

# MY student newsletter

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## Protect Your Back in Construction Work

**A**sk anyone plagued by periodic flare-ups of a back injury, and they'll tell you: "Don't take chances with your back." This is especially true if you work in construction trades, where 40% of workers complain of chronic back pain by the time they are age 50. Back injuries also happen as a result of slips and falls, not just when lifting, tugging, pushing, twisting, and carrying heavy objects. So avoid fall risks. Back injuries are invisible to others, so if a coworker has modified duties, others should not question the severity of the coworker's back injury or pressure the coworker into participating in a prohibited work activity while in recovery. Such peer pressure is a key contributor to reinjury and sometimes ongoing disability.

Source: (See [www.cpwv.com](http://www.cpwv.com) [search: "back pain older worker"].)

## Match Your Exercise Program with Healthy Changes

**A**re you ramping up your exercise program with the spring weather? If so, consider healthy lifestyle changes along with an increased exercise regimen. Eat better by consuming less sugar, less white flour and starchy foods, less red meat, and more veggies, and make fewer stops at the drive-in window on the way home. You will improve the value and impact of your exercise program with a healthier body to respond to it.

## May Is Mental Health Awareness Month: Is My Family Member Mentally Ill?

**F**amilies may worry about a loved one's mental health. Changes in mood, personality differences, worries and fears, strange thoughts, anger issues, unusual habits, sleeping or eating too much, and more. Is it mental illness? Not necessarily. Does their behavior interfere with their daily activities? Is their social life or occupational functioning adversely affected? If you are concerned about another's mental health, the best first step is to speak with a professional counselor/EAP to discuss the issues. You can then determine next steps, including how to influence your loved one to get help. Mental illness is common, and one in five people will experience a mental illness in any given year, but a supportive loved one is often the path to early and successful help.

## Where Fentanyl Is Found

**S**muggled fentanyl into the U.S. is up 400% compared to 2021, according to the U.S. Border Patrol, and in Texas it is up over 1,000%. The killer drug, now the number one cause of death among young people, finds its way into many substances purchased on the street, including cocaine, heroin, pain pills like Percocet (oxycodone), and even anti-anxiety pills like Xanax. Many people assume fentanyl is only added to opioid-based drugs. This is not true. It can be laced into any drug, and legitimate-seeming prescription drugs on the street are often counterfeit, laced with fentanyl.

(Sources: [www.tn.gov](http://www.tn.gov) [search "fentanyl health"] and [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org) [search "laced with fentanyl"].)

## Learn to De-escalate Conflict in Relationships

**T**he ability to de-escalate a heated argument or conflict is a life skill that can help you avoid unnecessary stress and, in the workplace, allow you to experience greater job satisfaction. Conflict is not an inherently bad thing if it leads to positive outcomes, but many of our verbal skirmishes create serious tension. Unnecessarily intense arguments can erode trust, build resentment, involve hurtful insults, and ultimately undermine productivity. To help de-escalate conflict, keep this in mind: You will rarely succeed in winning control over someone or outwitting them in a heated exchange. To interrupt tension quickly, try one of these three tactics: (1) Interrupt the flow of anger with a relevant statement about something you both agree on. This often creates a “reset” effect and halts intensity. (2) Switch your role from “co-arguing” to that of an empathetic listener. This also flips the script. (3) Let go. Don’t tie your psychological survival to winning or losing. Virtually all heated arguments are fueled by the fear and psychological impact of loss. It is often easier to end a conflict by reminding yourself you don’t have to prove anything to the other person. To become a de-escalation pro, practice these intervention techniques. You will fear conflict less, discover the arguments that are worth pursuing, and create more collaboration, while making your job more enjoyable.

## Try This: To-Do List Tip

**D**o you make a to-do list to help you manage your workday? Many people do, but there is one thing they are not doing correctly—they are making it in the morning. Instead, the to-do list should be written at the end of the previous day to be followed the next. Creating a to-do list at the end of the day allows you to spend more time on it so it is more meaningful and thought out. You are at less risk for distractions that may present themselves first thing in the morning, and the to-do list can be created with less stress. (The dynamic is similar to laying out your exercise clothes the night before to help you follow through.) And here’s a bonus—you don’t have to get up early in an effort to find time to write it!

## Avoid the Top Three Career Regrets

**E**very employee is a salesperson.” It’s a motto in many companies. Phrases like “Answer the phone with a smile” may sound tiresome, but delve more deeply. These are attitude adjusters. They help manage stress. Any position could, someday, somehow, come directly in contact with a customer. Most employees know this and respond accordingly, but living with a positive attitude is an acquired life skill. One distasteful or less-than-stellar customer experience is sometimes all it takes to set in motion stressful communication and a bad day, so it makes sense to put your best attitude forward. Try it for a day. You may discover that a purposeful and positive engaging style is a key to enjoying your job more.

## Will Pooling Finances Aid Relationship Health?

**I**t’s an age-old argument. “Will couples have a more harmonious relationship and be less likely to break up if they pool all of their income or if they keep it in individual accounts? What about pooling some and separating some?” One large research study examining 34,000 couples that were previously part of six smaller studies may have the answer: Pooling it all together is better. And the more financially stressed the household is, the more the recommendation to pool income applies. Is it a decision that’s right for you?

(Source: [www.cornell.edu](http://www.cornell.edu) [search: “couples pool finances”].)