Helping First Responders: Peer Influence and Suicide Prevention

Each year, more firefighters and police, along with other first responders, die by suicide than in the line of duty. Fortunately, the family-like closeness among first responders makes peer education and training a strongly promoted approach to prevention. Like in the field, “having each other’s back” is key, but recognizing signs of distress is critical. So if you are a first responder, would you recognize a coworker’s distress enough to act? Common signs include substance misuse, domestic partner violence, legal and occupational problems, the end of an intimate relationship, serious financial problems, depression, anger management issues, anxiety, and sleep problems. A life-preserving skill is your willingness to ask a distressed coworker about suicidal thoughts: “Are you having thoughts about suicide?” Think of this as the “Jaws of Life” question because of its ability to help save a life.

Explore more: www.suicideinfo.ca [search “first responders”] or www.theiacp.org [search “suicide toolkit”]

Good First Impressions Like a Bit of Insurance

Researchers found that making a good first impression is not only important, it also provides a buffer effect in case you later have a bad day, experience a slip-up, or make a mistake. Your good first impression establishes trust with others. Later, tolerance for a mistake you make is more likely. Failure to make a good first impression can compound the effect of future mistakes. Making a good first impression is like buying insurance to cover your reputation—at least a little bit.

Source: www.unh.edu [search “no second chance first impression”]

Does Diet Affect Mental Health?

Nutrition affects mental health, and nutrients with the most effect are B vitamins, vitamin D, antioxidant-rich foods, omega-3 fatty acids, and fiber. News about heart health and diet is more popularly understood, but how nutrition affects the brain is obviously as important. Does your diet suffer from a lack of these nutrients? (Talk to your doctor before considering supplements.) Among hundreds of research findings, some have shown negative effects of processed foods before age three on a child’s IQ; relief of depression symptoms related to omega-3; and fiber’s role in supporting gut microbes as important to brain health. Older males may benefit by moderate consumption of nuts.

Explore more: www.cdfh.ca/health-lifestyle/mental-health-and-nutrition and www.binghamton.edu/ [search “diet mental health”]

Dozing at Your Desk?

Suddenly your eyes close and you’re dozing at your desk—perhaps with your fingers still on the keyboard. You may discover willpower has little effect on this frustrating after-lunch phenomenon (caused by several metabolic processes), but you can manage it by planning ahead for it rather than fighting the losing battle. Begin with simple stretching exercises for a minute or two before sitting down to work after lunch. Every 30 minutes, stretch again. Engaging muscles will help counter sleepiness. Find loads of stretches at www.ochsner.org [search “fit at desk”].

Explore more: www.cdifh.ca/health-lifestyle/mental-health-and-nutrition and www.binghamton.edu/ [search “diet mental health”]

Information in FrontLine Employee is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health or legal professional. For further help, questions, or referral to community resources for specific problems or personal concerns, contact a qualified professional. Add “http://” to source links to follow. Link titles are always case sensitive.
Next day anxiety—dread over what tomorrow will bring—is a sleep wrecking ball. A recent study found over 40% of people experience this cause of insomnia. And it got worse in 2020 during the pandemic. Sleep efficiency experts recommend not viewing sleep as “just another thing you do” but instead as an activity for you to become your own expert on. Dozens of tactics exist to improve sleep, but start with a visit to the EAP and get support for starting a sleep skills discovery journey. A medical evaluation to rule out unknown physical causes might also be recommended. Check out the newest resource, published in 2020 (during the pandemic): “The Sleep Workbook: Easy Strategies to Break the Anxiety-Insomnia Cycle.”

Explore more: www.saatva.com/blog [search ‘up all night survey’] and see the resources tab at Canadian Sleep Society at www.css-scs.ca/