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Enthusiasm Is Contagious

We all want to work around people who are enthusiastic. Like all attitudes—even negative ones—enthusiasm is contagious. Enthusiasm’s ability to buoy others makes it a soft skill valued by employers. You can’t fake enthusiasm. So how do you maintain real enthusiasm when stress and job strain rule? Don’t see enthusiasm as a temporary state of mind or dependent on others. Instead, recognize enthusiasm as a part of your personality and a resource that helps you cope with stress and positively influence your environment. To stay enthusiastic, develop your passion by pursuing your dreams and ideas. Doing so will build resilience and help you take action early to intervene with factors and influences that could undermine it.



Make a Good First Impression

Everyone wants to make a good first impression, but research shows seven out of 10 people make a judgment call within 27 seconds—often before the other person has even spoken! How can this disadvantage be overcome? Be aware that the “impression time window” is short. Use a sincere smile, give direct eye contact, be a patient listener, and watch the handshakes! With rare exceptions, handshakes are a nearly universal form of greeting. Avoid “vice grip” domination handshakes. They can make a negative impression equal to that of a limp handshake. The lasting memory of your greeting should not be your handshake. It’s better to use a firm handshake that matches the other person’s grip.



Stop Skipping Breakfast!

You may have heard breakfast is the most important meal because the body needs energy and you won’t perform your best if you skip it. That may be true, but a review of key studies focusing on skipping breakfast confirmed something more menacing—increased risk of diabetes. Studies have also shown an increase in heart disease for no-breakfast clubbers. With type 2 diabetes on the increase, avoid skipping breakfast. Experiment and discover the healthy foods you look forward to eating to help avoid this chronic disease.

Source: www.academic.oup.com [search “breakfast diabetes”]



Giving Feedback that Sticks

Advice about giving feedback often centers on reducing the recipient’s defensiveness, not whether feedback will create change. However, there is a science-based approach for the latter. It’s called “Situation – Behavior – Impact (SBI).” You can download a free tool that explains how to use it, developed by the Center for Creative Leadership, an international training and research institute. You’ll enjoy its usefulness for improving workplace relationships. Three carefully coordinated elements comprise SBI: Identifying the *situation* needing feedback, describing the *behavior* needing change, and explaining the *impact* of the behavior in a way that prompts the recipient to make changes.



Download: <https://www.mindtools.com/blog> [search: “feedback tool”]

Empathy: Happier Customers, Less Stress

Direct customer service is known to be stressful. But there are customer service “tools” (ways of thinking and communicating) that can make this job easier and more rewarding. Upset customers, no matter the cause, have one thing in common: They want the pain to stop. The problem or need, even if unresolvable, always has another part—customer’s anger, agitation, or disappointment. Intervention calls for the skill of empathy. Empathy helps those with whom we interact feel heard. The more deeply heard, the quicker the return to a prior state of calm. This emotional relief is your reward and theirs. Empathetic responses are classified by “levels.” The higher the level, the greater the calming effect. For example, imagine a customer agitated about a \$10 service charge. The following levels of empathy would likely have increasingly positive benefits for the customer. Level 1: (lowest and least helpful): “Easy does it, this is not my fault.” Level 2: “I’m sorry, but the invoice does say a \$10 service charge applies.” Level 3: “I apologize if you are only finding out about this now.” Level 4: “I agree the charge can be easy to miss.” Level 5: “You feel blindsided and taken advantage of, and for that I’m sorry.” Experiment and role play with your team. Try to hit level 5 responses with customers. Before long, you’ll be a customer service dynamo and enjoy your job much more.



Making Your Workspace Healthier with Plants

A plant or two on a desk can make a healthier workspace and likely reduces stress, say researchers. This is referred to as “nature contact.” Nature contact means “exposure to the outdoors or outdoor-like elements in a place where you live, work, or play.” Examples include taking a walk outside, having an office with a window, or enjoying plants. No window? No ability on a whim to take a walk outside? Then choose plants. Why that works: Nature contact creates several effects: 1) momentary diversion from job strain; 2) success/satisfaction at a plant’s growth; 3) ownership/control over a goal-directed activity; 4) positive impact on self-esteem; 5) contrast of color and dissimilarity within an office environment; 6) visual beauty; 7) a counterforce to office stress; and 8) a thing to nurture and wonder about. (Find “best plants for an office” with a Google search.)



Source: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc [Search PMC3072911]

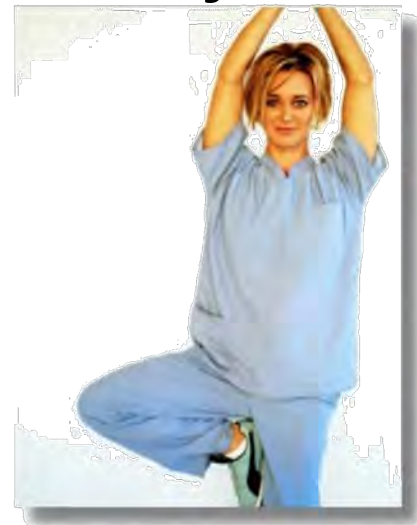
Soft Skills ... Maintain a Positive Attitude

Having a positive attitude does not mean you are dismissive of problems and concerns, while others who are pessimistic or downbeat are more mature and realistic in the face of undesirable circumstances. A positive attitude is driven by a belief that successful outcomes and solutions to problems are often influenced by optimism. A person with a positive attitude can still feel the tug to be negative; however, he or she succumbs to it less often. Maintaining a positive attitude is a learned skill, valued by employers, and often mentioned in performance reviews. If your attitude is easily affected by circumstances, try practicing “conscious positivity.” When you don’t quite feel like being positive, be excited for others’ achievements. Have fun playing cards when you are losing. Be friendly to others you don’t know. Motivate others by saying something positive. Avoid letting others’ negativity bring you down. And, ditch the “yeah, but...” With practice, you’ll get the hang of it fast.



Find Moments for Movement to Stay Fit

Research has shown that sitting at a desk most of the day can take a toll on your health. For this reason, some health experts call long-term sitting “the new smoking.” Stand-up desks and even expensive treadmill-desks have been introduced to mitigate this health crisis. There may be an easier way to mitigate all the risk: Move when you get the chance. Walk in the morning, walk at lunch, pace while on the phone, do some stretches every 30 minutes, try a few sit-ups, do some lunges, and/or try “burpees.” Put a reminder sticker near your desk that says “Move!” and fight the impact of sedentary work.



Source: www.cuimc.columbia.edu (Search: “sedentary sitting”)