



The Frontline Employee

November 2023

Living Well in Anxious Times

Terrible news about war and terrorism can be extremely unsettling, but completely avoiding news is probably not the best solution. To strike a balance, consider these few tips: 1) Schedule—not just prioritize—your self-care practices such as exercise, meditation, and hobbies to help reduce stress and promote mental well-being. 2) Maintain a supportive network of loved ones you can share concerns and process emotions with. 3) Focus on what you can control—your goals, daily activities, and well-being are still important! 4) If anxiety feels overwhelming, speak to a mental health professional at your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). 5) There are now free apps *that block other apps* and let you get news or schedule access only at specific times. Some will even block you from tweaking the schedule in case you get the urge to peek! Learn more: beebom.com/app-blocker-apps/

Get Help for Complex Grief

Grief is a unique experience for everyone. There is no “right amount of time” to navigate grief, but some people do experience prolonged (complex) grief. It can be intense and debilitating. If you are struggling with the inability to move forward in your grief journey, consider professional counseling. There are peaks, valleys, and new horizons in overcoming grief, but taking this step to wellness can help protect your physical and mental health and relationships at home and at work. Learn more about complex grief with this resource: www.abct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/complicated-grief.pdf

Make Your Medical Visit More Beneficial

Bring health questions to your doctor to maximize the benefits of a medical exam. It could save your life. For example, forgetting to mention the curious bump under your arm could be disastrous if it is cancerous. Ask questions about risk given your family’s medical history and about genetic tests that can help prevent them. And don’t hold back questions you feel squeamish about, like sexual health issues. The bottom line—team with your doctor to maximize wellness. Source: health.usnews.com [search “patients ask questions”]

Tips for Managing a Heavy Workload

Many surveys show the primary cause of job stress is a heavy workload. If reducing your workload is not possible, set boundaries between work and personal life by first gauging the amount of work and then scheduling the time necessary to complete it. Also schedule personal, family, or leisure time around these hours. Stick rigorously to this schedule. Here’s why: Work tasks naturally consume all the time allocated or perceived to be available to complete them. (This is known as Parkinson’s Law.) By rigorous scheduling, you leverage this principle to complete the work but still have a personal life—and all the benefits you derive from it!

Avoid Unconscious Bias in the Workplace

Our biases can undermine a positive workplace. A bias is a learned or acquired prejudice in favor of or against a particular thing or individual. A common distinction is that biases are usually not rational. Although diversity awareness and education can help us gain control over biases to prevent their harmful expression, unconscious expression often occurs. Do you recognize any of the following forms of unconscious bias in the workplace?

Confirmation bias: the tendency to use incidents, information, or behaviors you observe to confirm a preexisting belief. Example: Witnessing a workplace error made by an older employee, and using this experience to confirm the bias that older employees make more mistakes. *Implicit bias*: This bias is almost entirely subconscious, and you may even disavow it. However, you act on the bias when the opportunity arises. Example: Believing subconsciously that one gender is better at leadership than another, so it influences your vote for a work team member to be the team leader, in part because of the person's gender. Implicit bias can have adverse effects on hiring and promotion practices, and it often requires a good amount of education and training to increase employee awareness to overcome it. *Social bias*: This refers to attitudes or prejudices that individuals have based on race, disability, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation/identity, or socioeconomic status. Example: "All disabled people are inspirational." Biases can lead to discrimination, unequal treatment, conflict, and lower morale. Learn more: "BREAKING THE BIAS BARRIER: A Guide to Overcoming Unconscious Bias in the Workplace and Beyond" by Anabel Bassey (2023)

Do You have Shift Work Sleep Disorder?

Shift work sleep disorder (SWSD) affects about 10% to 40% of employees—like health professionals, truckers, first responders, pilots, online customer service agents, factory workers, and retail clerks—who work irregular, nontraditional hours (shift work). Preventing SWSD requires six to seven hours of quality sleep nightly, but many life factors can make this goal difficult to achieve. The key is effective sleep hygiene to avoid health effects associated with SWSD, including insulin resistance and diabetes, anxiety, depression, lower bone density, and even lower fertility and neurodegenerative disorders like dementia. Tips: Create a sleep schedule and a comfortable sleep environment, and avoid exposure to digital screens and drinking coffee and alcohol before bedtime, as they disrupt the sleep cycle. Get regular exercise a few hours before bedtime. Avoid eating prior to sleeping. Learn more: sleepeducation.org

Flip the Script with Positive Self-Talk

"Self-talk" is how we think and reason. It's the inner voice that influences your mindset and actions. The words or scripts it produces are either positive or negative but are often outside our awareness. With practice, you can take control of self-talk messages, steer them to be positive, overcome negative scripts, and make self-talk a superpower. In moments of adversity, ask yourself "Is my self-talk lifting me up right now or dragging me down?" If it's negative, fight the script. Immediately replace a negative script such as "I can't do this" with a positive script like "This is a big challenge, but I have the innate capacity to learn and grow from this experience." Key: Self-talk isn't about denial; it's about embracing challenges, learning from failures, and anticipating positive outcomes. The payoff for a positive self-talk habit is huge—more resilience, improved well-being, and more effective relationships.

Preparing for More Positive Holidays Ahead

November is a good time to plan support and structure and to brainstorm ideas for coping with stress or loneliness during the holidays. The EAP is here to assist you in addressing the feelings of holiday-related sadness, isolation, anxiety, emptiness, or loneliness that can arise during this season. You don't have to endure these emotions in silence or solitude. While you may witness the joy and enthusiasm of others, the EAP understands that your experience might be different. Together, you and the EAP can work on creating a personalized strategy to help you navigate the season, and also empower you to embrace the energy and excitement of the upcoming new year.

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