EAP BOCES Employee Assistance Program

PATHWAYS

June 2020

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

Three "To-Do's" with Your New Boss

Making a good impression in a new job and with the boss is everyone's goal. Unfortunately, being a new employee means missteps are going to happen, so focus on gaining an overall view of your job, the work culture, and especially patterns of communication. That's a lot to handle the first week, so set the stage for a positive relationship with your boss using these three quick tips. Observe which workplace issues create unease and concern for your manager—you'll gain empathy for what they face and potentially understand their priorities. Ask your manager the form and frequency of communication they prefer. And show positivity. Managers live for it and feel validated when they experience it from those they supervise.

You're Committed, So Show It

Employers know what a committed worker looks like. It's not those who simply perform duties and assignments well. Committed workers bring something extra that helps advance the work unit's mission. 1) They solve problems; they don't just point them out. 2) They show enthusiasm rather than casual acceptance. 3) They are proactive in reporting progress on what they are doing. 4) They demonstrate initiative—they act on perceived needs that fit with their duties before being asked. If you want to show you are a committed worker, walk the talk with these distinguishing work habits.

Fried Food and Focus Don't Mix

Skip the burger and fries at lunch. You will have a clearer head and better focus in the afternoon. New research shows one meal of fried food high in fat can zap your ability to stay focused on an important task or project shortly after it is consumed. At work, that means choosing fewer fatty and fried foods at lunch in favor of more nutritious choices may help you score that big win or big deal, or deliver a more effective presentation!

Source: www.academic.oup.com/ajcn [search "saturated fat"].

Avoid Aggressive Driving

Celebrate National Safety Month by putting the brakes on aggressive driving. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration research shows that aggressive driving plays a role in 56% of fatal crashes. Aggressive driving is "operation of a motor vehicle that endangers or is likely to endanger persons or property." (Road rage is a criminal form of aggressive driving.) Riding bumpers, using your vehicle to "teach someone a lesson" (like blocking their ability to pass you), zooming around a slow driver, laying on the horn, using hand gestures—these behaviors point to how your driving practices may be influenced by anger. Learn about triggers, behaviors, and prevention at bit.ly/aggressive-driver.

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Lessons from Social Distancing: Loneliness as a Health Concern

"Flattening the curve" with social distancing is the worldwide intervention being used to reduce coronavirus infections and death, but it has also created social isolation. For millions, social isolation is a risk factor for loneliness, and loneliness is a demonstrated health concern. Are you feeling the effects of loneliness? We're not talking about "Zoom fatigue" but symptoms like low self-esteem, depression, anger, nightmares, anxiety, and easily triggered anger at loved ones, to name a few. Humans are hard-wired to be social creatures, so when they are deprived of this innate biological need to engage with others, physical symptoms result. Symptoms of loneliness feel as if they are of mental origin, but they are physiologically driven, according to researchers. Before the coronavirus pandemic, loneliness was hot research news. Medical researchers call it the "new smoking" because of its adverse health effects. Note that loneliness is not equal to being alone. Loneliness is your body saying, "Find people with whom to socially interact!" The inability to get to your favorite gym, gather with friends at a favorite hangout, or mingle with coworkers who bring meaning to your life can have natural health consequences. Learning about loneliness is a key lesson of our collective experience with the coronavirus. Social distancing is likely to end in the future, but connecting to a mental health counselor now—even if it means one more Zoom session to do it—is worth the effort if it can help you lessen the impact of loneliness. Learn more at www.news.gallup.com [Search: "adults less worry"]

Bored with a Great Job?

With over 30 million newly unemployed in the U.S., imagine having a great job you can't stand. Don't feel guilty. All of us have a need for fulfillment as much as we have a need for food, clothing, and shelter. Without fulfillment, you will cast a wandering eye toward whatever might help you feel more alive. If boredom and feeling unmotivated have lasted for months or years, step one is to get a depression screening to rule out this disease. Boredom and blahs may be a symptom, not the problem. Engaging a career coach, starting new projects, taking a vacation, volunteering in the community—any of these activities could help energize your life. But if nothing is lighting your fire, a medical issue like depression could underlie it all.

Stress Management for Pandemic Heroes

If you are an essential service employee and working face-to-face with the public during the COVID-19 pandemic or you are in a job placing you at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, you can count yourself among the heroes. (Loved ones who support you and worry about you—they're heroes, too.) It's likely your employer has striven to reduce the risk of your contracting COVID-19, but it's not a 100% worry-free time. You've answered a higher calling so others can live as normally as possible during this time. If worry, anxiety, exhaustion, sleeplessness, family stress, and fear affect you, contact a professional, a support network, or your EAP for help. Tips like getting enough sleep, avoiding alcohol before bedtime, and practicing relaxation exercises are verified ideas for reducing stress and remaining resilient. They work, and you can learn more about them at heart.org [search "stressed essential workers"].

Curb Impulse Purchases to Save Money

If the household budget is stretched, cutting costs without added hardship can be difficult. Consider curbing impulse purchases as a path to finding more dollars. You could save over $5,000 a year by decreasing this behavior. Impulse purchasing is the tendency to engage repeatedly in spontaneous, on-the-spot purchases without consideration of the potential consequences. Sixty-four percent of us do it. The risk of an impulse purchase begins as soon as you enter a store, not when you see the item of interest. Most impulse purchases are groceries, not clothing. Try these tips: 1) Shop with a buddy. 2) Use cash. 3) Gain control and insight from two studies:
A) www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc [search "eyes wide shopped"] and
B) www.slickdeals.net/corp/impulse-spending.html.

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