

# MY student newsletter

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## Better Reasons to Stop the Gossip

**I**f you value a positive workplace where open communication is a tradition that reduces conflict, then you should value a tradition that refrains from gossip. Office gossip corrodes a positive workplace, and here's why: Gossip produces a chain reaction of secrecy and negativity that erodes trust. As one person shares gossip, the next person to hear it is naturally left inhibited from being open and sharing of themselves in the future because they figure they might be the next victim. Gossip creates a short-lived bond between two people, but it comes at a high cost. Choose optimistic information sharing instead. You'll be a more enjoyable person with whom to speak, and you'll bond in a more positive way.

## Dozing Off with Digital Media

**I**s your child falling asleep with technology aglow? Children's eyes are not fully developed, and research shows their eyes are more sensitive to light than the eyes of adults are. This can affect the brain and disrupt circadian rhythms (the biological clock). Lack of sleep can contribute to excessive tiredness at the end of the school day, grade slippage, conduct problems, loss of interest in other pursuits, depression, and an increase in suicide risk. Make rules early on concerning the use of digital media. Doing so later won't be as easy.

## Is a Family Member Mentally Ill?

**A**s symptoms of mental illness appear, family members often experience denial as they seek to cope with confusing or frightening behaviors, especially bipolar disorders and schizophrenia. Early diagnosis and treatment is crucial, so seek guidance from a professional counselor, medical doctor, or the EAP when you see confused thinking; prolonged depression (sadness or irritability); feelings of extreme highs and lows; excessive fears, worries and anxieties; severe social withdrawal; dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits; unusually strong feelings of anger; strange thoughts (delusions); seeing or hearing things that aren't there (hallucinations); growing inability to cope with daily problems; or suicidal statements.

Learn more at <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/improving-care>.

## Quick, Make a Speech!

**B**eing asked to give an impromptu speech will catch you off guard. Don't panic—there are proven tactics to help you. 1) You're respected—that's why you've been asked. Think, "I'm going to make this fun." Now you're poised. 2) Open with a question to "pull" in your audience. (e.g., "So, everybody here wants to hear about the Jones Project? Is that right?" But make sure it's a question everyone will readily answer "yes" to. 3) Personalize your talk with your experience using a story-like manner. Doing so will make it flow, capture your listeners, and reduce your nervousness. Being relaxed may result in natural humor, which, of course, is always a plus.

## Working Better Under Pressure

**T**he first reaction most people have to the idea of working under pressure is dread. We've all been there, caught between a rock and a hard place with the need to deliver. There are people who can work under pressure quite well. Some even thrive on it. The ability to work under pressure is a learned skill that has one overarching goal: Relief from feeling overwhelmed so you can focus and engage the work efficiently. Avoid obsessing over the large task at hand. Instead, break it into parts and give each part a mini-deadline. Eliminate all potential distractions. Not doing so will ratchet up the pressure more. Use clocks, timers, or other devices to keep yourself moving and on track, but decide the most critical chunk of work you must do first. Start with what's urgent and important. Schedule short breaks at specific times, even if they are only five minutes. These will help pull you through the stages of work faster. View a high-pressure work situation as a challenge to beat a deadline. This strategy produces energy and a competitive spirit with your deadline. Learn about yourself under pressure and how you respond to it. Take steps in the future to avoid procrastination, if it played a role.

## When Employees Struggle with Opioid Addiction

**N**ew research shows 75% of employers have workers affected by struggles with opioids, 30% of workers have family members with opioid misuse and addiction problems, 30% of employers have employees who have missed work due to opioids, 22% of employees experience impaired performance due to opioids, 18% of employers say they have had employees arrested, and 8% claim to have employees who have overdosed. Given these impacts, it is unlikely coworkers aren't the first to know. Can coworkers help? Know how you could save a life. In a caring manner, let your coworker know that you are concerned for their health and well-being. Then recommend use of the employee assistance program or another source of help like a counseling hotline. They are easily found online. Expect your offer of help to be declined at first. But stay tuned—a crisis or drug-related incident in the future or some related mishap will provide you with another chance.

## Be an Inclusive Role Model for a Positive Workplace

**A** positive workplace brings to mind a relaxed atmosphere, honest communication, a sense of humor, mutual respect and appreciation, and valuing of differences (diversity) among employees. But positive workplaces with these values don't just happen. They don't stay that way either without nurturing them like a precious garden. That's every employee's job. Here are a few ways you can play this role so your workplace is as productive as it is positive. 1) Recognize your biases, so they play less of an influential role in your people-to-people interactions. 2) Model "inclusion" behaviors—spot opportunities to help others feel they "belong," but also recognize the business advantage this has for your organization. 3) Respectfully challenge stereotypical comments when you see them. 4) Be proactive with discussions about what it means to have an inclusive work environment. Practicing these behaviors will make you a positive workplace change agent.

## Too Special to Be Alcoholic?

**T**he stigma of alcoholism has diminished greatly, but when it strikes home, loved ones may rush to defend the drinker, convincing themselves and others that their alcoholic is different, as evident in their lifelong employment, achievements, and community contributions. They may believe their alcoholic requires special care, handling, and an elevated respect apart from others. This form of enabling is referred to as "terminal uniqueness" by those in Alcoholics Anonymous because it results in delay in getting treatment, allowing the illness to grow worse and, with it, the risk that the alcoholic (addict) will never recover. If you have a family member with suspected alcoholism, learn about the disease. Be relentless in pursuit of treatment, and rely upon those who can guide you along the way.