PATHWAYS

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The Employee Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program

Overcoming the Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown

COVID-19 lockdowns have had a severe effect on mental health for millions of people this past year. Depression, isolation, and loads of adverse social consequences are as endemic as the virus itself. One key intervention is keeping a list of projects and tasks for completion to fill one's free time. This strategy is not simply a way to help you stay distracted, it helps you feel in control with an ability to direct your life. Gaining relief from this sense of entrapment is the goal of activities that give you more of a sense of control. Be balanced in how much you engage in social media. It may increase your sense of belonging and feeling engaged with friends and loved ones, but during this time, the "missing out syndrome" and the false "everyone seems better off than me" can have a more stark effect. So, stay aware.

Thinking about Quitting Your Job?

Hold your horses! Before you quit a job, consider the issues prompting the desire to leave. Two-thirds of workers cite conflicts with bosses and coworkers as leading reasons they left. The commonality of these problems means that EAPs have extensive experience with them. That's good news. Discussing the issues may lead to a decision to retain your job and finally resolve problems you were convinced had no solutions.

Do You Live with a Problem Gambler?

If you live with someone who gambles, does a gambling disorder disrupt your life? Gam-Anon is a starting point for getting help. This free program is for family, friends, loved ones, and concerned persons affected by another person's gambling. Gam-Anon offers support and answers. Fellowship members can offer their experience, which may also help you discover what to do, how to intervene, and how to take care of yourself in a relationship with a problem gambler.

Learn more at GamblersAnonymous.org [click on the "Gam-Anon" tab]. You can join a regularly scheduled virtual meeting.

Supporting a Partner with Anxiety

If you are in a relationship with someone who suffers from anxiety, feeling helpless is a common experience you share. Still, your support is extremely valuable. To offer support, don't dismiss their anxiety, worries, or fears. Don't try to shorten the episode. Do ask how you can help, and offer reassurance —"This will pass," "I'm here for you," etc. Nearly 60% of people who suffer from anxiety haven't explored getting treatment for it, thus encouraging medical evaluation may be a key step if social and occupational functioning suffer. Do not allow the stigma of a mental health diagnosis inhibit getting help. Most people with anxiety disorders don't suffer continuously, so intermittent symptoms can lead you to delay treatment.

Learn more from adaa.org, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, or www.anxietycanada.com

Time Management
Finding Time Nuggets

Most of us have the same goal with time—to get more stuff done with the amount we have. To maximize the value of your time, first accept that you can't gain more time, but you can manage it better. You are already managing your time; it's just that you may not be maximizing the returns. Start by tracking what you do for four or five hours in a typical business day. That's long enough to gain significant insight. Note what you have been doing every 15 minutes. Use a kitchen timer to stick with the process. Did you discover any time nuggets? These are blocks of time that typically get burned up by nonproductive activity. If you were idle for a few minutes, did you feel a draw to your email or social media? Decide how you can exploit these blocks by using a to-do list, in which you record plans, steps to your goals, and dozens of tasks that take mere minutes but you never seem to achieve during the year. Reach for this list when the urge to defocus strikes. Instead of social media or another email check, head for your list. Evaluate your progress after three days.

Presenteeism Working While Sick

Presenteeism is what happens when workers who are ill, injured, or otherwise physically or mentally unwell feel obligated to show up and put their best face forward. Some workers have a mistaken belief that dedicated employees put everything else on the back burner to prioritize their jobs. When you engage in presenteeism, you are less likely to perform your duties well and are at risk for making costly, even deadly mistakes. If you feel pressured, in a jam, or caught in life circumstances that compel you to work even if you are ill, talk to your employee assistance program or other mental health counselor. You'll team with a professional to examine all the issues. Whether it is how to communicate needs to your supervisor, negotiate, delegate, find resources, think through options, or explore whatever works, it is likely that answers exist so you remain or become the productive and fully present employee you and employer want you to be.

Finding Help
Why Can't It Be Easy?

These days everything that we need to accomplish is more difficult; and getting help for personal problems is no exception. You may be experiencing a sense of urgency to find help so you seek out your EAP. Why can't EAP just give me a few names of therapists that I can call on my own? It might surprise you to know that EAP is not just a referral service; they offer much more than the names of people who can help you. Most people mistakenly think that once you have a list, you can just call up anyone and get and appointment. When you call the EAP, you will be scheduled to speak to an EAP counselor who will evaluate your situation and engage with you in providing options and obtaining an appointment with a mental health professional in the community that can provide long term therapy if necessary. Each person is provided with referrals that are customized for their individual needs and EAP connects them with an appointment with the professional that will assist them over the duration of their treatment. Getting help for your mental health should not be a do it yourself project; seek out the help of the professionals at EAP today.

How to Feel More Secure about Your Job

Feeling insecure about the ability to do your job, making a positive impression, and how you are perceived by others? To feel centered and more confident:

1) Set goals for the day, week, and near future. You will be motivated by feeling directed.
2) Define the steps to how these goals will be achieved. This maintains the motivation you generated.
3) Engage. Feeling insecure can cause you to withdraw or delay communication with others, so be proactive with your team or others with whom you mutually depend to achieve results. 4) Talk to a professional counselor/EAP, and feel the relief that comes with sharing stress and processing fears. 5) Track your successes.

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