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The Frontline Employee

Best Tips for Success with New Year's Resolutions

Some people do succeed with New Year's resolutions. The following steps (or similar) explain why. 1) Choose a goal that excites you. Make it concrete. Assign a deadline. (For example, "Learn conversational Italian by June 1, 2022, with a passing score of "A.") 2) Write it down. Stay mindful of the resolution by placing reminders "everywhere" so you are continually prompted to act on it. 3) Make an action checklist of very doable steps to the goal, and break all big steps into smaller steps. Spend time developing this list. 4) Give yourself frequent rewards for completion of steps, but plan these rewards in advance. 5) Optional: Telling others about your goal may produce positive pressure to succeed, but research on this idea is mixed. So, if it feels right, try it.

Try the Advanced Heart Attack Risk Calculator

What are the chances you will have a heart attack in the next ten years? There is no certainty, but the Mayo Clinic has developed a sophisticated calculator that can be a strong reality check. It is based on 73 years of data closely following over 5,000 people and three generations. This is the Framingham Heart Study, the longest (ever) cardiovascular epidemiology research study, which began in 1948. Find the calculator at the link below. (The calculator is not a substitute for a professional diagnosis from a qualified medical doctor.) Source: www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org. [Search "cannon-falls heart calculator."]

Teaching Children to Reach Out for Help

Consider imparting an important life skill to children—understanding how and when to ask for help from professionals with expertise that can help them with life's challenges, including mental health professionals. Psychotherapy, mental health services, and support groups still carry some stigma, so helping kids overcome resistance early can help them save years of struggle and pain when the going gets tough. Discuss myths and misconceptions about mental illness, what professional counselors do, and how to encourage others to reach out.

Foods That Slow Alcohol Absorption

Some foods can reduce or slow the body's absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream, thereby minimizing alcohol's effects on the nervous system. Foods high in protein or fat do the best job, but others may lessen your desire to pick up a drink as well, thereby reducing the risk of overconsumption. Consider the following food choices if you are trying to avoid or reduce the effects of alcohol at a social event: eggs, oats, bananas, salmon, Greek yogurt, chia pudding, berries, whole-wheat crackers, grapefruit, melon, avocado, quinoa, beets, sweet potatoes, and trail mix. Source: Healthline.com. [Search "15 foods drinking."]

Managing the Stress of Holiday Expectations

Expectations are often cited as a key source of stress during the holidays, but pressure to participate in activities and events is less of a problem for many people than the sheer pressure of how one is *supposed to feel* during this time of year. If you suffer from depression, or if this time of year includes struggles over memories past, focus on the here and now, and practice avoiding the “future-focus” of what you imagine you will be facing. Do you know from past holiday seasons where your support network lies? This network may include compassionate family members or friends who know you best. Plan for when you will connect or share time with these special people. Include in your support plan a way to connect with your company’s employee assistance program or a mental health professional. You may only need a session or two to feel energized and in more control of your emotional state. There is an adage among members of 12-step groups: “Bring the body, and the mind will follow.” It means that behaviors can sometimes influence feelings. Therefore, if the opportunity to participate in a seasonal event appears, and you do not feel motivated to attend, consider whether participation might surprise you with an uplifting experience and a positive change in mood, you might otherwise have missed.

Relentlessly Bullied, but No One Knew It

Being bullied at school can create enormous anguish for young people, but many parents remain completely unaware of their child’s victimization. This is especially true in adolescence when peers wield powerful influence concerning values and self-worth. This dynamic can cause denial or hiding of victimization—even covering for the bully whose approval the victim may still crave. Desire for peer validation can be stronger than the need to share the victimization. Having meaningful engagement with your child (although more difficult as their time and attention becomes more devoted to friends) can help you become aware of signs of bullying, which can include somatic complaints like headaches and stomachaches or irritability and moodiness after school. Other signs of bullying include reduced interest in school, missing or damaged personal belongings, and avoidance of talking about “how things are going at school.”

Stay Healthy Working from Home

Is working remotely from home not as joyful as it first seemed. Four out of five remote workers struggle with “shutting off” work at the end of the day. About half believe their mental health has suffered. If this sounds familiar, try these fixes: (1) Maintain a regular schedule and stick to it. Resist temptations like sleeping in, doing chores, and participating in distractions that drag out an eight-hour day to 12 hours. (2) Take breaks, but when you do, connect with family and friends, not TV or social media. This will help you avoid burnout. If you can meet outside your home for coffee or lunch, this is even better. (3) Burnout prevention is about awareness and setting boundaries. At the end of the day, leave the smartphone behind. Do not stay connected, if possible. (4) Regular physical activity is essential to boost mental and physical health, so get up, stretch, walk, do jumping jacks. Discover what works best for you. Learn more: www.buffer.com/2021-state-of-remote-work.

Apps that Rescue You from Lost Time

If willpower seems futile to stop overuse of social media or web surfing, try an app to regain control. Some apps lock you out of what distracts you most. Others set limits on the time you can use. A few will confront you with how much time you have spent online, which allows you to calculate the cost of lost time. (Ouch.) Some apps send annoying messages that do not stop until you log off. The above options scratch the surface of what is out there, but a tech solution awaits you that might raise your personal and employment productivity.

Apps: www.reviewed.com [Search “social media stay focused.”]

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