

MY student newsletter

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Are You Affected by PTSD?

Most people with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) are not veterans. Violent crimes such as sexual assault and robberies, accidents and injuries, natural disasters, sudden significant losses, physical abuse, domestic violence, admission to intensive care—or even witnessing such events—can lead to PTSD. Acute stress reactions are normal after traumas—but lingering symptoms such as frightening dreams, flashbacks of the event, sleep problems, hypervigilance, and distrust of others should be evaluated if they linger for several weeks.* Treatment for PTSD may be needed. If these events and symptoms match your experience, talk to your SAP or health professional to see if a plan for treatment and intervention would be a smart move for

*See more at www.health.com [Search "ptsd 10 symptoms"].

Bring the Body and the Mind Will Follow

There's an old saying among participants of self-help groups: "Bring the body, and the mind will follow." If you're coming up short on motivation to participate in a recommended counseling or treatment program, consider this simple behavioral principle of cause and effect. You don't have to wait until you feel motivated to begin taking care of yourself. You can begin now and feel motivated later! The simplest example of this principle in action is when you lack enthusiasm to exercise, but after you do so anyway, you feel surprisingly glad you did and motivated to continue.

Important Water Safety Summer Tips

Kee young children safe around water this summer. Teach them to swim, and don't leave young children alone. In large swim areas, even under the watchful eye of trained lifeguards, keep a close eye, especially if children are playing near "the deep end." The more people in a swim area, the more vigilant you must be. No one can watch your child as well as you can. Risk increases with larger numbers of bathers; although rare, missed drownings and close calls do occur.

Forming a Caregiver Support Group

Support groups are powerful, especially when self-run with a structure that commits to empathy, fair communication, problem solving, acceptance of one's vulnerabilities, and most important—confidentiality. This means that what is said in the group stays in the group. These are group traditions. Are you a family caregiver who could benefit from such a support group but can't find one? Why not start one? You can also contact your SAP or a mental health provider knowledgeable about self-help group formation, structure, and maintenance. You'll get clarity on your goal, learn what works, and get tips to ensure your group thrives.

Staying Positive in a Crisis

A crisis is an unexpected event or situation requiring a decision point, while an emergency presents immediate risk to life or property. During a crisis, resist the impulse to panic, conjure up the worst-case scenario, and engage in "awfulizing" (or catastrophizing). This rush to fear and dread is driven by not knowing what will happen next. (It's this not knowing that aggravates the stress response.) Churning with fear undermines resilience and decreases your ability to solve problems, remain productive, and model optimism to others. With this in mind, recognize that imagined worst-case scenarios rarely follow crises, and when they do, they are almost always more manageable than first imagined. Counter crisis stress with sleep, proper nutrition, appropriate exercise, and relaxation and other mindfulness activities. Avoid reaching for drugs, alcohol, or comfort foods to gain relief. Reaching for substances can inhibit effective and timely decisions you need to make that will resolve crises faster and more successfully. Instead, take advantage of support resources. An SAP or a trained and supportive listener can offer guidance to help you with decisions, uncover options, and keep you grounded with a reality check.

You Can Overcome Indecisiveness

Everyone occasionally struggles with making a decision, but does indecisiveness feel like a frequent problem for you that's interfering with your happiness? Meet with your employee assistance program or a counseling professional in your community to work on overcoming "paralysis by analysis." Making decisions is a life skill that's teachable and involves comparing the outcomes and impact of choices while paying close attention to your emotions and the sway of feelings in your decision. With counseling, you can learn to make decisions more quickly by reducing overanalyzing, visualizing possible outcomes, trusting yourself more, and knowing that you are making the right choices. A counselor can help you understand how a pattern of indecisiveness developed and decide what further assistance could be helpful. Don't let indecisiveness remain a problem that causes you to lose faith in your own judgment and prevents you from attaining what life has to offer.

Team with Your Doctor to Fight Depression

Some patients with depression participate in psychotherapy, some use medication, and some do both. No matter what treatment path you take, discuss with your therapist or medical doctor practical steps you can take on your own to supplement your therapy goals. Supplemental activities depressed patients claim bring significant improvement include finding a passionate pursuit (hobby, goal, dream, or pastime) that makes one feel important and significant. Journaling progress can have a positive, self-fulfilling effect. Exercise is a naturally smart move for fighting depression. Find personal projects you have been excited about in the past but delayed, and complete one every week or two. Engage with others through meetups, volunteerism, 12-step self-help groups, etc. Your mind is your most precious tool. Nurture it with positives—from television shows to people, seek out affirming experiences.

Avoid Personality Clashes

Employees often complain about personality clashes with coworkers. These conflicts can extend for years but are often explained by communication missteps at the beginning of the relationship. Follow three rules to reduce the likelihood of getting off on the wrong foot and believing you are entangled in irreconcilable differences with a coworker. 1) Be proactive, not reactive, with common courtesies and civility. For example, asking "Did you have a nice weekend?" sends a message of strong desire for a positive relationship. 2) Discuss problems early, but first agree on how to do it. "How would you like to discuss problems or issues that arise between us? Should we meet in person, or is a phone call sufficient?" 3) Inquire about tension. When you notice an uneasiness in your relationship, address it early.