

CLAREMONT EAP IMPACT

Employee Newsletter

July-September 2010

DID YOU KNOW?

- Free "Simple Will" Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury
- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care

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IMPROVING RECALL

For communication to be effective, not only do you need to hear information accurately, you must also remember it. Remembering a name, key points of a client's wish list, a deadline or a list of concerns your boss mentioned can be challenging. Writing notes isn't always enough; you may need to carry that information in your head to stay on top of your job. Your memory is like a muscle: The more you use it, the stronger it gets. Repetition, association and organization are three keys to improving your recall. Here are some tips:

Repetition

Repeating information helps move it into the long-term memory area of your brain. Actors learn lines by repeating them many times over the course of several days. If you want to recall something you've heard, repeat it to yourself several times. Try writing it down from memory.

Association

Associating what you hear with something familiar ties it to other material in your long-term memory. One way to associate is to think of something the information reminds you of. How does it apply to your job, your experience, your needs? If you can associate it with something familiar, it will help you remember. For example, if you need to remember a number sequence, split the number into pairs and think of people you know whose ages fit the pairs. It will be easier for you to remember the people's names, rather than a string of numbers.

Organization

If you're required to absorb large amounts of information each day, try mentally categorizing it. Studies show that people given a large number of words to remember recall them better if they organize them into categories. Categories can be by alphabet, subject (animals, kitchen utensils, colors) number of letters, parts of speech and so forth.

Taking Notes

Taking notes during or immediately afterward uses repetition, association and organization to reinforce your memory.

Using Mnemonics

Mnemonics is a technique to help you remember things by using certain formulas. For example, you can make up a story using the information you want to remember. You can use rhymes (Thirty days hath September...), word play (think of "mixed up men" to remember "mnemonics") or association with rooms in a house.

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CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE TO ACCOMPLISH MORE



When things go wrong, it doesn't have to ruin your day. In fact, with the right outlook, you can prevent many problems from ever happening. When mistakes occur or something goes wrong, "remember that you're the person who controls your reactions," says Ed Foreman, a motivational speaker and president of Executive Development Systems in Dallas. "Don't let the weather, your spouse or your boss take that control away from you."

Choose to maintain a positive attitude. "Bring a proactive approach to situations, don't just react to things after they've happened," he says. "Decide how you would like them to turn out." Set high expectations up front. "Instead of wondering what might go wrong, start looking for things to go right. Our thoughts are self-fulfilling, so chances are you will get the result you expect," says Mr. Foreman.

A positive outlook contributes to a less stressful, more healthful lifestyle, he says. Anger, fear and other stressful emotions are associated with many health problems, from depression to high blood pressure, heart disease and the common cold. But feeling good about yourself and others helps prevent mental anguish and physical problems.



Being upbeat also contributes to more pleasant personal relationships. "Take an honest look at your attitude, then ask yourself, 'Would I like to work with this person? Would I like being married to me?' If you answer no, it's time to change your attitude and behavior," says Mr. Foreman.

Start with a smile

Start building a positive attitude as soon as you open your eyes each morning. "Instead of dragging yourself out of bed and off to work in a big rush, start each day with a positive, healthful routine," Mr. Foreman says.

To do that, he suggests you:

- Get up early so you don't have to rush.
- Tune into positive messages. If the morning news depresses you, listen to a motivational cassette or read an upbeat, fun book.
- Eat a healthy breakfast.
- Exercise. Refresh your body and spirit with a brisk walk or other aerobic activity.
- Leave home early. Allow enough time for your commute - and then some.

Put yourself in charge

"On the job, an individual with a positive attitude is more likely to achieve good results. The next time there is an important assignment or a promotion, that person is likely to get it," Mr. Foreman says.

Here are his strategies for achieving a positive attitude at work:

- Plan your day and your future. Work to achieve real goals, not just finish tasks.
- Greet people with a smile. Studies have found that smiling makes you feel better.
- Avoid excuses; they just make the other person angrier. But "I'm sorry" and "I'll take care of it" work wonders.
- Give sincere appreciation. Your co-workers deserve to know when they've done something well -- and they will return the compliment.
- Listen more and talk less. Listening to another person is one of the best compliments you can give.
- Alternate work and rest periods. Take time out to refresh yourself with a walk, stretches or other moderate exercise.
- Don't complain. Grumbling focuses attention on what's wrong, not what's right, and creates a negative atmosphere.
- Learn from your mistakes. Instead of getting upset, ask, "How can I correct the situation?"
- Make room for humor. Make it cheerful, not offensive.
- Review your accomplishments at the end of the day. Even small contributions make a difference.
- Go home early enough to spend time with family or friends. Relax and get a good night's sleep.

TOO TENSE? LEARN TO RELAX

The scenario has become an increasingly familiar one. You go to the doctor with a stomachache or other minor ailment that just doesn't seem to go away. Unable to find anything wrong, the doctor tells you that you're "stressed out" and that you need to relax more. You want to take his advice to heart, but you're not sure what to do.

Experts say that effective relaxation requires more than simply vegging out in front of the TV set. It means learning a few relaxation techniques to combat stress -- a condition recently linked to a host of physical and emotional problems like heart disease, headaches, asthma and insomnia.

In times of stress, your body produces various chemicals, such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol, that put the body on alert and send your cardiovascular system into overdrive. In other words, your muscles tense, you breathe faster and your pulse quickens. Scientists call it the "fight-or-flight" response, and no doubt it enabled our cave-dwelling ancestors to react quickly to imminent danger, such as the unexpected appearance of a saber-toothed tiger at teatime.

Today's comparatively more mundane threats, such as the traffic jam that threatens to make you late for a meeting, produce the very same reactions.

And unless you make an effort to alleviate those stresses through relaxation, your blood pressure may rise, your immune system's ability to fight disease may drop a notch and you may indeed begin to suffer from stomach and muscle aches and other stress-related symptoms. Turning on the TV -- particularly violent TV -- probably won't help. More than likely, it will just stimulate production of those chemicals that trigger a fight-or-flight response. It's better that you do something that reduces or eliminates the production of those chemicals, says Barbara Moeller, a New Jersey stress therapist.

Here are some techniques you can practice to relax more deeply and effectively:

Paul J. Rosch, M.D., a professor at New York Medical Col-

lege and a leading stress expert, says that what you think about can affect your stress levels. To see how this is true, try this exercise:

Imagine arguing with someone you don't like. Notice how your pulse quickens, your jaw tightens and your muscles tense? Now take a few minutes to imagine a more pleasant situation, such as napping on a warm beach. Notice how your heartbeat slows and muscles loosen up?

You've just witnessed how guided imagery -- similar to good old-fashioned daydreaming -- can help you to relax. To relax further:

- Sit or lie comfortably and close your eyes.
- Imagine a situation or scene that you find comforting or relaxing, such as a quiet stroll in the park.
- Try to involve as many of your senses as possible. If you're envisioning a beach, for example, imagine seeing the blue sky, hearing the waves crashing, smelling the salt air, feeling the warm sun and tasting great ice cream.
- Repeat an affirmation, like "I'm releasing tension now," to yourself as you keep the scene fixed in your mind.

There's no way to overstate the value of regular aerobic exercise, such as riding a bicycle, walking or jogging, to help your body relax, say experts. Regular exercise not only improves your fitness, it produces endorphins -- chemicals in the brain that counteract the stress chemicals and produce a feeling of well-being.



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TOO TENSE? LEARN TO RELAX

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One variation on exercise you might try is yoga, which uses stretching techniques to strengthen the body and quiet the mind. Yoga helps relieve tension in the muscles and increase circulation in the body, experts say.

Not many of us are aware of just how much our own breathing reflects and affects our state of mind and stress levels, says David Feifel, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego.

Fast, shallow breathing initiates anxiety, while slow, steady breathing invites a sense of calm, says Dr. Feifel, who adds that simply slowing your breathing can trigger relaxation in both the mind and the body.

Here's a simple technique you can practice anywhere, even in the car:

- Take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds.
- Imagining that you're blowing all the tension from your body, purse your lips and exhale slowly. Repeat several times.

"Relaxation techniques can give you a whole new perspective," says Dr. Feifel. "They can do more than just reduce stress; they can help you can gain the ability to extract a greater appreciation of the richness of life."



IMPROVING RECALL

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Remembering a Name

- As a person is introduced, focus on the name. Pay more attention to the name than to anything else being said. Notice a physical characteristic, such as a mole unusual hair color or a scar, not what the person is wearing.
- Repeat the person's full name: "Hello, Paul Jones." Do this instead of the usual "Pleased to meet you." It'll give just as good of an impression and you'll have the reinforcement of having actually spoken the name.
- Associate the name with a vivid image. It might be a rhyme: "Paul Jones, Ball Bones." It doesn't have to make sense. In fact, the sillier the image, the more likely you are to remember it.
- Associate the physical feature and the name in a rhyme. Think of the feature and the name together. Make up a silly story or image that includes both.
- After meeting someone, take 15 minutes to repeat the person's name to yourself, using your associations to guide your memory.
- If necessary, write down the names and features of people you meet.
- If you forget a person's name, ask for it again as soon as you can. "I'm afraid I'm terrible at remembering names. But yours is important to me. Would you mind telling me again?"

CLAREMONT EAP

Claremont distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

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