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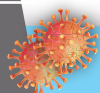
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Have you or a loved one become seriously ill from exposure to COVID-19 on the job? We are currently accepting COVID-19 cases of workers employed in certain occupations where currently proposed laws in both Virginia and North Carolina would classify COVID-19 illness as an occupational disease.



Heroes Come in All Sizes MacKenzie the Chihuahua is One Big Hero

The American Humane Hero Dog Awards competition is an annual celebration that honors some of the world's most extraordinary canines. The awards recognize dogs that have gone above and beyond the call of duty, whether it's saving lives on the battlefield, comforting the ill or elderly, or demonstrating just how powerful the bond between humans and animals can be. Winners are crowned in several categories, but the "American Hero Dog" is the top winner selected by expert panelists and a popular vote. It most often goes to dogs who show astute bravery in what they do, and in 2020, that bravery came in a 4-pound package.

MacKenzie the Chihuahua bested over 400 competitors to be selected as 2020's American Hero Dog. Born seven years ago with a cleft palate and severe pneumonia that nearly took her life, MacKenzie fought hard to overcome her sickness and birth defects. Soon after she defied all odds, her owners noticed her affinity for other animals — despite being tiny compared to many of them. That's when they gave her a special job: caring for baby animals born with birth defects just like she was.



Many of the rescue animals MacKenzie helps care for have medical problems that prohibit them from staying with their mothers, but MacKenzie takes a genuine interest in each baby from the moment they're introduced, no matter its species or size. She plays nurse, cleans, and comforts them through their recovery, becoming a pseudo-mother that teaches them how to socialize and play. She's nurtured countless puppies, kittens, birds, squirrels, mice, goats, and turkeys. Despite her tiny size, she's even mothered a Great Dane.

In addition to caring for rescued animals, MacKenzie also helps kids learn to be open-minded about both animals and people with physical differences or disabilities. The Chihuahua teaches the kids kindness and patience and shows them that no matter how small you might be, you can make a big difference.

MacKenzie lost her ability to bark very early in life, but she has one of the loudest voices when it comes to speaking for disadvantaged animals. Heroism truly comes in all shapes, sizes, and forms, but MacKenzie demonstrates that the most heroic act of all is exuding compassion for others, no matter their circumstances.



THE INVISIBLE STRUGGLE

That Can Have a Big Impact

Though I've certainly touched on the topic before in my many years of newsletters, I haven't written recently about the role that mental health plays for my clients. It feels especially relevant right now because while many folks are turning the page on a new chapter, leaving the difficulties from 2020 behind, and looking forward to starting fresh, this isn't the case for everyone. It's especially difficult for those who have been seriously injured at work and still have a long road of recovery, physically or mentally, ahead of them.

I've noticed lately that many of my clients are really struggling right now, and I think it's important to be aware that not everyone is feeling celebratory in light of the new year. Even those who have or will recover from their horrific physical injuries may still be dealing with mental struggles for a long time to come. For many clients, the event that

caused their work-related injury was severely traumatic, in some cases catastrophic, and this can lead to them developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While we often associate PTSD with military personnel in combat, any traumatic event can result in PTSD — especially life-altering events, which I unfortunately see all too often in my line of work. We hear stories of clients who wake up in a cold sweat almost every night, being forced to relive their horrific accident again and again during recurring nightmares.

Clients who are struggling with PTSD and/or depression or anxiety as a result of their injuries or inability to return to work are being doubly hit by the stresses of the pandemic. Imagine having PTSD coupled with difficulty sleeping and focusing and then trying to help your kids while they do online school from home. Imagine having established a daily routine to help you manage your symptoms and then having that routine thoroughly disrupted by a sweeping pandemic. Even leaving one's home or performing routine tasks can become a struggle. That's probably not hard to picture because it's happened to all of us, but for those struggling with PTSD and other mood disorders, remember that they're experiencing what you're experiencing, but their experience is compounded by their physical and mental pain and their already-compromised ability to cope with reality.

In addition, we frequently encounter folks who have had severe, preexisting mental health issues in their past that were largely resolved long ago; however, combine the stress of a severe accident and pain from injuries and throw in a worldwide pandemic, and many of these clients' mental health symptoms return with a vengeance. The good news is that so long as the mental health professionals can say that the accident was a precipitating factor for the return of the issues, then the new mental health treatment for those issues is entirely compensable.

I say all this because it can be easy to be dismissive if you haven't had mental health struggles yourself or known someone who does. But I interact with people regularly who are struggling with these issues, and I can see what a deep effect it has on their daily lives. In the worst cases, this can result in suicide, which we have unfortunately seen ourselves with one of our clients a couple of years ago.

If someone in your life is struggling right now, please take the time to listen to them and offer to help where you can. Encourage them to get professional help, if possible. Many of my clients are referred to mental health specialists by their treating physician, and it's an important part of their overall recovery. In fact, in many cases, the mental

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A little going-away party for Brittany

If you belong to a union or other labor-related group and want to schedule my presentation at your group's speaking arrangement, you can do so by calling 888-667-8295. The presentation is free of charge, offers important information for taking appropriate action in Virginia workers' compensation cases, and everyone in attendance gets a free copy of my book, "10 Traps and Lies That Can Ruin Your Virginia Workers' Compensation Case." Education is the best way to protect yourself from making a mistake. Call now, before it's too late.

HOW HABIT TRACKING AND DAILY RESOLUTIONS COULD TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE



Yearly resolutions are so last year ... if they're your only resolutions, that is.

Having long-term goals isn't a bad thing, but do you have a daily plan to reach them?

The huge boost

of motivation in January isn't always enough to sustain you all year long. That's why there are major benefits to starting new healthy habits, whether you increase your weekly exercise time, eat healthier foods, or work on getting better or more sleep.

Luckily, sticking with these habits might be as easy as making daily resolutions to complement your yearly goals.

BJ Fogg, a Stanford University professor and author of "Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything," notes that tiny habits can make a new habit easy to implement into your daily ritual. For example, taking a short daily walk could lead to an exercise habit, or keeping an apple in your bag every day could encourage healthier snacking.

It's important that you stick with it because habits take a long time to create. One study published by the European Journal of Social Psychology asked people about a simple habit they wanted to form, like drinking water at lunch or taking a walk before dinner. They found that the average amount of time it took before the action became automatic was 66 days! Don't be too hard on yourself if you miss a day, but know that sticking to a new habit is serious work, so starting small might help you out.

Another important aspect of forming new daily habits is rewarding yourself. Bad habits, like smoking, have an inherent reward. However, healthy habits can have rewards too! Try consuming a bit of dark chocolate after a workout or treating yourself to a fresh beverage or relaxing to a podcast after tackling an important task. Find ways to reward yourself, and you'll be more likely to stick to your new habit.

Certain daily resolutions don't have to be related to exercise or diet to majorly improve your life. For example, having a gratitude journal might boost your long-term happiness by 10% and improve your blood pressure. Don't hesitate to improve your quality of life! Just start small, and you'll be amazed by how far you'll go.

Our Clients Say It Best

"I am so happy I chose Joe Miller and his awesome team to support me. They go above and beyond to ensure that you are getting the treatment you deserve in your time of need. In the end, I am a million percent satisfied with the service. Thanks again, and a special shoutout to Brittany, his paralegal. She is patient, is understanding, and gets the job done. He did a great job choosing her as his partner. Thanks again, Joe Miller, for representing me."

-Camie C.



... continued from Cover

health professional is the only health care provider standing between the insurance company's desire to cut off our clients' benefits and our client's ability to survive financially.

Speaking of mental health specialists, we have some big news: Brittany, our paralegal, has recently left the firm to further her education and pursue a career in psychology. She's been a great asset to the team, so it hurts to see her go, but we're very happy for her. In fact, her firsthand legal work with clients who are going through difficult times, like the ones I described above, is part of what motivated her to get the tools she needs to continue to help people from a psychiatric standpoint. Our office manager, Tracy, has already assumed her paralegal duties, and she's been adapting wonderfully. We wish you all the best, Brittany!

Please take care of yourself and each other, and we'll continue to survive and thrive through this!

-Joseph Miller

Share the Love This Month

4 Ways to Support Your Loved Ones This Valentine's Day

Every Valentine's Day, people want to find the best ways to show their partner or even a close friend how much they care. It is easy to get sucked into thinking you have to give them the most expensive or elaborate present you can find, but sometimes, the most meaningful gifts are the simplest. Here are four easy ways to show your loved ones how much you care this February.

A Text a Day

Knowing someone has your back throughout the year, no matter how difficult things can get, is a great source of support and love. In addition to the usual communication you share with your loved one, add in a supportive text each day, whether it's simply letting them know you're thinking of them or wishing them luck on a presentation or interview. The best part about these texts is that they can be sent year-round.

A Morning Message Board

Whiteboards are fun to draw on and make great calendars, but they can also be used to share heartfelt messages with your roommates or spouse. Writing positive messages like, "I hope you have a wonderful day!" or "You matter!" can make all the difference. Waking up to a loving note from someone they care about could mean the world to them and shift their entire mood for the day.



A Daily Journal Entry

February and March are usually when New Year's resolutions begin to falter. To encourage yourself and your loved one, consider starting a daily journal. Leave a journal where you both have access to it and write positive messages inside for the other person. This acknowledgment of hard work is exactly what you both need to continue pursuing your goals this year.

Random Gifts

You don't have to wait for a birthday, Christmas, or Valentine's Day to give your loved one a gift. Buying small gifts lets your friend or spouse know you've been thinking about them. Whether it's a treat they enjoy, a book, or even a small gift card, these thoughtful gestures are sure to make them smile.

Joe's Monthly 'SOUL SNACKS'

"Our lives are fashioned by our choices. First we make our choices. Then our choices make us."
-Anne Frank

"There are two ways to live. You can live as if nothing is a miracle. You can live as if everything is a miracle."
-Albert Einstein

"Life is like riding a bicycle: to keep your balance you must keep moving."
-Albert Einstein

"Pain is a reality, suffering is a choice."
-R. Resnick



Balsamic Roasted Vegetable Pasta

Ingredients

- 1/2 tbsp grapeseed oil
- 2 1/2 lbs mixed vegetables of choice, chopped into 3/4-inch pieces (parsnips, turnips, carrots, butternut squash, Brussels sprouts, etc.)
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 8 oz uncooked pasta
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth
- 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 handfuls arugula
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Nutritional yeast, to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. In a large bowl, combine grapeseed oil, root vegetables, and onion. Toss until evenly coated, then spread the mixture across two foil-lined baking sheets.
3. Sprinkle vegetables with salt and pepper, then roast them for 35-40 minutes. While vegetables are roasting, cook pasta according to package directions.
4. When vegetables are done, heat olive oil in a deep skillet over medium heat. Sauté shallots and garlic for 4-5 minutes.
5. Add the root vegetables and onion, pasta, vegetable broth, and vinegar to the pot and stir until warm. Add the arugula and cook until wilted.
6. Serve with salt, pepper, and nutritional yeast.