for employers, but also for the tardy worker who pounds the steering wheel, angry at arriving to work late again. Get the fix by talking with the EAP if you struggle with this. Although most employees can point to what they believe is the reason for their chronic lateness, often the problem is more complex. Your EAP will help you find the solution to tardiness so you can experience the relief and satisfaction of getting to work on time.

## **“Do It Now” Revisited**

Procrastination would be a thing of the past if “do it now” were as easy as it sounds. To overcome procrastination, use baby steps. For example, need to finish a report? Step one might be to turn on your computer. Even better, walk into your office with step two being to turn it on. 2) Look at the clock and promise one minute of dedication to the task. The idea is that one minute will turn into two, and before long you are done. 3) Promise a reward. (“If I finish this task, I am taking myself to a movie!”) This is called a “pull strategy.” 4) Get an accountability partner—ask a person to check in with you to see if you have completed the task. This is a powerful tactic, but avoid choosing those with whom you have strong emotional ties such as a spouse, another family member, or a close friend. Ironically, your relationship can reduce the urgency needed to complete the task if you don’t fear their disappointment or reaction to your failure to follow through. The do-it-now mentality is a stepping stone to something even more powerful—a proactive mindset—which can significantly boost productivity and your ability to take immediate action. Experiment with strategies that work for you. Make it your goal to adopt a proactive mindset that instills an ability to take immediate action.

## **Stress Tips from the Field: Take It One Day at a Time**

“Taking life one day at a time” is a common saying, meaning to deal with each day’s problems as they come instead of worrying about the future. But it means much more, like pausing and engaging with what is happening right now, thereby appreciating the present moment. This reduces anxiety, produces a calming effect, and puts the brakes on catastrophizing. Instantly, you cease magnifying potential negative outcomes of a stressor, crisis, or concern that you face. You discover that you can control your responses to these things and not be swept up by them. Consider using the “one day at a time” stress management strategy more often. It doesn’t mean neglecting goals or plans or necessary interventions. It simply encourages balanced living right now and maintaining a perspective about concerns.

## **Supporting a Loved One Who Has Cancer**

Upon learning that a loved one has received a cancer diagnosis, you may find it challenging to determine the most supportive and comforting words to express or the best way to offer your support. 1) Be positive and encouraging. Don’t allow fear of unintentionally causing distress to keep you from this role. 2) “Being there”—meaning listening—is your most crucial role. 3) Discard the notion that you must produce a “right” answer or “solution” to what the person is experiencing. 4) Don’t back away or be avoidant, but make visits and contacts purposeful. 5) Don’t say, “If you need me for anything, just ask.” Instead, offer what you can do to lessen a burden. Use the EAP for help in navigating your emotions about the diagnosis and you’ll feel more empowered to be supportive during this critical time. Learn more: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/caregivers/how-to-be-a-friend-to-someone-with-cancer.html>

## **Getting Your Idea Considered**

Rather than having your idea only heard, get it considered. This goal involves a few steps, but they offer the possibility of more success. 1) Don’t share your ideas yet but gather information about the problem you are trying to solve. 2) Learn the how, when, why, who, what, where, and causes of the problem. 3) Write down your idea for solving the problem; it may now be more precise, which is even better. 4) Sum up the benefits of your solution and its downsides, risk, interruptions, or stressors. Can’t think of any? Try harder. (Change creates stress, so your chances of success increase dramatically if you appear balanced in your proposal.) 5) Add a suggested plan for implementing your solution.

**Questions? Call during business hours 815.748.8334, or after hours at 800.373.3327**