



Hidalgo Health Associates

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

225.927.0160 or 1.800.448.4470 – Toll Free

When Tragedy Strikes at Work

There are best practices for coping with tragedy in the workplace, and communication is crucial for all of them. 1) Share all



appropriate information. It facilitates healing discussions among workers. 2) Don't judge others' reactions. There is no "correct" way of reacting to tragedy. Each person is unique, and the reasons why are complex. 3) Use counseling resources and self-help groups. They can speed your way to a healthful return to your pre-tragedy emotional state. 4) Even if you feel no support is needed, consider a "check-in" that can help keep you from overlooking a reaction that later interferes with social or job functioning. 5) Because tragic events can adversely affect focus and performance, give it time, and be patient with people.

Kid Solutions to Coping with COVID

"Back-to-school"

means something dramatically different this fall, but coping well with changes requires discussing them together as a family. After school, ask the kids how things are going, but expect the usual "hmm... fine." To identify hidden worries, like bullying or social skills gaps that are causing distress, use open-ended questions that can't be answered with yes, no, or fine. Work on solutions together. Try brainstorming as a family or a group, or one on one with your child. You'll be surprised at the solutions kids imagine for solving their problems, ones that fit perfectly with their circumstances.



Use "Distancing" to Think Calmly Under Pressure

There is another kind of distancing worth knowing about: "distancing" as a job skill, and a means of functioning well under pressure. Distancing is the mental task of separating oneself emotionally from severe interactional stress (e.g., a verbally irate customer) so you maintain focus on a task. (Navy Seals learn this skill.) To develop the distancing skill, take a deep breath when under pressure; acknowledge the situation ("Okay, the pressure's on. I can do this."); challenge yourself to be calm and visualize calmness; and focus on positives and the temporary nature of the event. Employers value workers who can perform well under pressure. Now you know how to do it.



Drug of Abuse Resurgence: GHB

Gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) is a colorless liquid or white powder that is often associated with the club scene and rave parties. It is an illicit drug that has had a resurgence recently. GHB can easily be placed in a beverage, and



has been associated with date rape. The drug produces euphoria and memory loss, among other effects, but a drop too much can cause seizures and death. Hundreds have died after being unwittingly dosed by others. Other drugs used to facilitate sexual assault include Rohypnol and ketamine, but the most common drug used to facilitate rape is still alcohol.

Reduce Squabbles to Increase Productivity While Working from Home



Working remotely is the new normal for many employees. This change is requiring millions of workers to adapt. However, when family time increases, so can domestic stress. Add social isolation mandates, and you have a recipe for increased bickering and family squabbles. Have you experienced this “quarantine quarreling”? Has it affected your work productivity? We’re all familiar with bickering. It’s about the small stuff: “Whose turn is it to walk the dog?” and “How come no one put the wet laundry in the dryer?” Reducing bickering begins with understanding it is normal. Feeling less guilty about it can help you focus on intervention strategies. The inevitable is fewer incidents of its occurrence, fewer interruptions of your job, and more instances of members of your family communicating healthily. Even children can learn conflict resolution skills, and all can build the resilience necessary to cope with twists and turns in how the world responds to the pandemic. To these ends: 1) Have regular family meetings to discuss the need for a private, quiet workspace. Refresh and reinforce agreements about the rules to keep your remote workspace a productive one. 2) Take planned breaks to attend to family needs, which don’t vanish while you are working. Even 30 minutes spent attending to chores will reduce frustrations or resentments attributed to your being “always unavailable.” 3) Decide on definite work hours, if possible. Inertia often makes it easier to keep working after hours than to switch gears in favor of work-life balance. 4) Plan events on a family calendar so that everyone can look forward to and anchor themselves on them. This increases resilience and the ability to be more patient in the present. 5) Exercise with family members. The positive effects of exercising together are well documented in research. There is perhaps no more efficient way to accomplish three important goals at once—improving health, managing stress, and building bonds with those you love.

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Tips for Making Better Impressions at Work



Embrace these overlooked work habits to impress company leadership: 1) Put away the smartphone before the meeting begins. You might be producing good work as you’re tapping away, but phones are also fun, leisurely browsing devices. Many managers who have to compete with your phone might assume you’re indifferent, but they may not remark on it. 2) Bring more solutions to the table along with problems you identify. This solution-oriented mindset will elevate your reputation. 3) Focus on quality in your work, rather than quantity. Make it a part of who you are, but resist the temptation to direct others in noticing it. They do. 4) Show excitement for the job, focus on the positive, be willing to tackle tough assignments, and see opportunities in disappointment.

Benefits of Brisk Walking

“Walk faster and live longer” is a popular health tip. Now, research seems to support it. A three-year study of 92,000 people found that those who walked briskly for seven minutes daily within a 12-minute walk had a 30% lower likelihood of death. A two-minute brisk walk within a 35-minute stroll lowered risk of early death by 21%! If you don’t have an easy exercise program, it’s likely not a problem of capability. Instead, it is a problem of motivation. Overpower your resistance by identifying something you truly enjoy, and combine it with the exercise routine—music, books on tape, or mind-blowing educational content you’ve always wanted to hear or study. Let your doctor approve any exercise program, but find one that makes an impact like this one!



“You are a light. You are the light. Never let anyone — any person or any force — dampen, dim or diminish your light.” – John Lewis



- Q. *Looking at signs and symptoms of possible substance use on a checklist used for reasonable suspicion, it seems that employees could refute many of the items as unrelated to drug or alcohol use. I am referring to words like "unsteady or disheveled." What can supervisors do?***
- A. There is no need to argue about what you observe and what it means, but be sure to create effective documentation. Referral to reasonable suspicion testing does not require you to be certain of substance use prior to the test, only to properly document the possible signs and symptoms that support the referral. Key is considering all the categories of signs and symptoms, not just one, prior to meeting with an employee and referring to testing. These other areas of evidence are speech, odor, the employee's awareness (for example, disoriented, paranoid, or hyperactive), attitude and demeanor (combative, talkative, giddy, etc.) and changes in motor skills (such as shakiness, swaying, or unsteadiness). Don't simply check a list of signs and symptoms, but add other measurable and quantifiable observations that reinforce what you check. For example, "The employee was unsteady, speaking to me in the parking lot while leaning against a car."
- Q. *I want to praise my employees more. I know how valuable it is, but I hesitate because I feel it won't be taken as genuine and that the employee will think I am being patronizing or insincere. Is there a way I can get over this hump?***
- A. Done correctly, praising employees is an act of giving, and it requires being genuine and vulnerable in front of your employee. This can make you fear rejection, especially if your own beliefs about praise cause you to hesitate in accepting praise from others. Rather than analyzing the whys and wherefores of this problem, use a behavioral change process and measure your progress. Keep a small diary and record 1) Opportunities you spot to offer praise; 2) Sensations of hesitation you experience when you offer it; 3) How you feel afterward, once you've offered the praise; and 4) What you believe is the positive impact of praising the employee. When praising an employee, describe what was done well, why the action was effective, and how it advances the mission of the work unit. This process will give you stronger reasons to value praise and offer it more often. According to the Harvard Business Review, most employees rate supervisors as more effective if they offer praise. Learn more: hbr.org/2017/05/why-do-so-many-managers-avoid-giving-praise
- Q. *In supervisor documentation, what is the difference between describing and interpreting unacceptable behavior?***
- A. Descriptive documentation leaves no room for misinterpretation. There is no need to read between the lines. An example of descriptive documentation would be "Bill left the room quickly, appeared angry with a scowl, and shut the door behind him with great force, frightening employees. Two similar events involving Bill occurred prior to this one." Interpretive documentation is less measurable, more subjective, and biased. It falls short in the ability to support administrative actions, and as such, undermines the ability to correct performance. Example: "Bill's toxic attitude toward members of his team is persistent, and this was again demonstrated at 4:00 p.m., when he brazenly slammed the door in everyone's face after a heated exchange with his team. This happens constantly." The second piece of documentation is emotional and visual, but arguably less concrete. It may be more satisfying for the supervisor to write, but it could also lead to more disagreement about what actually occurred.

Q. *Social distancing and wearing masks are tiresome. Some employees handle it better than others. I worry about the effect the pandemic is having on mental health, especially for those who are fragile and less resilient. What can supervisors do to help?*

A. Employee assistance programs are on the front lines in meeting the needs of employees, so refer to the EAP as the best first step. An increase in mental health problems associated with the pandemic is in the news. Medical experts are closely watching the big four: depression, alcohol use disorders, substance abuse, and anxiety. Suicide can be a consequence of any of these conditions. If you are interacting online, you may spot signs and symptoms of a troubled employee. While you can't diagnose, you can ask how they are doing. Do so especially if you witness 1) Withdrawal-the avoidance of others and pulling away from work assignments; 2) Poor availability, and needing increasing time off; 3) Visible irritation, or a short fuse in online meetings; 4) Looking confused, distracted, or unable to focus in a conference call. Consult with the EAP whenever you are concerned about a worker because if a referral is needed later, it is likelier to happen. Source: [www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/05/04/mental-health-coronavirus\](http://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/05/04/mental-health-coronavirus/)

Q. *We had an employee who took his own life. No one seemed surprised by this suicide based upon the worker's past history of problems. Frankly, however, I feel guilty that we missed any signals, and wonder if we could have prevented this tragedy. How do I move past this?*

A. It is important to accept that the suicide is not something you had the ability to control. Employees should be encouraged to contact the EAP individually for support, and you should use EAP services yourself to process your grief and loss, along with the sadness, anger, and guilt that are natural responses to the employee taking their life. Confusion, helplessness, and feeling lost are what give way to the guilt and "what ifs." Also explore other options with the EAP, such as a group meeting online if appropriate. There are best practice guidelines for workplaces responding to loss; these can help in honoring the worker's life, providing support for family members, and engaging in activities that move the group forward. The EAP can help you identify these steps or research them for you. All of these things combined will help you move past the phase of grief you are experiencing right now.

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We Can Help!

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