



Workers' COMPanion

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YOUR INJURY DOES NOT DEFINE YOU

THE LINK BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND WORKERS' COMP

During a recent sermon, my pastor cited a study conducted by global health-service company Cigna that examined loneliness among Americans. I checked out the report myself, and it turns out that many of us are suffering. A whopping 46 percent of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone, and 27 percent say they rarely, if ever, feel understood by others.

These are troubling — if perhaps unsurprising — statistics, as are many others in the report. What caught my eye most was a note toward the end of the article making an explicit link between feeling connected and the workplace. According to the data, those who say they work “just the right amount” are the group least likely to be lonely, while those who work *less* than they’d prefer are likely to feel more isolated.

As a lawyer who’s been representing injured workers for over 30 years, this last bit of information doesn’t surprise me. For many of us, our work connects us to who we are. When a worker is forced from their job by circumstances out of their control, they’re cut off both from their primary source of income and the abundant personal connections that come with the workplace. It’s no wonder that many people feel isolated more after an injury than they have in their entire lives.

My readers likely would be amazed to know how many calls we get from struggling clients who just need someone to talk to — someone who understands and empathizes with their situation. I have several clients who’ve faced this struggle recently. The wife of a longtime client, whose claim has been botched and neglected by the system, told me that her husband feels like a loser lately. For more than a year, his devastating injury has physically prevented him from doing much, including providing an income, and the couple had to file

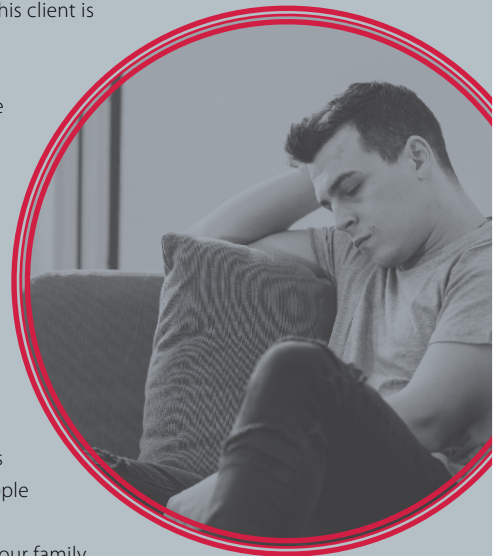
for bankruptcy. It’s no wonder this client is feeling down.

It’s a pattern I see time and time again. But I have a message to all of my clients feeling the sting of loneliness or inadequacy in the face of injury or illness: No matter how bad it may seem, *you are not alone in this*. Please, contact Wilma, Todd, or me at the office if you’re feeling isolated. We’re not licensed therapists, but we have decades of experience working with people in situations just like yours. We genuinely care about you and your family. Honestly, we receive frequent calls from clients who just need someone to vent to.

If we can’t help you, we will direct you to someone who can. We have numerous resources on file for our clients, from mental health professionals to support groups and everything between. The Ohio workers’ compensation system even provides benefits for treatment for depression, anxiety, and PTSD — just ask us how to tap into these resources.

Your injury doesn’t define you, and it doesn’t make you a loser. Even as mental health comes to the forefront of the national conversation, many of us who struggle with isolation, depression, and anxiety still feel guilty and afraid of seeking help. I know as well as anyone how difficult that first step can be, but whatever you do, don’t suppress your feelings or pile guilt onto everything else. Call us, shoot us an email, or talk to a loved one. During a time when more of us than ever are feeling lonely, it’s vital to count on one another for support. You’ll feel better for doing so.

—Jim Monast



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Black Gold for Your Garden Soil

NATIONAL LEARN ABOUT COMPOSTING DAY!

Most people have heard of composting one way or another. Your mom might have kept a bin in the backyard for overripe Halloween pumpkins, yard clippings, and egg shells. You might even have a coworker who boasts about the giant compost pile they use to fertilize their garden and lawn.

Whatever your level of composting knowledge may be, there is always more to learn about this popular and extremely beneficial method for handling organic food waste. Luckily, May 29 is National Learn About Composting Day! This day provides a great opportunity to introduce yourself to and begin the conversation about composting if you haven't already. Below are a few answers to your basic composting questions to get you started.

What Is Compost? Compost is decomposed organic matter, which is especially good for people who have gardens or aspire to live a sustainable lifestyle. People put coffee grounds; vegetable scraps; paper products, including receipts, paper towels, and tissues; wood chips, leaves, and other types of waste that are not categorized as processed food, meats, or fish products in their compost bin. Compost can stabilize gardening soil, keep the soil from contracting diseases, and help the ground retain moisture.

Why Do We Compost? Besides giving gardens and lawns significant nutrients, composting also reduces landfills. According to the United States EPA, "Food scraps and yard waste together currently make up about 30 percent of what we throw away." Organic material often takes longer to decompose in a landfill due to being wrapped in plastic. The more organic material that is composted, the quicker it can deteriorate.

Learn About Composting Day The best way to recognize this holiday is to learn as much as you can about composting. When you dive in, you'll discover you can compost materials you never knew you could, including latex balloons and cardboard egg cartons. Once you do your research, you can start your very own compost by dedicating a part of your backyard to disposing of organic matter or by purchasing a compost bin.

This article covers the basics of composting, but there's still plenty more to learn! Head to your local farmers market or botanical garden and talk to the experts about any questions you have — they'll be sure to give you some great tips.



CLIENT STORIES

MARY C.

Mary C. has been our client for nearly 25 years. It was way back then that she suffered her first of four injuries working for Honda in that city where the grass is greener. While auto manufacturing is much more automated than when Henry Ford made cars ("Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants so long as it is black."), human involvement is still essential, often requiring odd twisting and heavy lifting.

Honda manufacturing used to be a very high-paying job, though now people are typically hired through temp agencies and earn about half of what workers used to get. Although she left school in Kentucky after the seventh grade, Mary knew how to work hard. A salt-of-the-earth kind of gal, Mary soldiered through her lack of education and earned her keep doing heavy manufacturing work. She started in production assembly and developed bilateral hand swelling and pain and numbness of the wrists and arms. Despite being diagnosed with bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome, she kept working and injured her right elbow reaching for an air gun. Three years later, she tripped over a parts cart, fell onto her outstretched left hand, and broke a finger. Still, like the Energizer Bunny, she kept on going!

Finally, she developed lower and mid-back pain while hand-loading glass as the hydraulic lift typically used was broken. The disc herniation in her lower back caused such pain and leg weakness that she fell, breaking her big toe and fracturing her forearm where it joins at the elbow.

Her doctor stated Mary was no longer fit to work in any position because she couldn't stand or walk for any length of time. Her chronic low back pain led to weakness in her legs and several falls, the need for a cane, and regular pain medication, making her unsafe to work in any capacity.

The Industrial Commission agreed with us that the residuals from Mary's various injuries left her permanently unable to work. Though her manufacturing work took its toll on her body, her future financial and medical needs will be met.



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons user N. OH

Choosing the Right Doctor for Workers' Comp

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING A TRICKY SITUATION

If you're like most people, you've seen the same general practitioner for years. You trust them entirely with your care, and if it were up to you, you'd never see another doctor. Here's the problem: Now that you're suffering from a workplace injury or illness, you may suddenly be required to see a doctor you don't know.

Unfortunately, that's just the way it is in Ohio. If you want your treatment covered by workers' compensation, you have to go see a doctor certified by the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC).

Of course, the first step toward getting treatment is to find out if your current doctor is BWC-certified. You can simply ask them or look it up online. If so, that's great! You can continue seeing them for treatment of your work-related injury.

If your doctor is *not* BWC-certified, it's still important to find a doctor who's the right fit for you. Not only will this person be in charge of your treatment, but they'll also be the one to decide when you're fit to return to work. So, make sure you're able to communicate openly with them and they're sympathetic to your needs.

Depending on your injury or illness, choose a physician who either specializes in or has ample experience treating your condition. Get referrals from friends,

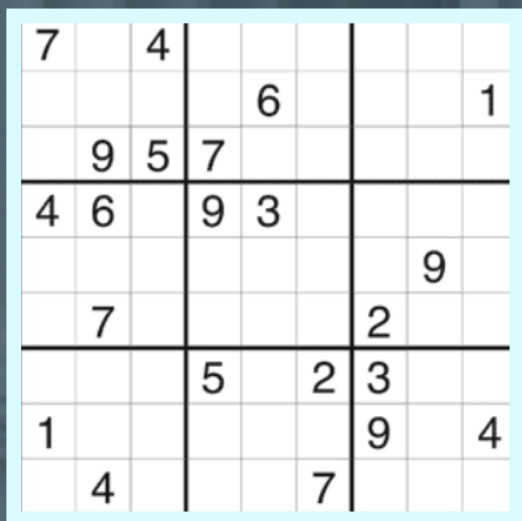
family members, and coworkers, especially if they've collected workers' compensation in the past. Make sure the doctor is convenient to get to, particularly if you have an injury that makes travel difficult. Don't commit to someone you've never met. Ask the doctor and their staff members questions during your initial appointment to get to know them better before making a decision.

Of course, you can always ask us for a referral, as well. Considering our many years representing workers, we've become familiar with plenty of excellent doctors. Just ask Wilma or Todd for a recommendation!

You deserve the best care after suffering from a workplace injury or illness, so don't allow yourself to be rushed while choosing a doctor. If your employer is making you feel like you're lying about your injury or trying to cheat the system, **give us a call at 614-515-2595**. We're easy to talk to, and we will help you navigate your legal situation even if it turns out you don't need a lawyer.



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ANSWER



NIBBLES WITH NUG SHRIMP SAUSAGE SKEWERS

These shrimp skewers are a quick way to add some surf and turf to your cookout. Pair them with a vinaigrette salad for a side dish that complements without overwhelming the main event.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 pound raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/2 pound cooked sausage, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 zucchini, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Wooden skewers, soaked in water for 30 minutes

CREOLE SEASONING INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons paprika
- 1/2 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1/2 tablespoon onion powder
- 1/2 tablespoon cayenne or chili powder
- 1/4 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1/4 tablespoon dried thyme

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat your grill to medium-high.
2. In a bowl, combine all ingredients for creole seasoning.
3. In a large bowl, combine the shrimp, zucchini pieces, and sausage pieces, and cover them with the olive oil.
4. Add creole seasoning and mix well until all ingredients are covered.
5. Load up skewers with alternating pieces of shrimp, sausage, and zucchini until they're full.
6. Grill skewers until shrimp are well-cooked (6–8 minutes).

Inspired by PaleoLeap.com



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Snacking

WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

There are many different opinions on the healthiness of snacking. Some people think of snacks as processed foods with high calories, but snacks don't have to be junk food. Depending on what snacks you're eating, and how often, these little in-between-meal bites can be highly beneficial or detrimental to your overall health.

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY SNACKS People snack when they're hungry, but they also do it when they're stressed, bored, or have a habit. When people snack on unhealthy junk food when they're bored, the result is weight gain. An excellent way to avoid unhealthy snacks is to surround yourself with healthy alternatives. Fill your fridge and pantry with whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and nuts and legumes. With those in your kitchen, you'll have plenty of healthy options to choose from when you're hungry.

WHO BENEFITS FROM SNACKING? Depending on your weight, fitness level, and medical conditions, snacking throughout the day can be more effective than eating

three large meals a day. Individuals who are crunched for time, have particular health conditions, are athletic, or are trying to lose or maintain weight all benefit from healthy snacking throughout the day.

People who have high cholesterol or diabetes can better maintain their cholesterol and blood glucose levels if they eat frequently during the day. For athletes, snacking helps distribute the consumption of nutrients their body needs throughout the day instead of all at once. This way, their energy levels stay the same instead of fluctuating with their meal times.

If you find yourself in need of a quick bite, think clementines and almonds instead of chips and Pop-Tarts. You'll still satisfy your hunger without jeopardizing your health or increasing your waistline.