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Helping Organizations Retain Their Most Valuable Asset

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

National Child Abuse Prevention

- Discipline your children thoughtfully. Never discipline your child when you are upset. Use privileges to encourage good behavior and time-outs to help your child regain control.
- Examine your behavior. Abuse is not just physical. Both words and actions can inflict deep wounds. Show children conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling.
- Teach children their rights. When children are taught they have the right to be safe, they are less likely to think abuse is their fault, and more likely to report an offender.
- Support prevention programs. Too often, intervention occurs only after abuse is reported. Greater investments are needed in programs that have been proven to stop the abuse before it occurs, such as family counseling.
- Know what child abuse is. Physical and sexual abuse clearly constitute maltreatment, but so does neglect, emotional abuse or the failure of parents or caregivers to provide a child with care.
- Know the signs. Unexplained injuries, fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy, and hostility are often signs of child abuse.
- Report abuse. If you witness a child being harmed, see evidence of abuse, or are told about abuse, make a report to your state's child protective services department or local police.

Source: Suggestions from the Child Welfare League of America. ©2006 Friends of Children, Tennyson Center for Children at Colorado Christian Home. <http://www.childabuse.org/home.html>

Sleep: More Important Than You Think!

Everyone knows the difficulty of dragging through a day after getting too few hours of sleep the night before. But do you know why 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night is the recommended amount for most adults?

Recent advancements in medical science have given us the ability to learn more about sleep (and sleep deprivation) and its relationship to our physical, mental and emotional health. Here's what the most-recent research is reporting:

Weight gain and obesity

A study from the University of Chicago found that lack of sleep makes you want to eat more. The reason? Sleep loss appears to trigger changes in hormones that regulate appetite and stimulate hunger for high-calorie foods like cookies and chips. Researchers believe that we crave high-calorie foods when we're tired because they offer up instant energy. According to a Columbia University study, people who get less than the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep a night are up to 73% more likely to be obese.

Cardiovascular health, cancer and diabetes
According to the Harvard-run Nurses' Health Study, failing to get enough sleep or sleeping at odd hours heightens the risk for a variety of major illnesses, including heart disease, cancer and diabetes. A report from the study summarizes that a sleep deficit may put the body into a state of high alert, increasing the production of stress hormones and driving up blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart attacks and strokes. Additionally, people who are sleep-deprived have elevated levels of substances in the blood that indicate a heightened state of inflammation in the body, which is now also recognized as a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.

A Yale University study found that when people slept less than six hours a night on average, their risk of adult-onset diabetes doubled. Researchers suspect that in an effort to give you more energy when you're tired, your body may raise your blood glucose levels – a condition that, if it persists, is a major risk factor for diabetes. Only after several nights of adequate



sleep did the blood glucose levels of the study participants return to normal.

Depression and mood disorders

It is well-known that sleep problems can be a key sign of depression. At least 80% of depressed people experience insomnia – difficulty falling asleep or, most often, staying asleep. However, the latest medical research now reports that the reverse is also true – sleep disorders can actually trigger depression or other mood disorders. The explanation? Sleep, mood and mental/emotional behaviors all share a complex mix of chemistry in the brain. Disordered sleep appears to set off an array of forces in the brain and nervous system that can result in a depressed mood, major depressive episode or other mood disorder.

Memory, learning and job performance
In a recent study, adults who were allowed just five hours of sleep a night for a week continuously scored poorly on tests. Only after they slept eight hours for two nights in a row did their scores improve. Researchers say by cutting your sleep short, you miss out on REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which helps consolidate information and enhance memory.

According to a Better Sleep Council survey, sleep-deprived workers reported the following as work-related consequences from lack of sleep:

- 31 percent reported a decline in quality of work
- 31 percent reported impaired thinking or judgment at work
- 30 percent reported trouble retaining information

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The survey summarized that “sleep deprivation impacts your alertness, your productivity and your ability to socially interact with co-workers.”

Safety at work or while driving

Researchers say that excessive sleepiness contributes to a greater than twofold-higher risk of sustaining a workplace injury. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports you're three times more likely to be in a car accident caused by poor sleep than by drunk driving. The NHTSA conservatively estimates that there are 100,000 car accidents each year caused by drowsiness, and these crashes result in 71,000 injuries and 1,500 deaths.

How much sleep should you get?

Despite the growing scientific evidence that suggests that too little sleep or erratic sleep may harm your health, many people remain indifferent to the importance of sleep. Forty-one percent of women in a nationwide poll conducted by the Better Sleep Council didn't think cutting back on their sleep would harm their health. These women reported getting six hours of sleep or less each night, which

is an insufficient amount of sleep for most adults. According to the latest research, the human body still needs 7-8 hours per night (the recommended average for adults).

What causes sleep deprivation?

The National Institutes of Health reports that approximately 70 million people in the United States are affected by a sleep problem. What are the causes of sleep loss?

- Not allowing enough time for sleep
- Anything that causes insomnia or poor quality sleep
- Excessive worry, depression
- Sleep disorders
- Repeated awakenings from noise
- Working at night, shift work
- Medical illness causing pain, difficulty breathing, etc.

What to do

If you have difficulty with your sleep for any reason, take action. Most sleep difficulties are either caused or reinforced by lifestyle habits or behaviors that are antagonistic toward good, restful sleep. Start by learning more about sleep and good sleep habits. There are many resources at your local book store, library or online (National Sleep Foundation website:) that are filled with information and tips about how to get a better night's sleep.

If you make changes, have done all you can, and still are not getting good, quality sleep, talk to your doctor. You may have a sleep disorder that is resulting from a physical problem such as diabetes, Sleep Apnea or Restless Legs Syndrome. Or an emotional problem like anxiety or depression may be disrupting your sleep. Your doctor can recommend appropriate treatment.

Your EAP is here to help

Quality sleep is vital to your health, happiness and productivity. If sleep is a problem for you or one of your dependents, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. A professional EAP counselor can help you assess your situation, help you devise a plan of action, and/or refer you to the most appropriate treatment provider. Why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.



According to a recent survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA), one in four Americans turn to food to help alleviate stress or deal with problems. However, turning to food in an attempt to relieve stress is an unhealthy behavior that can actually lead to health problems that result in increased stress.

Comfort eaters report higher levels of stress than average and exhibit higher levels of all the most common symptoms of stress, including fatigue, lack of energy, nervousness, irritability, and trouble sleeping. Comfort eaters are also more likely than the average American to experience health problems like hypertension and high cholesterol. In addition, 65 percent of comfort eaters characterize themselves as somewhat or extremely overweight and are twice as likely as the average American to be diagnosed with obesity.

When is comfort eating bad?

Some eating to promote feelings of calm and relaxation is considered well within the range of normal and healthy behavior. However, eating to relieve stress becomes a problem when stress-driven eating becomes excessive and interferes with good health.

Healthier ways to manage stress

If you're in the habit of eating when you're stressed out, you can learn healthier ways to manage stress. The tips below can help you get started:

1. Learn how to identify the difference between eating for hunger and eating in response to stress. Physical hunger builds gradually, is felt in the stomach, occurs hours after a meal, goes away when full, and eating leads to a feeling of satisfaction. Stress eating develops suddenly, is felt in the mind (having a craving for chocolate), is unrelated to the last time you ate, persists despite fullness, and eating leads to feelings of guilt. When you feel the urge to eat, get in the habit of asking, "Is it physical or is it stress?"
2. Learn how to face stress-causing problems head-on. Ask yourself: "What specific problems or conflicts are troubling me and how can I deal with each of these problems effectively?"
3. Engage in healthy activities that give you stress relief, such as: Exercise, meditation, listening to relaxing music, a warm bath, gardening or engaging in a hobby.

HMS is here to help: If stress-driven eating is a problem, contact Human Management Services (HMS) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. Your HMS counselor can help you identify the source(s) of your stress and help you develop an action plan to overcome your unhealthy use of food to manage stress and learn healthier ways of living. If you need help, why not call an HMS counselor today?

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