PATHWAYS

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Wellness, Productivity, and You!

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

Taking Care of Yourself at Work

Combat workplace stress throughout the day with regular interventions. Whittle away at stress rather than doing something about it only when you hit the wall at day's end. Think "preventive maintenance." The goal: leaving work feeling less exhausted. Target four areas: 1) **The Body** – Create means of stretching, moving, and exercising during the day. 2) **The Mind** – Practice mindfulness, meditation, or breathing exercises that produce calm. 3) **Diet** – Consume energy-giving foods. See a list at "bit.ly/hi-foods". 4) **Shift Focus** – Practice focusing on enjoyable pursuits or distractions unrelated to work. These self-care interventions will increase productivity and your resilience.

Helping Kids Avoid Peer Pressure

Help your child explore what it takes to be successful at thwarting peer pressure. With the start of school again, there's no time like the present for this information. Try some fun role plays and skill builders. Circumventing peer pressure has five key components: 1) **Saying "No"** – Learning how and meaning it. 2) **Situation Avoidance** – Taking action to steer clear of events likely to include peer pressure. 3) **Understanding Consequences** – Accepting that giving in to peer pressure has consequences and effects. 4) **Valuing Self-**worth – Having confidence and valuing self-worth over peer approval. 5) **Resilience** – Learning to recover from disapproval by peers (including bullying, which often accompanies peer pressure) for making the right choice.

Discover: www.yourlifecounts.org/blog/20-ways-avoid-peer-pressure.

Benzodiazepine Addiction: It's Still Here

Addiction to benzodiazepines (benzos) could become a national crisis because anxiety disorders, often treated with benzos, are also increasing. Klonopin, Valium, and Xanax are examples of benzos. Sleep problems and panic attacks are also treated with benzos. One in 20 people are prescribed benzos in the U.S., and addiction is possible, even when they are used as prescribed. Withdrawal reactions make benzos the most dangerous drugs to quit unsupervised. If you are using benzos and experience sleep problems, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, goose bumps, uncontrollable leg movements, and muscle pains, see your doctor and follow his or her instructions.

Wellness and Prevention for Isolated Jobs

Whether you are a seafaring mariner on a cargo ship or a telecommuter who enjoys a job with less structure, lots of alone time, and little contact with others, take an inventory of your health habits. Isolated workers are at risk for sitting longer, skipping meals, suffering from substance abuse, eating more junk food, and having irregular sleep patterns. Greater incidences of heart disease, periodontal problems, alcoholism, kidney stones, and cancer are all potential consequences. You may love the minimal structure of your position, but structure is good for people. Establish a routine so you not only are productive, but also remain healthy.

Source: www. http://www.teleworkrecruiting.com.

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What Assertiveness Can Do for You

Here are eight benefits to motivate you to be more assertive: 1) Deciding to be assertive can raise self-esteem because you pat yourself on the back for speaking up or taking action. 2) Assertiveness increases self-awareness by helping you identify your feelings and clarify your needs more quickly. 3) Assertiveness is a proactive behavior. Rather than wait for something to affect you, you act to effect change. As a result, you get more of what you want out of life instead of waiting for it to come to you. 4) Assertiveness allows others to learn more about you and understand your needs. 5) Assertiveness allows you to take more risks, be more creative, and have less fear of failure. 6) Assertiveness is self-reinforcing. When you are assertive, you empower yourself. You reduce the natural desire to hold back, postpone a project, not take credit, or fail to test your ideas. Rather than err on the side of caution, you act, knowing that it is better to fail as a step toward success. 7) All decisions are rooted in assertiveness. Making faster and more effective decisions is a by-product of an assertive person. 8) At work, knowing what your needs are and acting to get them met improves job satisfaction. This affects your desire and willingness to engage, and this behavior is something employers value because it raises productivity.

Empathize Without Becoming a Counselor

Empathizing is how we form meaningful relationships. With empathy, we don't just recognize a person's feelings and experiences—we move closer to them by causing them to feel as though they are deeply heard. This creates bonding. Do you have a knack for being a good listener and empathizer? If so, remember to quickly refer a friend or coworker to the next step, such as the EAP or another helpful community resource. Spending time engaging with the problems of others is generous and may offer relief, but too much involvement can often cause delay or decrease the motivation to take the next step necessary to finding a lasting solution. All of us should try to help others, but professional counseling is an applied sciences occupation. You may not mind lending personal time to offer support as a good listener, but taking on this role for too long could facilitate a crisis if the problem requires specialized help and help is not acquired soon enough.

Take Your First Step Toward Financial Wellness

Are you "financially well"? Financial wellness means having control over day-to-day and monthly finances; having the ability to absorb a financial shock or major expense; enjoying life without living beyond your means; and being on track to meet your financial goals (e.g., retirement.). Unfortunately, a majority of people can't say they are financially well in one or more of these areas, and many struggle with all of them. Do you need to take the first step toward financial wellness? You may be procrastinating, using denial, and practicing a bit of fantasy in thinking to postpone this decision. Start with an appointment to see your organization's EAP, or search for free financial counseling assistance in your community. Once you take even the smallest step on your journey to financial wellness, you will experience relief because you will know you are steering this process rather than allowing the problem to steer you towards a larger crisis.

Mental Health at College

Responsibilities faced by college students can be exciting but also stressful. Even well-adjusted students can feel overwhelmed. When fear, depression, or anxiety hits, smart students seek help from college mental health counseling services. Seeking help does not mean a student is unable to handle the rigors of college life. Discuss college resources with your student, including where to seek help. Be positive, upbeat, and optimistic, and de-stigmatize the idea of seeking help. Depression and suicide-related issues are serious ones for young people, and are part of why counseling resources exist. Federal privacy laws may prevent colleges from notifying you that your student has sought help, so if it is important to you, inquire about arranging permission in advance. This does not make you an overbearing "helicopter parent." Do what makes sense for your family. Learn more: [www.nytimes.com; search "Suicide college students"].

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