PATHWAYS

July 2020

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

SHRM's Workplace Model for Discussions about Race

The national unrest and news associated with racial injustice has many employees feeling the need to process the crisis in an honest discussion. If that's true for you, check out the Society for Human Resource Management, which has assembled a guide for doing so. It appears adaptable to any diversity-related issue or concern. You can find the guide at SHRM.org (search "tips for discussing racial injustice in the workplace"). You will find recommended outlines, rationales, procedural steps, definitions, and listening/replying guidelines that bring people together, and more.

Resources for Parenting in COVID Times

The "2020 Stress in America" survey was just published by the American Psychological Association. It shows the COVID-19 pandemic has "altered every aspect of daily life, from health and work to education and exercise." Parental stress is particularly great with disrupted routines, missing graduations, and difficulty structuring free time for kids. A comprehensive list of resources is available just for parents. It covers nearly all aspects of parenting during the COVID pandemic—things to do with children, routines, safety, helping teens, parental discipline, taking care of yourself, and more. See the new PDF at www.keltymentalhealth.ca (search "parenting covid").

When a Coworker Has Cancer

About 40% of us will be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetime. This fear of a cancer diagnosis can hamper your ability to say the right things when you discover a coworker has cancer. Your genuine and heartfelt words (consistent with your relationship and how well you know your coworker) are best. For example, "I am really sorry you are facing this. I care and want you to know I am here for you." Don't overreact, don't try to cheer up a cancer victim or share cancer stories, don't give pep talks or advice, and don't use phrases like, "keep your chin up." When offering help, be specific about a task or project you can accept to lessen your coworker's burden. Don't say, "let me know how I can help." Above all, don't stop treating your coworker like a coworker. That's who they are.

Www.Cancer.org

Inhalants Abuse: It's Still Around

An estimated 21.7 million Americans have used inhalants, and most were children between 12 and 18 years when they first experimented. Inhalant abuse is breathing or "huffing" volatile substances like solvents, aerosols, White-Out, felt-tip pens, glue, paint, gasoline, and other substances to get high. Hundreds of other volatile products can be huffed. Any of them could cause brain damage or death. *Parent advice*: Remain aware of this health concern, because more teens experiment with illicit drugs *for the first time* in June and July. Explain to children the danger of inhalants, and learn more about this problem so you can be proactive in prevention. Parents' guide: www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/inhalantsrrs.pdf.

Sources: DrugAbuse.gov, National Inhalant Prevention Coalition of Canada, and National Survey on Drug Abuse and Health at SAMHSA.gov.

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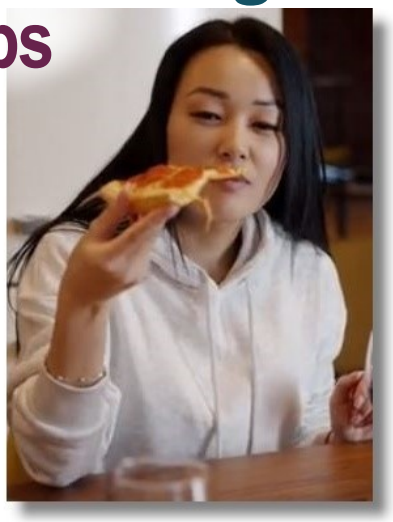
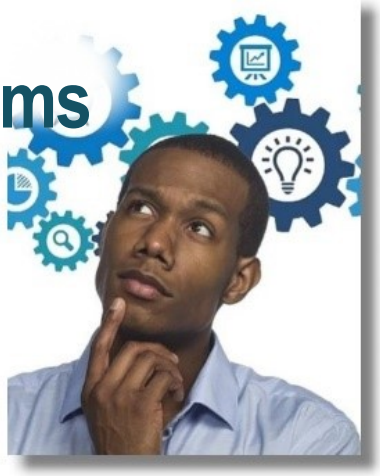
Remote Worker Dieting and Fitness Tips



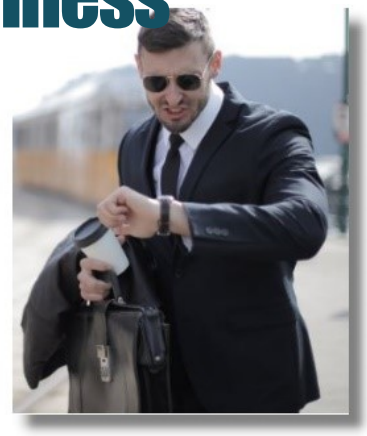
If you are working remotely from home, consider how your job can interfere with a healthy diet and personal fitness. Distractions, hunger (or ignoring hunger), postponing meals, interruptions, deadlines, focus, stress, and how tired you become can each influence decisions about diet and fitness. For example, while wearing earphones on a call, you wander into the kitchen and engage in unconscious eating. Under a high-pressure deadline, you skip exercise. Too busy to eat dinner, you go for the late-night ramen noodle cup. Here are five ways to be a healthier remote worker: awareness, setting boundaries, creating structure, planning, and preparation. Working from home can be satisfying, but use *awareness* to create the right environment. Manage this environment with *boundaries* where distractions and unhealthy food temptations are not present. *Create structure* by arranging your day so snacks, meals, and chores are predictable, not intrusions. *Plan* a schedule in which health and fitness behaviors remain central to your well-being. Finally, *prepare* your workplace and do the groundwork daily with "pre-flight" tasks to make your day a healthy and productive one. Get a water bottle in place, flip the switch on your eight-hour Crock-Pot recipe, make a sandwich ahead of time, set up healthy snacks, and lay out your exercise clothes to allow a smooth transition from your job to your workout.

Try a Formula to Solve Problems



An orderly plan for solving problems can help you arrive at a more satisfactory solution. Unless you are a scientist, social worker, or philosophy major, you may not have studied the "problem-solving process." There are many variations, but the main advantages are increased focus, better deliberation, and less guessing that can lead to a harmful solution or none at all. Apply these steps to personal or work-related problems: 1) define your problem—but be sure not to confuse symptoms (that which is undesired) with the problem (that which causes what is undesired); 2) brainstorm solutions; 3) analyze the solutions and pick the best one; 4) implement the solution; and 5) review the results. Each step may have substeps. Use a team or family group of those who have a stake in the solution for even greater impact.

Overcome Struggles with Tardiness



Studies show surprising ripple effects caused by tardiness within organizations, so it's a problem worth overcoming if you are constantly in a rush to get to work and still don't make it on time. Start by conquering two hurdles. One is figuring out what is really making you run late, and come up with an intervention. For many, this is not as easy as it sounds. You may benefit from working with a counselor or EAP to discover the right intervention. Of the top five causes of frequent tardiness, three are associated with oversleeping, being too tired to get up, and forgetting something. These are internal rather than external causes. This points to the value of working with an empathic professional. The other hurdle is getting past the fear of asking for help, but once you experience relief and success, you will wonder why you didn't call sooner.

www.careertrend.com (search "late to work").

Questions to Bring to a Professional Counselor

If you decide to see a professional counselor, maximize the benefits of your first visit by answering these questions before you go: 1) What is causing stress and tension in your life? 2) How does the tension affect you, your family, and your job? 3) Are these stress or tension issues short term or long term? 4) Who in life represents your support group? 5) What are you willing to change or give up to have less stress or tension in your life? 6) When you have successfully reduced stress and tension on your own, how have you done so? 7) What has not worked? 8) If counseling is successful, how do you envision life afterward?

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