

STAYING FRESH ON THE JOB

I received lots of responses about how to stay fresh on the job. This time many of the responses gave specific things to do, so I offer them to you pretty much unedited. It seems that an enthusiastic supervisor always helps and one that is interested in morale. I know that this is a long letter but take what you want. Might make a good discussion at a meeting or work group.

Here is a thought for the week: Make a commitment to do something special for someone on your staff or even at home every day this week. Maybe a compliment, maybe make some food to share celebrating an anniversary, birthday or washing a car window for someone. For this to work have no expectations about the outcome. Lets see what happens.

Have a great week.

Paul

How right you are! There are days when we are working with ES people and begin to wonder what we are doing. It is a mountain of paperwork and that sometimes seems to be it. However, we are really helping people regardless of what the reason they come into our office about. If they are unemployed, we can give them encouragement about finding a new job and, perhaps, even some hope in bettering themselves if that is necessary. For those that are in Work First or under-employed, or unemployed, we can help them regain their self-esteem, set some goals, find a path that will help them reach those goals, etc., etc. For the youth, I like to find out what they think they might like to do, discover some interesting things about themselves, work toward gaining some good, solid, work maturity skills, and start planning for the future. With the WIA program we can keep tabs on them for a longer period of time and, hopefully, initiate many things that will enable them to discover their true niche and become successful not just in a job in their life. It is always a great feeling when the results of working with someone are positive. I prefer to see the glass as half full, not half empty.

Hope you are well and that all is going well for you. Sounds as if you will be busy for awhile. The weather is breaking here finally, and we are all getting Spring Fever. I am ready for a vacation! Take care. I always look forward to your letters. They are filled with information that is not only useful but, many times, makes the day, work, case, etc., better. Thanks for taking the time to share with all of us.

Carole

Life is a challenge at best right now- but it will all work out in the end. As you said in your message I need to keep the end result in mind.

With any project I've been involved in I always try to picture what I want the end product to look like- whether it is a job fair or the conference or a report. Then I try to plan working backward from that end result to where I need to start and what steps I need to take along the way to get there. So far it seems to have worked for most things. I know that there are many people out there who have not seen many successes and so envisioning success is difficult. Possibly teaching creative visualization in job club classes (and I know there are those who would think this is all touchy-feely garbage) may help them to see an end result that they can be proud of. Teaching them to go back to that image when they are feeling overwhelmed can help. I know it does for me.

As for staying fresh on the job I think it is important to keep your life balanced with enough other activities that work is not the only thing you concentrate on. Also never stop learning. If your employer offers training classes, take them. Don't be afraid to learn new skills and try new things. You may find you enjoy and are really good at something you didn't even know existed before. All of these new skills and putting them into practice will keep your job from becoming boring and also help you grow as a person.

Hope this is helpful in some way. Looking forward to seeing you on April 26!! By the way- we are having a mixer that evening at the hotel for our conference participants. It will be held in our main meeting room from 4:30pm - ??? Please join us for snacks and drinks!

Take care! Travel safe!

Julie Sacramento CA

Greetings from IL. Guess what. . . it's cold again. This Workforce Investment Act is kicking my butt. Our director is adamant about a heavy caseload but that means so much more paperwork and less time to counsel, which is my favorite part. Some of my clients come in just to visit rather than ask for guidance. I enjoy that. I've built some wonderful rapport with people who have no one else to really share their ups and downs and now I'm being asked to compromise it. What to do...Anyway, I'm now running a youth program. It's exhausting and time consuming but I always feel rejuvenated after interacting with the kids. They have such a fresh, unique spin on life. Some think they know what it's all about and others haven't a clue. To watch their eyes and expressions really warms my heart. Some of my kids have already learned humility, disappointment, patience, challenge and responsibility. Others are waiting to find out. I've seen tears and anger and escorted one to the psych unit. Just can't believe life could be so bad... In response to your burnout scenario: that would be me. BUT. . . I try very hard to notice days I get snappy or run down and look for signs. That's when I take a day or two off and make sure that I do something that I ENJOY to rejuvenate myself. Sometimes you just have to let those dishes pile up at home for a couple of days. I've now found oil painting to be a great form of relaxation and expression. I have a "print" of my mood. I study the

colors and the designs and where I want to be in my painting. Still only a novice but enjoying every bit of it!

Have a great week!

Carrie

I think the big thing on any job is keeping one's perspective about the job. Don't take it to seriously or yourself to seriously. If you're not positive you're not productive- that's my quote for the day.

Employee "burnout" is a very important issue that few agencies are willing to address at a management level. And all too often it is addressed on an individual basis when people all already burned out.

In an agency I previously worked for, a co-worker and I were trained in support group leadership, and we decided to offer support groups for our own staff. Once we established trust, the support group became a great way for people to let go of stress (not just work related) and get support from each other. It was a great avenue to get to know each other as human beings - beyond the fact that we all happened to work together.

Personally, I have learned to let go of trying to control the lives of the participants in the program I work for. Feeling responsible for someone else's success - as defined by an administrator completely removed from the life of the client - was an unbearable burden. Now I start my relationships with participants based on the faith that they are resilient and already have survival skills (or they wouldn't be here for me to serve). My goal is to validate the skills they already have, and with our combined knowledge and abilities help them on the road to achieving their personal development goals. As for the paperwork, there's always a way to prioritize what's important and still get the other stuff done.

Carol CA

I don't and never have considered my job a chore. I go to work with a vision of seeing my Section 8 waiting list exhausted and doing whatever it takes to get all our applicants leased-up. I heard somewhere in my travels that when Helen Keller was asked what could be worse than not having sight, she responded that having your sight without vision would be worse.

Jon

Before I came to motivational counseling I had been lucky enough to try my hand at two careers that look pretty flashy on my resume. I was a journalist for The Washington Post during Watergate. Then, I went into corporate communications and got pretty good at advertising and promotion. I began a PR/ad firm and after five years a military base closure and economic recession forced me to close the doors. I stumbled into my current career when somebody suggested the county would be a good place to work and earn a retirement. As you can imagine, I dream all the time about where I could work and use my PR and advertising skills. But, the truth is I've never been as fulfilled or satisfied as I have been here at the San Bernardino County Jobs and Employment Services Department.

The satisfaction is in the mission. Where can you make a decent living, with fringe benefits, and yes, a retirement fund, and spend each day knowing that you are actually being paid to help folks make a better life for themselves and their children?

Sure, I could probably make a little more money, or maybe a lot more money, as the senior account executive at some ad agency in downtown LA. But, somehow, when I get out the old resume and begin to dust it off, my heart goes out of it. Coming up with a new way to promote "widgets" doesn't compare to seeing the smile on some gal's face when she starts to believe that her life is about to change for the better because of our encouragement and support.

And, the benefits don't stop there. Because we are in the human potential business, we treat our employees and our peers with the same kind of positive support we give to those we counsel. That's the way my boss treats me and her boss treats her and so on up the ladder to the top. When I was promoted to supervisor, someone asked me how I could weather not seeing the clients each day at my desk. Well, my counselors need my help, support and guidance to help motivate the clients. So, in a way, my daily efforts are multiplied by those of my staff.

So, when I tire of computer work, meetings, and stacks of paperwork, I have to remind myself, it's not the grunt work, it's the mission! All I have to do is walk out into the reception area and chat with the clients! That's enough to remind me why I come to work here everyday and not on "Wall Street."

Constance CA

When people ask me what I do in my line of work, I generally respond that " I have a great job and have a chance to have an impact on people's lives each day. I have opportunities to counsel mothers, some of whom are uneducated and in lots of cases received poor parenting as they grew up. Somewhere along the way their ability to see themselves as achievers and their ability to make good judgment was damaged or not fully developed. It is my job to assess their situations, determine ways to help them recapture their will to achieve and their ability to believe in themselves, using all the tools and partner agencies at my disposal." It is a wonderful feeling to take someone with low self esteem and low expectations of herself, and guide her through our program, and watch her blossom into someone ready to take on the world with a new understanding or her capabilities.

Well, I did not mean to write a book, but I do love my job and feel what we in social services do, is of tremendous importance to society. Susan Williams Rome GA
I've always seen my job as one where I can actually make a difference in peoples lives, one person at a time. When you help people support themselves you help their children and the whole community. When you help the a community you help the world
Here's what helps me not burn out: 1) if people want to have a lunch meeting with me - I attempt to schedule a walk thru the park with them, we walk, talk, and brown bag it. That way I get my break, exercise, & can actually accomplish a lot on a walk. 2) I try to

schedule one day a week when I have no meetings outside the office. I just put a big pencil mark through that day on my calendar. It helps me not feel so scattered & gives me one uninterrupted day to work. Carol Curtis AZ

I do not respond to your E mail often but this is one thing I feel strongly about.

Employment Counselors and all of the other positions that are held by men and women working to impact welfare reforming positively are some of the most stressful jobs. They can also be some of the most rewarding job when you have a client who is successful. I have experienced often in the government-based workplace that we do not treat one another with kindness. I am not speaking of the professional courtesy or respect that a coworker is expected to display. I am speaking of a genuine concern for another human being. If we are not displaying this to one another it is a pretty good assumption that we are not extending this behavior to our client's either. I am blessed to work for a supervisor that has created this kind a work atmosphere. She is not a push over and she does not walk into work with a sickening smile and want us all to sing Kum Bi Ya. (not sure of the spelling but you get the idea) but she does operate a team that take a holistic approach to workplace conduct. We do not bring our entire personal life to work but we are all aware that our life outside work impacts how we perform at work. We all spend a significant amount of our day in the work place. Some of us see the people we work with more hours of the day then we see our families. I believe it is important for us to be as positive and happy at work as we possibly can be. My supervisor has the advantage of allowing us to flex our schedule. She encourages an extra 30 min at lunch if it means that a person can come back more productive. I personally have time to go to the gym for lunch with this option and it is just the invigoration I need to fend off the stress some days. She is aware of the mental fatigue working in this environment has on employees. We recently had another situation come up. Our receptionist needs to take a certain Lunchtime every day to pick her children up. It is not a convenient time of the day for her to go because our office is busy and she is in charge of the front desk. We addressed this in our morning meeting as a team and as a team we worked out a schedule of coverage so that our office can still run smooth. It was not arbitrary and it was not one persons decision. We operate like a family in some ways. I believe it is the small things like this that show employees you care about them as a person apart from a job title. Creating a work environment like this increases productivity, lowers the stress level and helps us all to be a little more tolerant. This is just one example. I hope it illustrated how important it can be for staff to know they are appreciated and being a bit more flexible and understanding with one another and showing genuine concern can go a long way to relieve workplace stress and burnout. REMEMBER THERE IS NO I TEAM.

We try to help each other refresh. Such as nagging each other to go out side during lunch. we all feel better when we do. Some rest in the lounge. One friend treats herself to a manicure. Some people take off their shoes and use a foot massager. I like reading. I play music or comedy tapes. We have a group who does country line dancing in the conference room. At one time we had presenters come in and sell their services or products (Jewelry, Luggage, clothes, facials, make-up, crafts, plants, Christmas items). We have a Department party in January to celebrate our success in the previous year. Throughout the year we have food (breakfast burritos, soup lunch, pies, pizza, bake sales,

raffle baskets to make money for our party. This works to bring up the moral. Each Division picks a day at least twice a year to do something . This generates a "feel good" atmosphere all year Linda

When someone asks me what I do for a living I tell them "I am a Career Counselor. I help customers with ways to find work, interviewing skills, resume writing, motivation, research, etc." I also tell them that I LOVE what I do, it is the best job I have ever had and I work for the best employer I could ask for. I don't find it necessary to talk about how much I make because it is nobody's business. As far as I am concerned, I am paid what I deserve. When I get in front of large audiences to talk about the One Stop Career System, oftentimes, I get teary-eyed and have to compose myself. What this says to me is that I am passionate about the work I do, genuinely believe in the system, and have internalized the gifts that I can share and pass on to customers and fellow staff members. I never stop trying to learn more and rely heavily on tips I can get from more experienced counselors. The minute I think I know it all, is the minute I close my mind to growth. Thanks for this opportunity to share. Cinthia Arduengo CA

One thing I do to stay fresh on the job is keep a folder of funny e-mails, cartoons, jokes, articles etc... to read when I'm having a tough day. It works wonders. Here is a little humor for you.

HOW TO KEEP A HEALTHY LEVEL OF INSANITY or HOW TO ANNOY OTHERS

1. Page yourself over the intercom (don't disguise your voice). *
2. Find out where your boss shops and buy exactly the same outfits.
3. Always wear them one day after your boss does (this is especially effective if your boss is of the opposite gender).
4. While sitting at your desk, soak your fingers in Palmolive. *
5. Put mosquito netting around your cubicle.
6. Insist that your e-mail address be 'zena_goddess_of_fire@asab.fdl.cc.mn.us'
7. Every time someone asks you to do something, ask if they want fries with that. *
8. Suggest that the Coke machine be filled with prune juice.
9. Encourage your colleagues to join you in a little synchronized chair dancing.
10. Put your garbage can on your desk and label it "IN."
11. Determine how many cups of coffee are "too many."
12. Develop an unnatural fear of staplers.
13. Send e-mail messages that advertise free pizza, doughnuts, etc., in the break room. When people complain that there was nothing there, lean back, rub your stomach, and say, "You've got to be faster than that." *
14. Put decaf coffee in the coffee maker for 3 weeks. Once everyone has gotten over his or her caffeine addictions, switch to espresso.
15. When driving colleagues around, insist on keeping your car's wipers running during all weather conditions to "keep 'em tuned up."
16. Reply to everything someone says with, "That's what you think."

17. Practice making fax and modem noises. *
18. Highlight irrelevant information in scientific papers, then cc them to your boss.
19. Finish all your sentences with "in accordance with the prophecy."
20. Adjust the tint on your monitor so that the brightness level lights up the entire working area. Insist to others that you like it that way.
21. Dont use any punctuation
22. As often as possible, skip rather than walk.
23. Ask people what sex they are. * (Sometime I wonder this--really!)
24. While making presentations, occasionally bob your head like a parakeet.
25. At lunch time, sit in your parked car and point a hair dryer at passing cars to see if they slow down. * (An outstanding idea!)
26. Specify that your drive-thru order is "to go." *
27. Stomp plastic ketchup packets.
28. Holler random numbers while someone is counting. * (We've all done this one)
29. Honk and wave at strangers. * (Works especially well in Japan!)
30. Decline to be seated at a restaurant, then eat the complimentary mints by the cash register. *
31. TYPE ONLY IN UPPERCASE.
32. type only in lower case.
33. Look off into the distance while someone is talking to you and interrupt them every 15 seconds while saying "What? Never mind. It's gone now."
34. Sing along at the opera.
35. Go to a poetry recital and ask why the poems don't rhyme. * (I've often wondered this)
36. Five days in advance, tell your friends you can't attend their party because you're not in the mood.
37. And, the final way to annoy people: send this e-mail to everyone in your address book, even if they sent it to you or have asked you not to send them stuff like this._