PATHWAYS

June 2021

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

Affected by 'Headline Stress Disorder'?

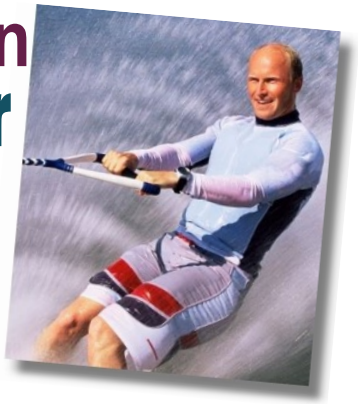
Are you affected by "headline stress disorder?" It's not a real mental health diagnosis, but it has been discussed at the National Institutes of Health. News travels faster than ever. There is more competition for your attention and your loyalty, but it can be at a price if the news you consume keeps you agitated, angry, depressed, and worried. Combine this reality with our ability to share news with others in seconds, and you have a recipe for experiencing palpitations, insomnia, anxiety, depression, endocrine disorders, and hypertension. If this sounds too familiar, monitor your news consumption. Keep a record of what you read, watch, and listen to for a few days. Experiment with cutting back, and if you don't make progress in reducing exposure and reduced symptoms, speak with your EAP or a professional counselor.

Source: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc [search PMC7104635]

Have a Burnout Prevention Plan

You can experience burnout even if you love your job. Your initial enthusiasm, energy, and accomplishments can obscure your awareness of being overworked, resource limitations, lack of control of your schedule, and the negative consequences of neglecting work-life balance. Eventually, enthusiasm and interest wane, excitement diminishes, and job strain begins with associated physical, mental, and emotional effects. Without intervention, you risk a spiraling of increased symptoms of exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished effectiveness. Design strategies for renewal and work-life balance and consider a plan to spot symptoms early so you can intervene in order to halt "burnout creep."

Keep Safety in Your Summer



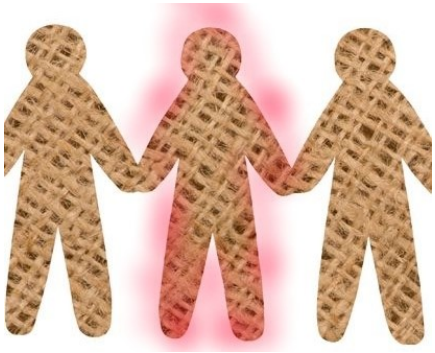
As the impact of the pandemic diminishes and you head outdoors to have fun in the sun, "keep safety in your summer." A review of safety and wellness websites points to the most common activities associated with injuries or death: boating and water sports, mowing lawns, unsafe use of playgrounds, bicycling, using trampolines, swimming and pool incidents, activities that include risk of slips and falls, spoiled food illnesses from outdoor eating events, and car accidents. Being safe means staying alert and being aware of your surroundings. Avoid participating in any of these activities while using drugs or alcohol.

Please, Report Sexual Harassment

Despite the protection of sexual harassment policies, 72 percent of sexual harassment victims don't report the incidents they have suffered. Have you been sexually harassed but did not report it because you feared the consequences? Did you dismiss the incident, embracing that strategy as a way to cope? Did you think that somehow you were to blame for being harassed? If you are sexually harassed, follow your employers policy and report it. Your employer wants to support you, and every sexual harassment prevention policy forbids retaliation. Decide to step forward so you can be the content and focused employee that both you and your employer want you to be.

Source: i-sight.com (Search "sexual harassment infographic.")

Race-Based Traumatic Stress



The national focus on racial discrimination has produced opportunities to discuss other harms of racism that do not receive much attention in the news. One of these is race-based traumatic stress, which is an injurious response to the stress experienced in relation to a discriminatory or racist event or interactions. If you have been affected by race-based trauma, you may experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress: anxiety, nightmares, sleep difficulties, and relationship and communication problems with those you love. These types of traumas might lead to fear of social situations, trouble being relaxed in social situations, feeling worried others might notice your anxiety, feeling that the world is an unsafe place to be, avoiding activities that might find you at the center of attention, and many other negative realities. Research shows that children may be particularly vulnerable to race-based traumatic stress from bullying peers and authority figures, or even from what they witness in the media or secondary to the race discrimination experienced by their parents or caregivers. Those affected by race-based traumatic stress may find it tougher to seek help for symptoms because they don't believe professional counselors or mental health clinicians will understand their worldview or experiences about racism. Fortunately, this concern is being overcome with new awareness, education, and increasing numbers of professional counselors who identify as members of diverse communities. If you think race-based traumatic stress is interfering with your ability to be happy, healthy, and productive, consider professional counseling or contacting your EAP.

Source: www.fact.virginia.gov/racial-trauma/ (See "download brief.")

Pandemic and Prolonged Grief

Following the death of a loved one, stages of grief are experienced as you mourn a loss. But what if the pandemic kept you from visiting with your loved one prior to his or her death? What if circumstances did not allow you to be with family and friends in order to offer mutual support? And the meaningful funeral you envisioned didn't happen. Circumstances like these may increase the risk of prolonged grief disorder (PGD). PGD normally affects about 10–20 percent of persons who experience loss. With PDG, the loss you feel seriously interrupts your daily functioning. It lasts for months, and feels extreme and persistent. If you are affected by PGD, learn more about it and consider how your EAP or another community resource can help you move forward with the peace of mind you deserve.

Learn

Leadership Skills Can Be Learned

Don't dash your dreams for a leadership position because you think you don't have the skills. They can be learned. A goal of being a leader is a force that can bring more excitement and energy to your job. Some leadership skills are easy to learn and only require a mental shift to practice. For example, do you know that leaders are also good followers? That doesn't mean sitting back and being told what to do. It means feeling comfortable with someone else having control, being okay with others questioning your ideas, having an open mind, trusting others, spotting opportunities to step in and help, and being a good observer of the larger picture. Explore more about leadership skill development. You may discover the hardest step is just deciding to do it!

Parental Tips:

Reducing Dating Violence

One out of three teens will experience dating violence, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dating violence can have long-term psychological effects, so the CDC recognizes teen dating violence as a serious health problem. Plenty of guidance is offered to help parents play a prevention role. The CDC recommends talking with your teens, starting somewhere between the ages of 11 and 14, depending on your child's maturity. Suggested topics: 1) behaviors that are healthy, unhealthy, and unsafe in dating; 2) warning signs of unhealthy dating behaviors; 3) dating issues related to texting and social media, including what's okay and what's not okay; 4) trusting in what has been learned about proper behaviors and boundaries—listening to one's inner voice instead of outside pressures; and 5) being assertive in defining boundaries (e.g., "no means no").

Source: search.cdc.gov (Search "preventing teen dating violence.")

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