PATHWAYS
April 2021
The **Employee** Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program

Helping First Responders: Peer Influence and Suicide Prevention

Each year, more firefighters and police, along with other first responders, die by suicide than in the line of duty. Fortunately, the family-like closeness among first responders makes peer education and training a strongly promoted approach to prevention. Like in the field, "having each other's back" is key, but recognizing signs of distress is critical. If you are a first responder, would you recognize a coworker's distress enough to act? Common signs include substance misuse, domestic partner violence, legal and occupational problems, the end of an intimate relationship, serious financial problems, depression, anger management issues, anxiety, and sleep problems. A life-preserving skill is your willingness to ask a distressed coworker about suicidal thoughts: "Are you having thoughts about suicide?" Think of this as the "Jaws of Life" question because of its ability to help save a life.

Explore more: www.theiacp.org [search "suicide toolkit"]

Dozing at Your Desk?

Suddenly your eyes close and you're dozing at your desk—perhaps with your fingers still on the keyboard. You may discover willpower has little effect on this frustrating after-lunch phenomenon (caused by several metabolic processes), but you can manage it by planning ahead for it rather than fighting the losing battle. Begin with simple stretching exercises for a minute or two *before* sitting down to work after lunch. Every 30 minutes, stretch again. Engaging muscles will help counter sleepiness. Find loads of stretches at www.ochsner.org [search "fit at desk"].

Good First Impressions Like a Bit of Insurance

Researchers found that making a good first impression is not only important, it also provides a buffer effect in case you later have a bad day, experience a slip-up, or make a mistake. Your good first impression establishes trust with others. Later, tolerance for a mistake you make is more likely. Failure to make a good first impression can compound the effect of future mistakes. Making a good first impression is like buying insurance to cover your reputation—at least a little bit.

Source: www.unh.edu [search "no second chance first impression"]

Does Diet Affect Mental Health?

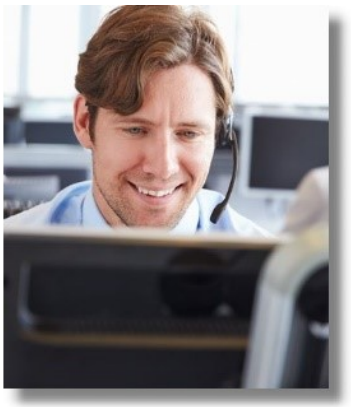
Nutrition affects mental health, and nutrients with the most effect are B vitamins, vitamin D, antioxidant-rich foods, omega-3 fatty acids, and fiber. News about heart health and diet is more popularly understood, but how nutrition affects the brain is obviously as important. Does your diet suffer from a lack of these nutrients? (Talk to your doctor before considering supplements.) Among hundreds of research findings, some have shown negative effects of processed foods before age three on a child's IQ; relief of depression symptoms related to omega-3; and fiber's role in supporting gut microbes as important to brain health. Older males may benefit by moderate consumption of nuts.

Explore more: www.binghamton.edu/ [search "diet mental health]

Do I Need Professional Counseling?

You might be surprised at how resilient human beings are simply by considering your life struggles over which you have prevailed. But could you have surmounted these obstacles faster if you had engaged a professional counselor? Consider professional counseling if any of the following are part of your experience right now: 1) Every day is a struggle, and your own efforts to correct or fix some unwanted set of life challenges are lingering on. 2) You are frustrated with a behavior or emotional reaction you haven't been able to rid yourself of for very long. An example might be how quick you are to get angry or the inability to let go of a past hurt that prevents you from trusting others or enjoying life the way you see others do. 3) You are struggling with the ability to get excited about life, feel hopeful, or feel energized about a hobby or activity you once enjoyed. 4) You've "relapsed" or gone back to participating in some behavior you thought you'd permanently quit. 5) You feel overwhelmed by problems, and your constant worrying about them causes you to feel detached and distracted, unable to fully and emotionally participate in life around you. 6) You use withdrawing from others or avoidance of social events as a way to cope with #5 above. 7) You are in a relationship characterized by long-term struggle and conflict, and coping with the other person's behaviors is not improving your happiness. You feel trapped and unsure of what to do about it. If you recognize yourself in this description - Don't delay, call EAP today!

Stop the Stress Before It Starts



Communication with stakeholders can reduce stress or make it worse. Practice these more pleasant responses and see whether you aren't more buoyant about your job at the end of the day. Don't say, "I don't know"—say, "I'll find out." Don't say "No!"—say, "What I can do is…." Don't say, "That's not my job"—say, "Let's find the person who can help you." Don't say, "Calm down"—say, "You're right, this is a problem." Don't say nothing.—say, "I will be with you in a moment." Hint: When you're alone, practice speaking these lines aloud. You will develop reflexes that establish a more affirming tone.

"ePresenteeism" A Risk for Remote Workers

Presenteeism means "coming to work despite illness, injury, anxiety, etc., often resulting in reduced productivity." Presenteeism is also "working long hours at a job without the real need to do so" (dictionary.com). Are you at risk for "ePresenteeism?" It's real. ePresenteeism can be a slippery slope for clocking more hours, leading to adverse effects on mental health caused by added stress, possible burnout, and work-life balance disruption. The pattern can be difficult to break once it starts, so take care of yourself and create good work-life balance habits. Eighty percent of HR managers fear remote working has fueled a culture of ePresenteeism. Beyond negative health effects, another concern is loss of workers from turnover (quitting) as a way of overcoming the habit. Work-life balance is a learned skill. Turn to your EAP if you're feeling trapped by your own work habits.

Explore more: www.theundercoverrecruiter.com/epresenteeism-burnout/

Coping with Next Day Anxiety

Next day anxiety—dread over what tomorrow will bring—is a sleep wrecking ball. A recent study found over 40% of people experience this cause of insomnia. And it got worse in 2020 during the pandemic. Sleep efficiency experts recommend not viewing sleep as "just another thing you do" but instead as an activity for you to become your own expert on. Dozens of tactics exist to improve sleep, but start with a visit to the EAP and get support for starting a sleep skills discovery journey. A medical evaluation to rule out unknown physical causes might also be recommended. Check out the newest resource, published in 2020 (during the pandemic): "The Sleep Workbook: Easy Strategies to Break the Anxiety-Insomnia Cycle."

Explore more: www.saatva.com/blog [search "up all night survey"]

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

BOCES Employee Assistance Program

1741D North Ocean Avenue, Medford, NY 11763 (631) 289-0480
154 Commack Road, Suite 210 Commack, NY 11725 (631) 218-5445
188 W. Montauk Hwy, Ste. E1, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 (631) 728-2008

BOCES Western Suffolk