



August 2007

# Employee Assistance of the Pacific

## Eating Your Way to a Brighter Day

Not only do the foods we eat have an effect on our weight and health, but scientists have learned that they also impact our mood and our ability to function at a high level.

The science behind foods' ability to alter mood is due to the chemical messengers or neurotransmitters that are produced or released depending on the message that the nutrients transmit. If protein is eaten in sufficient quantities it can heighten energy and alertness. A high-carbohydrate meal can increase the brain's tryptophan levels, and hence the serotonin that promotes contentment and normal sleep.



Morning people who get out of bed ready to face the world with lots of energy should have their protein heavy meals for lunch and dinner. For example, they would benefit from not just having pasta for lunch, but to add chicken or seafood.

Night owls have to conform to morning schedules sometimes, so breakfast should be the protein rich meal of their day. To keep the energy flowing, it would also be beneficial for them to have a mid-morning snack of yogurt or cheese.

In times of mild depression, when medication is unnecessary, caffeine can be an effective antidepressant. But more than a serving or two a day will become counterproductive. Folic acid can produce similar effects. A cup of cooked spinach or a glass of orange or grapefruit juice should raise spirits if a person isn't clinically or chronically deficient.

(Con't on Page 2)

## EAP ELDERCARE SUPPORT UPDATE

Employees from over a dozen firms have used EAP's new Eldercare Consultation services since they began two months ago in June 2007! These employees reflect the experiences of caring people in our workforce. Some were in a crisis situation, while others were looking ahead to learn about aging and care options. Interestingly, although we often think our caregiver population is mostly women, half were men. Employees often chose to consult by telephone. However, many came in to Eldercare Hawaii, sometimes bringing family members and their senior loved ones along. Working caregivers called in from Maui and the Big Island, and some had families split between Oahu and the Neighbor Isles.

All kinds of eldercare concerns impact an employee's work life. You may be concerned about an elderly parent, grandparent, or other family member. It may be a close friend or elderly neighbor who relies on you for assistance and support. Many caregiving tasks can be managed without too much trouble. However, without planning and support, the inevitable transitions can throw our lives out of balance. We can end up compromising on quality of care, and the quality of our own lives and work, needlessly.

What is an eldercare consultation? It's an opportunity to receive help with your own needs and questions in a confidential setting. It offers help in navigating a complex array of services and resources and gives support for the emotional journey that is both the challenge and the reward.

Simply call your EAP Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm at 531-3271 (Neighbor Islands toll free at (800) 591-3271). We will help you arrange an eldercare consultation that fits your schedule.

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## Eat Your Way..... (Con't)

Here are some foods associated with positive moods: Vegetables, fruits, swimming fish, nuts, beans, non-fat dairy products, egg whites and whole grains. Foods that are not beneficial especially in large quantities: caffeine (in high daily doses), alcohol, sugar and white flour.

If changing your diet to include foods that are supposed to make you feel better isn't having the desired effect and you still feel tired, depressed or irritable, consult a physician or your

EAP, there may be a deeper concern or issue that needs to be addressed.



### Suggested Reading On This Topic:

Mitchell, Susan, and Christie, Catherine (1998). *I'd Kill for a Cookie*. New York: Dutton.

Challem, Jack. (2007). *The Food-Mood Solution*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

"How Food Benefits Mood"

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/2264529.stm>

## Blood Pressure and Sound Sleep

Talk to your doctor about your sleep pattern if you have high blood pressure.

A report published last year, which was not widely reported on, found a strong relationship between high blood pressure and fewer hours of sleep. Sleep apnea (when breathing stops while sleeping) has long been

associated with heart health, but this report addresses the actual number of sleep hours.

Among participants between the ages of 32 and 59, those who slept fewer than six hours a night had more than double the risk of high blood pressure than those who slept more than six hours a night.

Known sleep-zappers include stress, alcohol use before bedtime, caffeine, and even pets in the bedroom.



## Getting a Better Perspective on Respect



Grab a dictionary and you'll see a dozen definitions for the word respect. Here in Hawaii, with its unique cultural diversity, we often find a strong feeling of family and familiarity in the workplace and the lines of respectful behavior are sometimes blurred.

Do you view respectful behavior

simply as avoiding saying or doing certain things—like what your parents expected of you when you visited your grandparents' house during the holidays? In the workplace, respectful behavior is more than that.

Practiced well, respect contributes to improved morale, increased productivity, and a happier workplace for everyone. The most important thing to understand is that respect in the workplace is not just about avoiding offensive behavior. It is a process of personal growth by

which you recognize the worth of others along with their personal qualities or abilities, and then naturally interact with them from that viewpoint. This can be a difficult challenge if you have come to work with biases that don't make respectful behavior easy to practice.

We all have biases, usually about many different things. The challenge is to recognize our own biases, acknowledge the biases of others, and understand how those biases interfere with our personal and workplace productivity.