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Walking on Stepping Stones Susan Mikolic Takes Stress Out of the Office



It's a tough time in the workplace these days.

Some people are burning the midnight oil, working extra hard to keep their businesses running with a skeletal staff. Others feel daily pressure about looming layoffs, and the fear that they could be next. Even when business is great, employees face work overload, co-worker conflicts and an assortment of day-to-day situations that can lead to stress or burnout.

That's where Susan Mikolic steps in. A registered nurse and president of Stepping Stones Mental Health Educational Consulting, Inc., Mikolic provides programs to help businesses deal with employee burnout, stress and other negative factors. Mikolic is a petite bundle of positive energy. A mother of two who overcame her own stressful circumstances and helped herself and her sons gain physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, Mikolic now shares her wellness plan with individuals and businesses.

Rather than just talk with companies about how to reduce negative feelings or situations, Mikolic works with employees in dealing with specific problems. "Each program I present for work groups is personalized," she explains. "I talk with the organizers of every event before I prepare a program so I have a deep understanding of their group's specific needs."

For example, if a company is trying to deal with employee burnout, Mikolic devises a program to help them adopt healthy strategies for dealing with it. "People who are on the brink of burnout are physically, mentally and emotionally stressed," Mikolic says. The core work in these sessions involves helping attendees identify the root of their stress, demonstrating that stress is a result of over-expend energy and providing them with new ideas for managing their energy to reduce stress.

As the name of her company implies, Mikolic understands that the road to emotional and physical wellbeing is not reached in a single session but requires a series of small "stepping stones." Mikolic helps employees reach wellness through her "red light plan," a method for monitoring energy output throughout the day.

"Attendees are encouraged to maintain contact with me as they move through their burnout stages," Mikolic says. "I help them develop their personal 'red light plan,' to give them the tools they need to avoid burnout in the future."

Mikolic talks a lot about energy in her corporate programs. "Energy is our fuel," she says. "If we overextend ourselves, if we place too high of demands on our system, we are going to have negative results."

The Stepping Stones positive energy program encourages changes that can infuse positive energy into an individual's life. "No one needs to remain stuck in negative energy and negative emotions," Mikolic says.

Encouraging participants to understand that they cannot always be in control of situations, especially when it involves something as drastic as a job loss or potential job loss, is not easy. The one thing that can be controlled, according to Mikolic, is one's reaction to the situation.

"There are times in life when we need to learn to accept change and look for the positives in each situation," she says.

When working with employees facing job loss, Mikolic introduces stress-reduction habits that can help them avoid becoming paralyzed with fear and dread. Again, the "red light plan" comes into play as a means of reducing stress in situations beyond someone's control.

Mikolic has presented her Stepping Stones programs to government agencies, educational institutions, beauty salons and everywhere in between. Overall, the responses are as positive as Mikolic's own energy.

"Folks that have been able to resolve their fears and become peaceful through difficult situations [say they] are calmer, have improved co-worker relationships... and have more energy and enthusiasm on the job and in their home life," Mikolic notes.

One satisfied attendee of a program went so far as to call Mikolic her "guardian angel."

Mikolic prefers to see herself as "the vehicle to deliver the message" about physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Mikolic also offers programming specific to helping children with emotional disturbances succeed in school with training and consultation services for educators and families. Learn more about Mikolic and Stepping Stones by visiting <http://www.steppingstonesmentalhealth.com>.

From *Cool Cleveland* contributor Diane DiPiero ohiodianeATnetzero.net.