PATHWAYS

July 2021

The **Employee** Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program

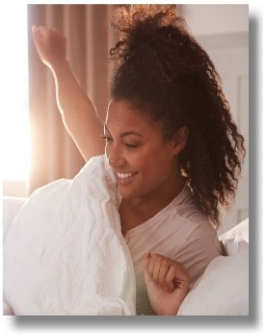
Develop the Habit of Active Listening

"**Active listening**" is the practice of engaging with a speaker using techniques of listening that maximize understanding. The goal is more complete communication. Active listening is conscious and purposeful. The skill is often taught in couples counseling because it reduces misunderstandings, conflicts, and frustration; increases closeness; and helps people solve problems faster. Obviously, active listening has immense value in the workplace. Do you know how to actively listen? To practice active listening, decide to be neutral and nonjudgmental when the speaker begins. Don't interrupt. Periodically reflect back your understanding. Don't "fill the silence" when the speaker pauses. Use nonverbal behaviors to show you're listening and engaged. Finally, ask for clarification if needed, and summarize what you heard.

Caregiving Apps Make It Easier

Being a caregiver is about more than grocery shopping and providing companionship. It's a constant stream of issues, concerns, interruptions, and crises related to medications, surgeries, rehabilitation, appointments, and dozens of personal care issues. It can equate to an exhausting second job. If you're a caregiver, discover apps that can help you reduce the stress of keeping up with it all. Start by taking a look at six such apps at www.caring.com/caregivers/caregiver-support. Consider an app like "Care Zone" to store information, share calendars or get prescription information. Putting technology to work may be a way to relieve some of the stress and offer some valuable resources.

Morning Grogginess? Try Avoiding the Snooze Button



It may sound like too much to bear, but giving up the snooze button as you struggle to get out of bed might help eliminate the morning grogginess and excessive daytime sleepiness you experience. Snooze buttons can create a condition called "fragmented sleep," as it can interrupt REM sleep, which is the restorative part of your sleep cycle. A recent article in the Journal of Sleep Medicine found that just one night of fragmented sleep can have adverse effects on mood, attention span and cognition.

Source: pubmed-ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/67L8922

Learn more: www.newsroom.clevelandclinic.org [search "snooze button"].

Finding Your Emotional Intelligence Gap

Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ) is your ability to identify, understand, and "regulate" or control emotions. This includes the ability to respond to feelings in ways that are helpful or constructive. The result: You communicate more effectively, demonstrate empathy, and solve problems more successfully. As with IQ, it's possible to measure EI, but the score is not as important as discovering areas where you can make improvements to help yourself personally and professionally. Many EI tests are job-specific for leadership, teaching, caregiving, and even dentistry! If you decide to explore your EI or EQ pay particular attention to the exercises and ways you can explore your emotions. Find more information at www.positivepsychology.com/emotional-intelligence-tests/

www.nodc.org/images/stories/2018/Handouts/EI-ASSESSMENT.pdf.

Equity in the Workplace: What's Your Role?

Workplace equity means having a workplace where everyone feels valued, is treated fairly, and is empowered to contribute and to pursue happiness in their job. Workplace equity is a goal that requires everyone's participation so opportunity for all becomes reality. What's your role? Here are five ways that you, as a coworker, can help bring equity to your workplace. 1) Value diversity. Diverse workplaces enhance businesses and help them compete in an increasingly diverse world-of-work that expects and rewards workplace equity. See diversity as a plus for any organization. 2) Value inclusion. Inclusion means that differences among employees aren't cause for discrimination—people feel equally welcomed and valued for their contributions. 3) "Step in." When you witness values of inclusiveness, equality, respect, or equal opportunity being overlooked or dismissed, be the one who says, "Can we talk about ___ in this situation?" 4) Don't turn away or dismiss slights or unintentional (indirect) discrimination against others. Those who are victims of discrimination often brush off or set aside these micro-aggressions. 5) Know your biases and mind your language. Everyone has biases, but consider how these biases are demonstrated in private conversations with close friends, and how they may emerge within the workplace and community at large. Workplace equity is an evolving value and area of study for employers and work organizations. The misconception among many employees is that the responsibility for equity lies solely with management and the organization's policies. Ultimately, however, it is the employee-to-employee interaction level that determines whether the goal is realized. This is the business case for understanding and promoting workplace equity. Awareness Challenge: Examine this resource and discuss it with your workgroup:

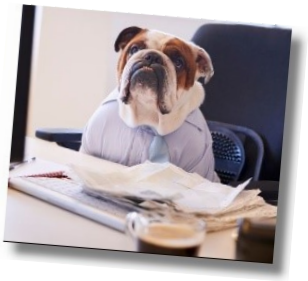
wwd.dsph.umn.edu search "micro-aggression examples"

Diagnosing Compulsive Buying-Spending Disorder

A lack of international consensus by experts on the diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying (spending) disorder led to research, with findings released in May 2021. The American Psychiatric Association still does not consider compulsive shopping an addiction or a behavioral disorder. Still, after interviews with experts in 35 countries, at least two characteristics were described as "universally accepted": excessive purchasing of items without using them for their intended purpose (think unopened boxes of deliveries, loads of clothes in a closet with price tags still attached, etc.) and shopping as a means to positively affect or elevate one's mood. It is hoped that this international consensus will lead to more studied and accepted criteria, lessen denial, and increase self-diagnosis by those who suffer with a shopping addiction. Do you or a loved one experience these behaviors? Not sure? Start with your EAP or a professional counselor to explore more.

New Stress of Going Back to Work

Have you been asked to return to your job on-site after working at home remotely for the past year? Perhaps you kept your fingers crossed hoping your remote job would be the new normal into the future with newly established family routines, no commute, a home office that started to feel ideal, and a feeling of independence you cherished. Many employees are excited about returning to work, but not everyone feels this way. Talk with your EAP about how to cope with the stress of change and disappointment and how to reconnect so you can become your most productive self and experience the job satisfaction you want.



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