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

Design a Conflict Resolution Strategy

Meet with your team to develop a conflict resolution strategy. Doing so will help you experience fewer, less intense, and more easily resolved conflicts. Most businesses are advised to establish these intervention strategies as part of their standard business systems, so there is no reason for you not to create one, too. Figuratively, this is an "in-case-of-emergency-break-glass" strategy, but here's the point: You're going to have conflicts. Predesigning a strategy allows you to have (1) faster implementation when needed; (2) an agreed-upon approach, where outcomes are more acceptable to team members; and (3) improved awareness to seek cooperation early in order to avoid conflicts entirely. How to develop a strategy: Ask the EAP for guidance, or include it in a facilitative role as part of your conflict resolution strategy.

Don't Mix Alcohol with Psychoactive Drugs

Everyone's heard it: "Don't mix alcohol with other drugs." Despite that being nearly universally understood, little research has existed on this topic until now. A recent study has shown that only one in five nonfatal alcohol overdoses involves only alcohol. The others combined alcohol with drug use. What's more, any psychoactive drug—marijuana, opioids, cocaine, heroin, and other illicit drugs—increases the likelihood of alcohol overdose, and these overdoses are more severe. That was the surprise to researchers.

Source: umich.edu [search: "overdose alcohol drugs"]

Try a Winter Garden to Improve Mood

No need to wait for spring to experience Mother Nature's greenery; savor the rewards now with an indoor garden. This mood enhancer and positive distraction is easy and inexpensive to create. A Google image-search of "indoor garden ideas" will make you excited about getting started. Winter, with its shorter and grayer days, can be a difficult time for those who experience symptoms of depression. If that's you, the delight of a small indoor winter garden and watching sprouts go from turf to table may be the uplift you need.

Parent Prevention of Teen Dating Violence

Don't have "the talk" about healthy relationships, mutual respect, manners, and appropriate behavior an hour before your teen's date arrives. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that these discussions begin when your child is in middle school, before dating begins. Modeling also helps young teens practice relationship health. Parents or guardians play a key role, so consider whether physical or verbal abuse poses a roadblock to your ability to communicate a credible message to your teen. A professional counselor or your EAP can help. If your child is *already* dating and you have not talked about healthy relationships, now is better than never! Learn more at healthychildren.org.

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Be a Networking Pro!

Most of us will naturally develop a network of supporters, allies, and potential helpers over the years who can play valuable roles in enhancing our careers and magnifying our influence. Although this is usually a scattered and undefined process, consider making a conscious effort to accelerate this as a practice. Become more "socially aware." See engaging with others as not just a pleasant social interchange but also an opportunity to consider how you can be of service to them and they to you, now or in the future. The positive benefits of a professional network are, of course, reciprocal. Realize that your address book and professional friends in a membership association or other groups are a virtual gold mine. The hottest tip is to make annual contact with your network by mailing a short postal note with personal news, achievements, and good wishes. Several years of these "touches" will produce tremendous leverage and "top of mind" awareness among your contacts, and you will experience a surprising number of opportunities to help others and be helped by them.

Stop the Downward Slide with EAP Help

Even if you pride yourself on being an optimistic employee with a pleasant disposition, workplace negativity can still affect you in ways that you may not like. Negativity tends to be as contagious as a cold virus, and it can be a self-perpetuating force. The good news is that negativity in the workplace can be beaten. It has weaknesses, the most important of which is refusing to participate in it. This isn't easy, of course, and it requires education and individual employees willing to be change agents. Here's how: Speak up when you spot negativity, not by criticizing but by educating about its impact and suggesting a different approach to communication. Team up with a coworker to practice this same change-agent role. There is nothing more powerful than peer influence, and you have the right action on your side. Note: If you feel affected by negativity, turn to your EAP for guidance and support to build your resilience so you don't succumb to the limiting pattern around you and instead can be a positive force that influences others.

What Occupational Therapists Do…

Occupational therapists (OTs) help people—children or adults—achieve their highest possible level of performance despite any diagnosis or limited abilities. OTs are licensed professionals with widely varied skills. They are eager and master problem-solvers who engage with all areas of living—eating, dressing, sleeping, bathing, school sensory integration, work, play, habits, routines, memory, and more. OTs also function with schools, visit homes, and consult in the community. An OT may discover why a child is having problems in a classroom or create a way for a veteran with one arm to independently operate a coat zipper. Could you or someone you know with a life obstacle benefit from the expertise of an OT? Search for OT clinics in your community, or talk to your EAP.

Don't Use the Internet as a Doctor

With internet access at our fingertips, using online resources for answers to your health care concerns seems like a fast, reliable, and cheap solution. From the rash on your leg to the swelling in your neck, "answers" to medical questions seem to be only a click away. But are they the right answers right now? If it is not, a delay in the right treatment could mean tragedy. With online self-diagnosis and treatment recommendations comes big risk. Does that odd-looking red spot really match the image on Google? Talk to your doctor, and don't let fear be a roadblock to making the call. Doctors are trained in more than just examinations; they are trained in medical history, decision-making, pharmacology, psychology, prognostic indicators, and dozens of other factors. Many or all may be necessary to help you. Or if you seek online diagnostics, why not use one of the many new online medical insurance approved services. At least you would have a qualified medical practitioner looking at that rash rendering their opinion as opposed to "best guess" approach to your own health.

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