

The Successful SUPERVISOR

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Tips from  LifeSolutions

"I've been working at changing my eating and exercise habits and have been thinking about work life balance too. I would like to support my staff to take care of themselves as well, but I don't want to push or tread on personal decisions. I'm stuck ... any ideas?" The beginning of a new year is a good time to think about healthy workplaces that can support healthy and productive employees. In this issue, *The Successful Supervisor* will focus on what a supervisor can do to support a healthy work environment. As always, we are interested in your feedback and/or questions. Please e-mail your questions and comments to the EAP at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com or call an EAP account manager at 1.800.647.3327.

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Let's start with *congratulating* you for investing in your own health. Starting with personal change is the best way to begin any change process. And, it's not unusual that, once any of us begins to focus on lifestyle change, we look across all parts of life to see what else we need to bring into balance.

Looking to make the workplace healthier makes good personal and business sense. Some information to support this includes:

- ◆ Two-thirds of U.S. adults are overweight with the direct and indirect costs over \$117 billion per year (Finklestein, *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 10-8-2010. <http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/2010/10/workobese.html>).
- ◆ Sixty percent of adult Americans do not get the recommended amount of physical activity, which is a minimum of 30 minutes per day for five days to maintain weight. To lose weight, one needs to exercise 60 minutes per day with cardio preferences (International Association for Worksite Health Promotion, IAWHP, 2010).
- ◆ The costs of stress-related issues is over \$300 billion per year and influences all realms of integrated lifestyle program elements, such as physical activity, nutrition, and weight management (APA, 9-30-10).

The good news is that this picture can change. Making the modifications in diet and exercise you indicated will help to manage risk factors, and in many cases these changes result in a return to health. So what can you do as a supervisor? Here are some ideas.

1. Support Your Business Unit's Wellness Committee

This committee is made up of interested employees. Their task is creating fun and effective ways of raising awareness and engaging employees in healthy activities to achieve personal goals.

- ◆ Find out about the program from your Human Resources or Medical Department.
- ◆ Get involved in the committee. The more you know and personally demonstrate, the easier it will be for staff to follow.
- ◆ Encourage your staff to participate in activities of their choice.

2. Incorporate Workplace Health into Your Staff Activities

- ◆ Having a celebration involving food? Discuss healthy and tasty choices ahead of time. Having each person bring a personal favorite with the recipe is one good idea.
- ◆ Remind people to drink water throughout the day.

- ◆ Encourage staff to take the steps instead of the elevator and do so yourself. For some there will be a need to build up the ability to take the steps all the way. Even one flight of steps before heading to the elevator begins the journey to health. And the steps needed to get to the elevator count also.
- ◆ Remind staff members of the online resources they can turn to. The Wellness Committee and Human Resources can help in this regard. Also our website, www.lifesolutionsforyou.com has information on health and wellness. Click on the WorkLife portal login, put in your company code (call us if you don't know this) and look for the heading: Thriving.

3. Support WorkLife Balance

Given the "do more with less" workplace environment of today, some ask if "balance" is possible. Here are some ideas:

- ◆ Encourage your employees to take breaks. Balance begins by recognizing the importance of pausing periodically to refresh.
- ◆ For those who are at computers or engaging in other sedentary jobs, suggest they get up every hour or so and stretch. There are many stretches for fingers, hands, legs, and back, which can support health and prevent issues like carpal tunnel syndrome. Just a minute or two provides ongoing relief.
- ◆ Take a breath when your mind is cluttered or frustration sets in and encourage others to do the same. Breathing is a stress reliever as it gives oxygen to the body and brain.
- ◆ Commit yourself to seeking ways your department can work "smarter," not "harder." Build in idea-sharing at meeting to keep staff engaged and part of the process.
- ◆ Accept that work means different things to different people and what constitutes balance will vary. Supporting each staff member individually is important.

Remember *LifeSolutions* is here to support you and a healthy workplace. Call us at 1.800.647.3327.

Nothing in this information is a substitute for following your company policies related to information covered here.