

MY student newsletter

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New to Customer Service by Phone?

If over-the-phone customer service is new to you, you'll discover new challenges. Veteran telephone customer service employees have some advice. One piece is to avoid reacting emotionally—it may be easier to react to antagonism when you are aided by the anonymity and distance that embolden an irate customer. Try smiling while you speak. It can help you be less reactive to antagonistic behavior. Standing or walking back and forth while on the phone may also help you feel more engaged, feel less stressed later on, and improve focus. The unavailability of an empathic ear from a colleague—if you feel the need to vent a distressful experience—might be missed, so use EAP resources to process work stress. Discussing work experiences in confidence can lead you to better ideas and solutions that ultimately help you find greater meaning in any job.

Use a Site Blocker When Self-Discipline Fails

To stay productive at work, we use self-discipline. However, there are so many digital distractions that only a robot could avoid them. Social media, shopping sites, political news feeds, gaming—these tempting delights burn up irretrievable minutes and hours. Instead of sitting for hours and doing everything but work, use a site blocker. There are many such apps and browser extensions. One of them is "StayFocused." It is free. Find it on your Google Chrome browser. You can find others with variable features by doing a simple search for "site blockers."

Stalking Prevention Month: Yes, That's Stalking

Stalking is "repeated unwanted attention and harassment directed at a specific person causing him or her to fear harm." Stalking is a crime. Although similar definitions exist in every state, unfortunately many perpetrators ignore or incorrectly "compare out" of the definition. They believe whatever they are doing isn't stalking. Many behaviors can constitute stalking, including unwanted contacts via social media, sending unwanted gifts no matter how well-intentioned, contacting the victim's friends, hiring an investigator, or even going through the victim's garbage. Could your behavior constitute stalking?

Learn more at LegalDictionary.net [search stalking].

Being Positive May Reduce Memory Decline

Positivity or demonstrating an optimistic attitude has always been a valuable workplace trait in employees. Many research studies have examined its benefits on the bottom line, its ability to favorably influence others, and its affirming effects on general health. Now research shows its benefits for helping prevent memory decline as we age. Positivity is learned, and optimism is a teachable skill. A simple online search will show hundreds of tips on how to develop a more optimistic disposition. Your EAP can also help, especially if depression or other life circumstances feel like they are robbing you of your ability to feel positive.

www.sesp.northwestern.edu [search "positive memory decline"]

Make Your Goals Happen in 2021

Those who succeed in accomplishing big goals often practice similar behaviors. Since "like behaviors" often produce "like effects," consider the following: 1) Write down your goal and action steps to accomplish it. 2) Evaluate changes needed in your life to facilitate realization of the goal (e.g., creating a new routine that produces massive action). 3) Create methods to make the goal "top of mind." You have many goals—important, urgent, big, and small. Each competes for your time and attention. So, preventing defocus and distraction is critical to keeping your goal ever present. If focus does not happen, you risk losing the momentum created the day you decided on your goal. 4) Act on tasks during the time of day when you have the most pep. Many goal-slayers start early in the morning and practice an early-to-bed, early-to-rise routine (the "5 a.m. Club"). If you're nodding off while working, it's likely that you haven't figured out this step. Getting up early helps curb procrastination and provides precious time early, even on weekends, without interfering with work-life balance or risking burnout. Energy, ideas, answers, and motivation are often found in social groups, so hanging out with like-minded goal seekers can be helpful, and those who want to win can keep you focused, but avoid open-ended groups that lack structure and purpose. 5) Reward yourself at incremental steps and measurable milestones along the way.

Are You Glamorizing Overwork?

Stressed? Ask yourself if you glamorize work. There is nothing glamorous about working yourself into the ground. Chronic overworkers can suffer from cardiovascular problems like high blood pressure and a cardiac event. Those unable or unwilling to draw the line between just enough and too much on-the-clock activity are also more prone to depression and anxiety. Overworking does not make you more valuable, although this association is often learned from parents or caregivers. Likewise, overwork does not beat quality as an indicator of doing a great job. For a healthier you, focus on accomplishments, rather than overworking. You may still work some long hours, but they will be fewer. Set boundaries, but if it's too difficult, consult with an EAP professional. Soon you will point to the success of your accomplishments, not the hours you rack up.

Your Stress Management "Urgency Kit"

There are many techniques for managing stress, but you may only be aware of a few, such as exercising, meditation, journaling, or talking things over with a friend. Experimenting with different ways of managing stress can help you discover a collection of dependable techniques that fit your life and work for you—a personal stress management "urgency kit." Try these quick, "on the fly" stress management techniques to see if they qualify for your kit. 1) Peel an orange. Studies show the smell of citrus can help reduce stress; 2) take a walk in green space; 3) listen to classical music for five minutes; 4) drink black or green tea; 5) try a guided imagery exercise using all five senses; 6) declutter your desk; 7) spend ten minutes in the sun. Discover a thousand ideas in the book *Simplicity: 1,000 Ways to Reduce Stress and Simplify Your Life* by Glen Mizrahi.

Have a Workplace Injury-Free Year

Approximately 5,000 employees die from workplace-related injuries each year in the United States. The "fatal four" (not including automobile accidents) are falls, electrocution, being struck by an object, and getting caught "in between." These awareness tips can help ensure you don't become a victim: recognize hazards, use proper safety equipment, maintain a safe distance, respect barricades, correct an unsafe situation without delay, monitor a huge or heavy moving object, get the proper training, avoid rushing, and don't shortcut safety measures. And if the thought "Should I stop what I am doing and go get the proper safety equipment?" crosses your mind, do it! Statistics: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics