

Strong EAP

Employee Assistance Program

January 2012

Living on a Budget in 2012

Living on a budget is not easy for most people, but success is not determined by using simple willpower to avoid indiscriminate spending. Instead, the winning secret is acquiring the right attitude about budgeting. This drives your goal. Instill the attitude with new beliefs. Budgeting is control—you being in charge of your money instead of it controlling you, especially if you are chained to debt. Without a budget, you risk spending all the money and not saving enough. You also risk not spending enough. Yes, a budget actually helps you spend enough rather than unnecessarily living too financially restricted. The good news about budgets: In time, the determined budgeter acquires a new habit of living on a budget, and this lifestyle becomes self-reinforcing. What follows is the powerful feeling of freedom—and a better night's sleep.

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Exercise for Better Sleep

Most studies show a moderate connection between exercise and better sleep. One study showed that adults who were able to participate in the nationally recommended exercise regimen of 150 minutes a week indeed reported better sleep. There are many reasons for sleep difficulties, and an evaluation is in order

when the problem persists. However, if you haven't tried exercise on a regular basis—about 30 minutes per day, five days per week— it's worth a try; <http://tiny.cc/shut-eye>. Consult with your physician before beginning an exercise program.

Effect of Violence on Children

Children exposed to family violence appear to have changes in their brains similar to combat veterans, a new study finds. These changes may continue into adulthood, creating problems with anxiety. Violence need not be extreme to create this impact, and the signs won't

be visible. The brain changes tend to be oriented to a heightened anticipation of pain and sensing of threat. Domestic violence has many victims, and there are big reasons for seeking help. PDF source: tiny.cc/child-harm

Rapid Response to Customers

If you work directly with customers—internal or external—try an experiment to improve your job satisfaction: Give a rapid response to needs or requests, and do so with the next ten customers. Sure, you're busy and stressed. It is easy to choose delay over delivery, using an "I'll-get-to-it-later" attitude or coping

strategy. Delay is often unavoidable but guard against it as a coping strategy. A quick response to a customer is one of the easiest ways to get a "Wow," and few things are more gratifying than an appreciative, praise-filled customer who can add to your positivity on the job.

Managing Anger in Healthy Ways

There are many myths about anger, including that it is “bad” or “immature” to get angry or it is better to suppress it. Trying “never to feel angry” is a harmful practice and a hopeless goal because humans are hardwired to feel anger. Another myth is “the best way to get over it is let it all out.” Rather than squashing the anger or running with it, anger management is the life skill of learning how anger works and how to control one’s response to it. The key is learning how to identify feelings of anger when they emerge and then staying in charge and directing that anger toward a constructive purpose. Many people struggle with anger management because of their experiences without effectively

managing anger. Health issues may also contribute to problems with anger management. Guidance from a professional counselor who specializes in anger management is generally a speedier route to learning better anger management skills. Professional help is definitely recommended if you become explosive and demonstrate extreme expressions of anger to the point of violence. Your employee assistance program can offer you great support and referral to expert help. Don’t stay frustrated with your inability to “will” yourself into better anger management practices. Anger mismanagement is one of the most common problems people experience, and it is one that can be successfully treated.

More Time with Loved Ones in 2012

A highly desired New Year’s resolution that is right up there with the desire to lose weight—some studies report more so—is grabbing more quality time with loved ones. Sound good? If you are like most busy families, with everyone zooming off in different directions, you recognize that time can pass you by. Try combining things everyone should be doing, such as exercise, with an opportunity to be together. Thinking “dual-purpose” in this way can double

your time together. But the payoffs don’t end there. This type of strategizing permits a quality opportunity where those special talks about personal responsibility, work ethic, commitment, honesty, community service, or faith can happen more often. Give this buddy exercise chart a try by posting it on your refrigerator. It will help keep at the front and center the commitment to exercise together. Resource download: <http://tiny.cc/exercise-log>.

When You Stand Corrected

Facing a corrective (disciplinary) action meeting will test your composure and professionalism. The winning strategy in most cases is to turn the predicament into a learning experience that leaves you determined to change and achieve. Here’s how to hit the reset switch and go from dread to determination. Understand that a corrective action or disciplinary meeting is an attempt to elevate behavior, not to punish an employee. It’s an educational tool.

If you adopt this perspective, you’ll take a team approach with your supervisor and see performance as the issue of management’s concern, not you personally. Ask for a follow-up appointment to discuss progress if one is not given, or send short periodic reports of your progress to your supervisor. Naturally, rely upon your employee assistance program for ideas, support, encouragement, and help in reducing anxiety and worry.

Countering Counter-Productive Behavior at Work

During the week are you fully engaged or do distractions like gossip, cell phone calls, email wars, election-year political discussions, kitchen conversations, surfing the Internet, or just simple “dawdling” affect your productivity? Although important business metrics (things companies like to measure) include waste, breakage, machinery downtime, absenteeism, and utility bills, these things are often far less than the cost of lost productivity from employees who don’t focus. Distractions will always exist. But look beyond your valuable skills and abilities, and revisit your aptitude for staying focused. It’s a New Year’s resolution you can share with your employer, and it will pay handsomely in a tight economy where mission-focused companies win the day.

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