

IMPACT

Employee Newsletter

July—September 2003

Did you know?

- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care
- Free “Simple Will” Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury

Claremont EAP
800.834.3773

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Make Plans for Summer

Summer is a special time for family fun. Warm summer evenings seem custom-made for after-work family barbecues and neighborhood softball games. As soon as you know the dates of your children’s summer holiday, start planning.

For the Whole Family

Whether you have vacation from work or not, there are many ways to enjoy the summer with your family.

If your summer plans include a trip out of town, get your kids involved in the excitement by talking about the places you’ll visit, reading about your destination, looking at maps and buying travel gear.

If you plan a road trip, establish a base in one location. Take day trips from the base to surrounding sites so your children will have a familiar place to come “home” to at the end of each day.

Consider weekend family getaways to state parks and beaches. Many places offer camp sites and cabins. If one parent’s vacation time is limited, you may be able to find a cabin within commuting distance from that parent’s job.



During the summer, kids love amusement parks, boat rides, visits to the zoo and just about any excuse to be outside.

For Kids

Chances are your children will have more free time on their hands than you do during the summer. How can you keep them occupied while you’re at work?

Day camps sponsored by community organizations can include a wide variety of activities, such as swimming, arts and crafts, horseback riding, dance classes and other sports. Some have transportation arrangements, such as a bus that picks up children at specific locations.

Neighbors and other parents may be happy to watch your children while you’re at work. Consider hiring a college student to prepare meals and drive children to sporting events. Grandparents and relatives who live in other locations may enjoy spending time with your children during part of the summer.

Overnight camps give older children a chance to develop independence while enjoying the pleasures of the great outdoors. Some camps are sponsored by scouting organizations, others by religious groups. Many focus on a particular kind of activity, such as horseback riding, the arts, drama or music.



Planning the Care of Your Aging Parents

If your parents are in their golden years, keep in mind that even gold can lose some of its glow with the inevitable effects of old age—and sooner or later, older loved ones will need assistance.

“It’s never too early to start planning for their future care,” says Virginia Morris, author of *How to Care for Aging Parents*. “Many children of aging parents wait until there’s a crisis, and then they’re left scrambling for mediocre options.

Everyone —especially those who live far away from their parents and work full time—can benefit from being prepared and planning far ahead.”

Advance Planning Means:

- * Making sure legal documents have been drawn up, including an up-to-date will, a durable power of attorney, a living will and a health-care proxy.
- * Researching the housing options and services available in your parents’ community.
- * Discussing with your loved ones how you can help with their future housing, financial and medical-care needs.
- * Asking them about growing old— “what are their concerns, their worries, what’s important to them, how can you help them?” says Ms. Morris.

“Don’t parent your parent,” she urges. “The point isn’t to control your parents’ life, but to help them maintain control. Your role is to give them as much autonomy and independence as possible.”

When it’s time to act

One day, all the signs may point to the need for you to actively step in to assist your parents. Telltale signs include:

- * Your loved ones start losing weight.
- * They stop washing their hair or clothing.
- * They drink more alcohol.
- * They leave piles of unpaid bills on their desk.
- * They let food grow moldy in the refrigerator.
- * They start walking unsteadily.

“Trust your instincts,” Ms. Morris says. “Anything that strikes you as ‘Hmmm, is this OK?’ probably isn’t OK.”

Important First Steps

Immediately open a line of communication with your parents’ doctors so you can discuss your concerns. And if you live far away, obtain a copy of your parents’ local phone book so you can contact care providers and other resources.

Defining Your Limits

Many adult children find their first steps into care giving responsibilities are like walking into quicksand. If you don’t manage your time well or haven’t planned in advance, you can become mired in never-ending obligations, such as daily chores and care, handling legal or financial issues or lining up health-care providers.

“You need to set limits,” says Ms. Morris. “Establishing limits doesn’t mean you don’t love your parents or that you can’t take good care of them. But you’re not going to be any good to them if you’re depressed, angry or sick—you have to take care of yourself.”

To do this, Ms. Morris suggests you:

- * Decide what you can reasonably do to help, then stick with that plan. If you decide you’ll visit your mother twice per week, help her manage her finances and investigate local resources, then that’s what you should do. Get help for other needs as they arise.
- * Accept help early on—from relatives, friends, neighbors, churches and synagogues, senior centers or home-care agencies. “Set up a whole support network—don’t be the only person doing this,” says Ms. Morris.
- * Take care of yourself. Get exercise, get enough sleep, pay attention to your diet and go to support-group meetings for caregivers.

“People often push themselves until they become burnt out and angry at their siblings, and their work starts to suffer. I have seen several times where caregivers ended up in the hospital because they were so wiped out,” says Ms. Morris. “This can be a consuming job—it’s crucial to take care of yourself.”

“Many children of aging parents wait until there’s a crisis, and then they’re scrambling for mediocre options.”



Feeling Good About Each Other Communication Keeps Relationships Fresh

Building a good life together is a continuous process. As we move from young love to parenthood, and then on to maturity, our needs change.

Many issues- money, in-laws, sex, children, drug and alcohol abuse, or verbal, emotional or physical abuse- are common causes of communication breakdown. All of these issues are loaded with strong emotions.

Clear communication can be the glue that keeps you growing together in positive ways.

Put a Smile in Your Style

Talking to your partner in a honest, direct way is a challenge. It's easy to fall into speech pattern traps, which muddy what you want to communicate. For example, the simple habit of starting a conversation with a "why" question can put your partner on the defensive. Developing a way of talking that expresses your true feeling can be more important than your words. Your smile and touch say that your teasing is loving, not sarcastic.

Solve Speech Problems

1. Be honest. Start with "I feel..."
2. Be aware that you might be misunderstood. Ask.
3. Be open. Your feelings can draw out your partner.
4. Be creative. Use laughter to tackle tough talk.
5. Be specific. Your partner may not understand.

6. Be sensitive to reactions. Withdrawal signals tension.
7. Be expressive when you listen. Use verbal and nonverbal feedback.
8. Be patient. Interruptions can be irritating.
9. Be careful. Offer reassurance that you are interested.
10. Be fair. Avoid sore spots that end conversation.

Enjoy Verbal Intimacy

Since more time is spent in talking than having sex, verbal intimacy is the key to maintaining a satisfying relationship.

Verbal tricks include:

- Repeating back what's said so you're both in tune.
- Using "I" instead of "You" to express feelings.
- Listening without giving advice.

Nonverbal tricks include:

- Using a friendly, soft tone.
- Matching expression and gestures to your message.
- Being physically close to talk.

Argue Successfully

Change and conflict are a natural stage in being together. Cooperation and compromise are what can keep you together. Here are tips from happy couples:

1. Say what's bothering you

- by being specific. "I feel upset when you..."
2. Be positive. " I appreciate it when you call if you're late..."
3. Listen without comment, defense or disagreement.
4. Discuss details. Avoid old issues.
5. Negotiate to agreement, even if it's to disagree!
6. Be ready to be wrong or equally guilty.
7. Assume your partner wants you to be happy.
8. Put yourself in you partner's shoes.
9. Take 10-minute breathers.
10. Remember why you like each other.

If you need help, don't hesitate to call a counselor.



“Developing a way of talking that expresses your true feelings can be more important than your words.”



“Start by developing a commitment to quality, efficiency, teamwork and good health...”

Productivity: Improving Your Odds of Success

The term “productivity” can mean different things to different companies. One firm may define productivity as getting work done fast. Another may measure productivity by the amount of goods or services delivered in a specific time period. A third company may define productivity as the proportion of total output (such as work, training, financial investments and time) to the total output. And some companies productivity simply equals profits- the amount of money a business has left over after expenses.

No matter how your company defines productivity, it remains an important component of its success as well as your own.

Characteristics of Productive Workers

Productive workers are always on the lookout for ways to get the most out of the people, machines and materials at hand, including improving their own skills. Productive workers pay attention to the outcome of the work. For example, an

employee who works quickly but has to spend time correcting mistakes is not being productive. So the productive worker strives for quality, as well as safety and cooperation with coworkers. Productive workers make mistakes like everyone else. But they try to learn from their mistakes. Productive workers tend to set goals and develop priorities, tackling the most important tasks first. They value time by beginning work on time, and they work as efficiently as possible, whether they're working alone, on a team or under constant supervision.

The Benefits of Productivity

Some workers believe that improvements in productivity benefit only the company, but productivity has advantages for the workers too.

Companies that prosper because of productive workers can offer greater job security and opportunities for promotion. These companies are more likely to provide bonuses or a wider range of fringe benefits. A productive

workforce enables a company to expand, thus providing more jobs and deterring layoffs. In a wider context, a stronger company contributes to a stronger economy.

On personal level, the productive worker knows how to avoid painful and costly accidents, adapts more easily to change, is better able to cope with stress, has a more positive attitude, is a skilled problem-solver and feels satisfied after putting in an honest day's work.

You Can't Lose

Improving your productivity may mean making changes in how you think and live rather than working longer hours. Start by developing a commitment to quality, efficiency, teamwork, good health and safety habits. And remember, improving your productivity improves the likelihood of advancement, recognition, personal profit, valuable new skills and job satisfaction. When you look at productivity in that light, you can't lose.

Claremont distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

For more information or for confidential help call
Claremont EAP 800.834.3773

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