PATHWAYS

March 2024

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

Mental Health Tips for Dealing with Complaints

Learning how to develop emotional resilience as someone new to managing people who are unhappy or complaining about your organization's service isn't easy. Yet it's vital dealing with difficult experiences. Emotional resilience is your ability to adapt and bounce back from stressful interactions. How can you develop emotional resilience? Practice recognizing your emotions, triggers, and stress responses. Do this for a few weeks. Keep a small diary of these discoveries. Doing so will help you develop keen self-awareness that allows you to spot early signs of emotional distress. Empower your ability to intervene and manage this state of mind. You will also be able to appropriately detach from emotionally charged situations and enjoy your job more. In turn, this will boost empathy skills—your ability to understand, connect with, calm, and serve your stakeholders with winning service.

Source:https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicoleleinbachreyhle/2015/01/08/10-tips-for-dealing-with-customer-complaints/

Use Anticipatory Joy to Manage Work Stress

Looking forward to something enjoyable coming up soon can create a positive emotional state to help you manage stress better. Biology is key in this stress management technique known as "anticipatory joy" or "positive anticipation." The anticipation of an enjoyable experience releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter that produces a sense of pleasure and reward. This uplifts your mood and counteracts stress hormones. Try it. Focus on a soon-to-be-experienced activity—plan one now—that will bring joy and excitement. See if this strategy shifts your attention away from stressors and creates positive thinking. The payoffs are reduced anxiety, improved mood, increased motivation, and a sense of purpose.

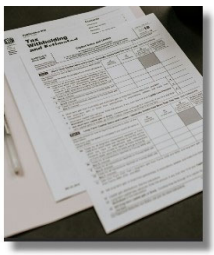
Source:https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/how-to-deal-with-stress-at-work/

Best Way to Utilize a To-Do List

To improve the effectiveness of to-do lists, consider these valuable tips: 1) Write down all tasks in "mind dump fashion" and prioritize later. 2) Break up any big tasks into small doable steps. 3) Do not make your to-do list too long because if one glance at the list causes you to feel overwhelmed, you may lose motivation. Put it aside, and not complete it. Identify urgent versus important tasks—not hardest first and easiest later. 4) Add deadlines to each item because your to-do list is an action plan, not just a memory jogger.

Source: https://hbr.org/2021/01/i-tried-4-to-do-list-methods-heres-what-worked

Avoid the Stress of Last-Minute Income Tax Preparation



Avoid the distress of rushing any last-minute tax preparation this year by dedicating time now if you are still procrastinating. Break up the task into bite-sized pieces by creating a schedule or timeline for each task—gathering documents, organizing receipts, adding things up, filling out forms. Stick to a schedule using your smartphone by setting reminders and gentle nudges to stay on track. Consider potential obstacles or distractions and develop strategies now to avoid them. Remind yourself of the benefits of completing your taxes early—it helps. Make one of these benefits a big reward for yourself for avoiding the rush this year!

Job Stress Versus Job Strain

Job strain refers to heightened levels of stress in the workplace that surpass typical levels, potentially leading to severe health consequences if not adequately addressed. You will find job strain occurs when high demands of a job are coupled with low control over the duties. Strain increases with the inability to know how long engaging with demands will last and a feeling of powerlessness to control decisions to reduce strain. Positions with job strain can be found in fast-paced healthcare settings like emergency rooms, teaching jobs in under-resourced schools, dangerous military occupations, and some highly demanding home health aide jobs. Get help and support, learn how to manage job strain if you identify some of the following: 1) consistently feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work; 2) frequently working long hours or taking work home to meet deadlines; 3) frequently dealing with emotionally challenging clients, patients, patrons, or students; 4) needing to suppress emotions to remain calm in stressful situations; 5) feeling emotionally drained or exhausted after work; 6) having little or no control over work duties, including the methods and pace; 7) finding decisions about the job are being made by someone else or being micromanaged with no autonomy; 8) receiving no support from others when facing work challenges; 9) frequent isolation on the job; 10) receiving little or no training for the position; and 11) performing repetitive or physically demanding tasks.

Sources:https://www.uml.edu/docs/Job%20Stressors-3-22-16_MHSN_tcm18-236606.pdf

Revisiting Icebreakers for Increased Productivity

Icebreakers aren't just for off-site conferences where everyone is a stranger. More accurately, icebreakers help set a positive tone for any sort of meeting. They can encourage team bonding and help your group experience a more relaxed and inclusive atmosphere boosting productivity. Rather than diving into your next same-old routine or unchanging meeting, try an icebreaker. Then, try a new one periodically. Yes, they work for remote meetings, too! Try this one guaranteed to shake things up, Have each team member share three statements about themselves—two truths and one lie. The rest of the team tries to guess which one statement is the lie. This activity encourages sharing personal information in a fun and engaging way. It is a great way to have everyone laughing before getting down to business.

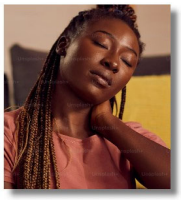
Resource book: "50 Remote-Friendly Icebreakers: Quick and Easy Warmups and Energizers for Better Meeting Mojo" by Ben Caruthers

Spring Break Safety Tips for Parents

If you are nerve-wracked over an adult child visiting spring break destinations here are some things to consider. You may be contemplating the safety, responsibility, and substance issues you've heard so much about now. Have a discussion with your child now about these concerns. Make some agreements—the most important is ensuring they reach out to you while away for any reason and setting expectations for regular check-ins. Read and discuss any safety/advisory literature offered by your child's college or university. Talk about substance abuse, responsible drinking, and your expectations. (Research shows it does make a difference in reducing risk and abuse.) Remind them about safety in social gatherings, not accepting drinks from strangers, making smart choices, trusting their instincts, and avoiding risky situations. Make sure your young adult has copies of their identification and important documents, such as their passport or driver's license. Also, encourage them to keep these documents safe while traveling.

Checklist for discussion: https://www.collegeparentsmatter.org/spring-break

Mindfulness on the Go



Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and what's going on around you. Doing this while being fully present without distractions or critiquing your thoughts is the goal. This reduces tension and can revitalize you during the workday. Nothing special is required to practice mindfulness. A popular example is deep breathing: Focus only on your breath, inhale slowly, hold your breath for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Repeating the process produces calmness. Another is "mindful walking," where you take a short walk outside and focus only on the sensations of walking with your feet on the ground. The movement of your body helps your mind to relax in the moment. Don't wait to get home to manage stress. Do it on the go with mindfulness.

Learn more: positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

BOCES Employee Assistance Program

1741D North Ocean Avenue, Medford, N 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