

Work and Family

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COMMUNIQUE

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February 2 – Groundhog Day

February 14 – Valentine's Day

February 17 – Presidents Day



Communicating with Your Doctor

Many patients do not question their doctor. Often they feel they have no right to challenge someone who has had at least 11 years of formal medical education. The more information you have, the more active you can become in making decisions concerning your health. The following are some basic guidelines for improving your communication skills with your doctor:

- Write down your questions. Organize your questions and concerns before your visit.
- Don't feel intimidated or "stupid." Ask questions when you don't understand an explanation. Ask your doctor and other health professionals to simplify their responses by stating them in non-technical terms.
- When tests are prescribed, question their value and need. For example: "If I have this test, how will it change the outcome of my problem?"
- When treatment is prescribed, ask what other options are available. For each

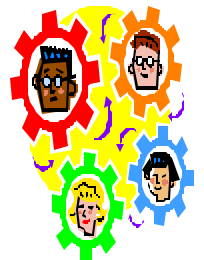


option, have your doctor explain the risks, benefits, and total expense.

- When medication is prescribed, ask about signs of adverse reactions. Be sure you understand the recommended dosage and schedule.
- If your doctor is on-line, consider communicating via e-mail. It's easy to ask questions. You'll probably get an answer quickly, and you'll have a written record to refer to later. It can close the distance for those that live far from medical facilities or are homebound to discuss non-emergency issues. Also, your doctor can link you to other health resources on the Web.

Building Healthy Work Teams

To be successful in your job you may need to help someone else succeed. Because, ultimately, their performance affects you – either directly in terms of job evaluation or indirectly in how successful your organization is. As you go about your work, keep in mind that you are contributing to a success greater than your own. Even though you may not be on the "front line" talking to the people who buy your company's products or services, your work does contribute to the total effort of winning and maintaining customers. To identify your "internal customers," think about where your work goes and who it is important to. Then strive to deliver superior service to those individuals by: (1) Listening actively for better understanding. Ask questions about your customers' expectations. Clarify any instructions so you can provide your colleagues with what they need. (2) Being responsive and reliable.



Deliver on your promises and earn a reputation as someone co-workers, and superiors, can count on. (3) Seeking regular feedback on your service. Find out what is working well and what needs to be improved. Remember, a good working relationship supports the performance and success of both people.

Elder Care Issues

With all of the advancements in medicine, Americans are living longer than ever before. And with this longer life expectancy comes the need for additional resources for eldercare. The following organizations may be able to assist and direct you:

American Associate of Retired Persons
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
(202) 434-2277
www.aarp.org

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
1112 16th Street, NW – Suite 100
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-8130
www.n4a.org

National Council on the Aging, Inc.
409 3rd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 479-1200
www.ncoa.org

Managing Criticism

Rarely is there a person who actually enjoys receiving criticism. But negative feedback on your work or performance can be turned into something very positive. How well you handle criticism eventually can lead to closer working relationships and faster advancements.

- Take a deep breath. It will give you time to think calmly before you respond to any criticism and may stifle any impulse to be immediately defensive.
- Paraphrase. Repeat the criticism in your own words to show that you have

understood the problem at hand and are willing to listen to advice or new ideas.

- Look for a lesson. The next time your supervisor offers criticism, say, "How would you have handled the situation under similar circumstances?" Doing so will show that you're open to constructive solutions. Another idea: Ask your supervisor where you can get the information you need in order to improve. He or she may recommend reading specific materials or talking with a co-worker who can provide insight.
- Stand up for yourself when necessary. It's okay to disagree with a criticizer's point of view – just do so in a way that doesn't close the door to constructive dialogue.
- Speak your plan. Instead of using vague phrases such as "I'll try to do better" or "I'll work on that," use phrases like "From now on I'll..." or "Would it help if I...?" to show that you've understood the criticism and plan to make specific changes.

Using Your Time Wisely

Although many working adults cannot imagine the thought of having "free time," perhaps you are looking for ways to fill some idle time away from work. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America is always looking for volunteers. Not only does the one-on-one attention make a world of difference in the life of a child, it is sure to change your life as well. For more information, contact the following:



Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
230 No. 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 567-7000
www.BBBSA.org

They will put you in touch with a local chapter and give you details on the program.