

WORK • LIFE • EXCEL

Work • Life Tips

▶ If you are thinking about professional counseling, you probably have a one-on-one relationship with a therapist in mind. Don't rule out group therapy or group counseling as a possible approach to achieving your goal. The skilled facilitation of a group of patients or clients seeking to conquer similar issues can be a powerful and exciting approach to personal change. Group therapy is typically less costly, and meetings usually last for an hour and half versus an hour for individual therapy. There are many types of therapy groups. Not every personal issue is suitable for group therapy, but the EAP can help you decide if a group is the way to go.

▶ Ask any addiction treatment program what sabotages the recovery of a newly recovering patient and most will tell you that failure of significant others to participate in counseling or education programs ranks near the top of the list. The issue—family members often believe that the addiction is solely the patient's problem. They are unaware of common enabling and provocative behaviors that help fuel the progression of the disease. When the patient exits treatment, family behaviors haven't changed. This contributes to the patient's decision to not manage the disease properly, and relapse ultimately follows.

▶ What we eat plays a major role in brain health and functional independence as we grow older. Wake Forest University researchers examined a group of older adults to determine the impact of drinking a beetroot supplement before working out. They discovered their brains performed more efficiently, mirroring the operations of a younger brain. Combining beetroot juice with exercise delivers even more oxygen to the brain and creates an excellent environment for strengthening the somatomotor cortex, which is the part of the brain involved in planning, control, and execution of voluntary movements of muscles. <http://news.wfu.edu> [search "beets"]

Will Gratitude Add to Your Life?

Thanks to research, the practice of having an attitude of gratitude is beginning to take its place alongside meditation, yoga, and mindfulness as a health practice with demonstrated value. Magazine articles, books, Web sites, diaries, greeting cards, and calendars all promote the attitude of gratitude. More than 20 gratitude-focused research studies have cataloged the health benefits of gratitude, including improved life satisfaction, vitality, hope, optimism, and reduced levels of depression and anxiety. Practicing gratitude is a conscious process that includes the intention of regular thankfulness (i.e., "Today, I am thankful for..." or "My favorite part of today was...") and training one's mind to see the good in any situation. Will it work for you? Source: www.tandfonline.com [search "grateful experiences and expressions"]



Media Violence and Aggression Link



Violent video games, television shows, movies, and their role in influencing and contributing to increased risk of violent or aggressive behavior are concerns many parents share. These fears can now be supported by research that shows the strong correlation of such

media to increased violence. Other factors contributing to increased risk of violence by viewers were also studied. These included peer delinquency, peer victimization, gender type, neighborhood crime, and abusive parenting. Only one of these had more influence than media violence: violent peers. Although abusive parenting is a well-known risk factor for violence in adulthood, media violence has an even greater influence—it's more than twice as influential. <http://www.news.iastate.edu/news/2017/04/11/mediaviolence>

Let Nature Rejuvenate You

New research shows that there are mental health advantages that come with spending time immersed in natural settings. Frequent technology use puts extraordinary strain on cognitive functions such as attention, problem solving, focusing, multitasking, and shifting between programs with different cognitive demands. Research indicates that exposure to natural settings seems to improve our ability to perform these tasks because of the restorative benefits offered by a radically different change of environment. A couple of days of downtime and communing with nature can give you a 50% boost in productivity! <http://www.plos.org> [search "OO51474"]



Find Work and Family Balance with Shared Activities

If you struggle to find balance between work and family, try “shared activity” as a strategy to help you feel less guilty and score some wins. While working in your office at home or doing chores (with the few precious hours you possess on the weekend), consider engaging your child in a way that combines the activity with one he or she can also do that allows them to be present with you. It’s a myth that your child watching you work is a “negative” or that “finding balance” means it must always be play. Witnessing your work ethic can be powerfully influential. Many parents with demanding work schedules have mastered the art of exposing their children to their work by creatively allowing them to be close observers or even participate in some manner. Work and family balance is about testing and experimentation. Find fascinating strategies at pinterest.com by logging in free and searching “work family balance.”



Getting Couples' Communication Unstuck



Communication problems are still the most commonly cited reason for separation and divorce, so don't let the frustration of communication problems linger too long in your relationship before taking steps to intervene. You can start by applying tried-and-true principles of effective communication. Although many communication strategies for reducing conflict and healing relationships exist, the following three are foundational and can help you experience almost immediate results: 1) Use “I” statements when talking about your feelings and your needs. Doing so instantly removes the blaming dynamic your partner responds to with defensiveness. 2) Listen without interrupting. This takes conscious effort, and it is a skill that comes with practice. So practice. It will be easier because of #1 above. 3) When your partner speaks, listen and validate what was said. The ability to paraphrase demonstrates the most appreciated and satisfying form of validation, but expect it to feel a bit awkward until it becomes a more natural part of your communication style. If these exercises don't work, then seek help from a professional counselor before throwing in the towel on your relationship. Counselors know how to apply communication strategies and can guide you through them and give you more to use in the future if needed.

Getting Help for Anxiety

More than 40 million North Americans suffer from chronic forms of nervousness that interfere with their life. These are anxiety disorders, which are highly treatable forms of mental illness that can benefit from counseling, support, medication, or alternative therapies. If anxiety is interfering with your life or bothersome in ways that interfere with your relationships, your job, and your happiness, don't be a prisoner to the disabling condition. Anxiety can't be seen like a rash or a mole, but it is just as real, and it's not your fault. Failing to understand anxiety can lead you to suffer longer as you struggle to control its symptoms. This can contribute to additional stress and health problems like depression. Reach out and get proper help from mental health professionals through an insurance referral from your doctor or help from an employee assistance program.



How to Receive Criticism Well



Handling criticism well is a workplace skill you may never quite perfect, but there are ways to build emotional resilience to it. 1) Criticism doesn't mean you're wrong, but some truth probably exists. Search for it. 2) One complaint does not mean everyone feels the same way. 3) Criticism may originate from a reaction to only a small part of your work, not the entire effort. Don't discard what is working well. 4) Like the ring of a bell, the sting of criticism dissipates. Don't risk an improper reaction to it by responding immediately. Instead, wait for a few hours—or, even better, overnight—before reacting. 5) See criticism as a gift to improve your productivity and increase the value of what you do. 6) Label criticism as feedback, and thank those who offer it.

