PATHWAYS
January 2020
The **Employee** Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program

Bystander to Domestic Abuse

Millions of women are abused each year, and over a thousand are killed by their partners. Men face abuse too, those numbers are far smaller. Recognition and intervention are critical to breaking the cycle of abuse, but the key roadblock is thinking, "This is none of my business." Here's your motivation for a different approach: The sooner the abuse is recognized, the safer the exit can be. It could save a life. The simplest intervention is a friend or coworker recognizing an injury, asking about it, and tactfully not accepting an unconvincing answer. The follow-up statement is, "I'm concerned about you. How did you really get hurt?" Offer to find help, and count on your EAP or community resources for expert guidance on what to do or say next.

Election Year Politics . . . and Office Talk

Discussion of election year politics can lead to strong feelings and heated arguments. These interchanges at work can affect productivity because they may erode working relationships, alienating workers from each other. Smart tips: (1) Avoid interjecting political commentary, innuendos, allusions, and insinuations into meetings, emails, or official communications. (2) Respect the feelings of those who assert their wish to avoid political discussion at work. (3) Remember the key to avoiding overheated political discussions: Respect the rights of others to have beliefs different from yours.

Heads Up! Younger Persons Injured More Often

Younger persons are injured on the job more often than older workers. They have less training and experience. They tend to be more hesitant about asking questions. And they take more risks. Younger workers may be given tougher jobs, requiring more strength, and this increases risk of injury. If you are a younger worker, heed these observations. Ask questions, don't take chances, ask for help with tough jobs, and if you forget a piece of safety equipment, turn around and go back to get it.

Improve the Relationship with Your Boss

Try these "best tips" with your boss to see if they increase the excitement you have about your job: (1) encourage your boss to share knowledge and experience with you; (2) treat your boss like you would your best customer; (3) ask for feedback rather than waiting for it; (4) initiate contact to keep your boss updated on projects you are working on; (5) have no doubts about what your boss expects of you; (6) encourage your boss to delegate responsibility to you; (7) when bringing problems to your boss, include the solution; and 8) inform your boss about problems early so he or she doesn't make a surprising discovery another way; 9) remember that respect is a two way street and if you want to be treated with respect by your employer, it is important to treat them with that same standard.

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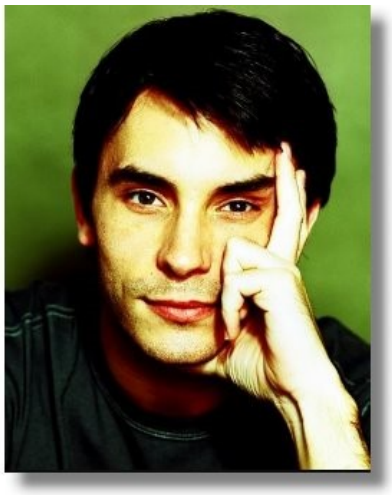
Should You See a Therapist?

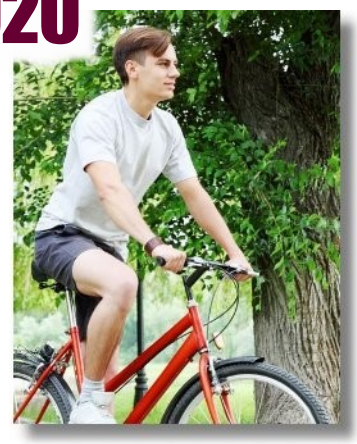


If sadness, grief, fear, and conflict are common human experiences, when is it time to see a psychotherapist? Consider these four broad sets of circumstances: (1) Fear or powerful emotions that follow traumatic events and relentless worry or intrusive thoughts are creating distress and disrupting otherwise pleasurable activities and experiences. *Why go*: Constant emotional anguish can contribute to headaches, weight loss or gain, digestive problems, and strain on valued relationships. This can compound the primary issue (s) of concern, thereby causing more harm. (2) Those who care about you start expressing concern about your health and suggest counseling. *Why go*: Others often see changes in our behavior and demeanor before we recognize them ourselves. However, these individuals may not verbalize concerns immediately and might wait until more acute or repeated symptoms occur. (3) Conflicts with those you love are too frequent and outnumber the positive experiences you once enjoyed. *Why go*: Frequent conflict builds resentment, which can contribute to a belief that differences are not reconcilable. Conflicts may become more difficult to resolve or resist resolution. (4) You're using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress. This one is a bit tricky because the starting point is not psychotherapy but an assessment by a professional to rule out addictive disease. *Why go*: Life problems are difficult to resolve when worsened by substance use. Why wait? EAP can help you right now with all of these considerations.

Overcoming Everyday Anxiety

Anxiety happens when we perceive a threat. Fear of running out of gas will cause you to feel anxiety. A notice about downsizing will create anxiety. Everyday anxiety is manageable with three steps: (1) identify the cause when you feel anxious; (2) develop a plan for removing the cause; and (3) the most forgotten step of all—form a contingency plan to cope with the threat if it actually materializes. Implementing this life skill approach to anxiety will usually reduce suffering. Apply it when anxiety strikes, even at night to stop tossing and turning in your sleep. Note that anxiety disorders also exist. Too much anxiety can be debilitating, so if fear, panic, and a feeling of being overwhelmed are gripping you, then talk to the EAP or your health provider.

Stopping a Bad Habit in 2020



Try five key principles to maximize chances of success in stopping a bad habit this year. (1) Drop "resolution" and use "commitment" for a stronger sense of promise in reaching your goal. (2) Substitute a good habit for the bad habit. For example, instead of hitting the couch when you arrive home, immediately grab workout clothes and leave to go exercise. This replacement activity reduces the intensity of missing the activity you are giving up. (3) As you progress, even on the second day, help by sharing with others your energy and plan for success. This reinforces your own commitment to move forward. (4) Meet with someone who will be excited about your goal and cheer you on. Your company's EAP is an ideal person for this role. 5) Plot, plan, and score your progress, and keep this chart in easy view.

Deciding to Stop Enabling

Have you decided to stop enabling someone you love who has a serious health or chronic personal problem (for example, an addiction)? Enabling, despite its harm, is nothing to feel ashamed about because it is a natural response to protecting someone you love from the serious consequences of his or her behavior. The key is making the change—switching to healthier and purpose-driven detachment that facilitates your recovery from enabling and may influence change in your loved one. Get support for your decision. It's a big one that will test your resolve. Counseling and support groups can make it dramatically easier. So, talk to your EAP to discover a self-help group that matches your needs. No other mentoring or teaching format has been shown to produce more rapid and certain change.