

October
2019

FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE

MIIA Employee Assistance Program

Confidential Counseling

- Addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Family Issues
- Grief/Loss

Resources & Referrals

- Legal
- Financial
- Child Care
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- Work/Life

Stress Management

- Personal Concerns
- Professional Issues

800.451.1834

To take a free,
anonymous mental
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This issue:

- Give Your Brain a Break
- Are You Addicted to Your Smartphone?
- World's Most Enabling Statement
- Marijuana and the Developing Brain
- Improve Communication with Your Boss

Give Your Brain a Break

Be more productive at work by taking breaks. Here's your motivation if you are inclined to skip them: a neurologic discovery called "voluntary" and "involuntary" attention. Each type of attention engages different uses of your brain. When you focus on work, whether it is a computer or a car engine, you are purposeful, intense, and focused; this is voluntary attention. In contrast, involuntary attention occurs when you walk down a sidewalk; you are not focused, but you are "attending" to the environment as it appears—butterflies, clouds, traffic, trees, flowers, wind, sunshine, sounds, and sensations. This process of allowing your brain to engage the world this way (being "pulled" along rather than "pushed") is what relieves your stress and refreshes you neurologically. The payoff is improved memory and attention back at work.

Are You Addicted to Your Smartphone?

Smartphone addiction is not a recognized mental disorder, but it gets a lot of attention in the news. One in three people can't get through a meal without looking at their phones, according to one study. Signs of problematic phone use may include feeling anxious without your phone, constantly checking your phone without a reason, reaching for your phone when bored, losing track of time while using your phone, being distracted while with friends or watching TV because you are on your phone, and texting while driving—especially after attempts to stop the practice following a near accident or close call. Compulsive behaviors are actions people engage in repeatedly even though they wish they could stop. Smartphone addiction can be one of them. Don't stay frustrated, feeling out of control. Talk with a counselor or your EAP.

World's Most Enabling Statement

Drop the use of the term "functional alcoholic." Often used to describe an alcoholic whose drinking practices do not appear to cause life problems, this is perhaps the world's most enabling utterance. Alcoholism, like cancer, tends to be a chronic health problem and likely leads to death if left untreated. You may observe that family members who are the most affected by alcoholism virtually never use this phrase. In practical terms, functional alcoholism means "the alcoholic's drinking doesn't bother me." Unfortunately, this phrase fuels denial, offering an excuse to avoid interventions that might otherwise save a life.

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Marijuana and the Developing Brain

You need reliable information if you are a parent or guardian seeking to help children understand the dangers of marijuana so they hopefully decide to stay away from it. You can view refreshed information at the drugabuse.gov web site. Its information is well scrutinized, so you can rely on it. New information there includes street forms of THC and street terms used for concentrated THC oils, research summaries on the impact of marijuana on the adolescent brain, and more. Example: Did you know that 9% to 30% of marijuana users will develop a form of substance use disorder? Source: DrugAbuse.gov

Improve Communication with Your Boss

A top stressor for many employees is relationship conflict with the boss. But delve deeper and what often appears is irregular or unclear communication. A quiet supervisor one day or an abrupt short answer to a question the next might leave you distracted and wondering about the status of your relationship. "Is everything all right with my work?" "Is the boss upset with me?" "What's on his (her) mind?" Avoid these stressful guessing games. Early on or starting now in your relationship, get clarity with three "traditions:" ask your boss how he or she likes to communicate and how much; ask about the perceived acceptability of your work periodically; and be personable (i.e., "How was your weekend?"). Small civil exchanges make it easier to engage and increase the likelihood you'll team up earlier, more often, and more effectively when the going gets tough.

