



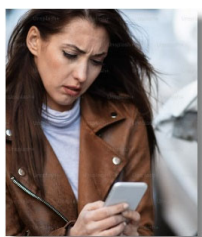
PATHWAYS

May 2024

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

Mental Health Awareness Month: Overcome Fear of Stigma to Seek Counseling

Personal challenges can affect your well-being and mental distractions often accompany them, keeping you from feeling your best. Your employee assistance program (EAP) is an easy path to help with challenges, but does stigma or embarrassment hold you back? You are sure of your EAP's confidentiality, but you believe handling problems on your own demonstrates you are strong. Here's the big reveal: Nothing could be further from the truth. Seeking counseling is a courageous and proactive decision demonstrating strength, self-awareness, and a commitment to personal growth. Just as you would seek medical care for a physical ailment, seeking counseling for challenges or emotional pain is a vital aspect of self-care. Today, employers are committed to fostering a culture of support where seeking counseling is encouraged. Go for it. Make the call. Your future self will thank you for it.



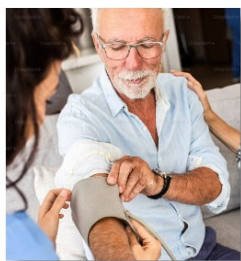
Get the Positivity Back in Your Team

Does your workplace team have a strong bond with a high level of trust? If not, getting the positivity back is probably easier than you think. Team morale will naturally erode if simple task reinforcements are ignored due to time pressures, deadlines, staff shortages, and overwork. This allows minor tensions and miscommunications to fester. Create routine opportunities for facilitated discussions where the whole team can privately address conflicts, miscommunication, and perceived tensions to constructively resolve issues. Use this time to clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Dispel ambiguity and new potential sources of conflict. Now, witness how better you feel coming to work tomorrow.



Check Your Blood Pressure

Eleven million people in the U.S. have hypertension (high blood pressure) and don't know it. Are you one of them? Monitor your blood pressure if you haven't checked before or if it's been a while since your last check. High blood pressure is often called the "silent killer" because it has virtually no noticeable symptoms until its effects suddenly create a hypertensive crisis. This could be a heart attack or stroke. Contrary to popular belief, experiencing a headache does not necessarily indicate high blood pressure! Scary fact: One-third of stroke victims experience vision loss—some permanently and in both eyes. Source: millionhearts.hhs.gov [search "hypertension"]



Stay Safe on a Bicycle

Each year, about 1,000 deaths occur from bike accidents, and most happen because traffic rules weren't followed. Accidental deaths in Canada involving bicycles is proportionately similar. Spring begins a surge in bicycle riding. It's smart to consider tips you may not have heard of before to help you stay safe. Here's one regarding lighting: Safety is maximized during night riding when lights can be seen from both ends of your bicycle. Have one blinking to attract attention and a separate one that is steady on. This allows other road users to gauge your distance. In addition to proper lighting, wearing reflective clothing and using hand signals are also crucial for safe biking. Remember, staying visible and predictable on the road can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, ensuring a pleasant and secure ride for everyone. Source: www.nhtsa.gov [search "bicycle safety rules"]

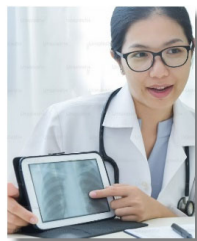


Avoid Workplace Communication Landmines



Many organizations view communication problems as their biggest and costliest challenge. Virtually nothing happens without communication and this leaves a lot of room for trouble. Regarding impact on staff, employee conflicts, hard feelings, resentments, and even a desire to leave the employer entirely are consequences associated with problematic communication. How many of the following communication landmines do you recognize? 1) Misreading the tone of text (misinterpreting a received message creates unnecessary tension); 2) Lack of clarity or information when given an assignment (leads to confusion, frustration, and delay or possibly fear of asking for further clarification); 3) Failure to validate (not giving the speaker verbal and nonverbal cues that confirm the message is being received and understood, causing frustration and tension); 4) Withholding information (deliberately withholding information or excluding coworkers from important discussions leads to feelings of exclusion and resentment); and 5) Ignoring nonverbal cues such as facial expressions or other body language during a conversation meant to convey feeling and meaning (the person speaking feels the listener is disinterested or lacks empathy, creating tension). If there is one overarching strategy for preventing or overcoming communication challenges, it is promoting a workplace culture fostering respect. This positive workplace lays the groundwork for better communication by promoting trust, collaboration, and mutual understanding among employees. Respectful workplaces solve conflicts faster and their frequency because employees are more willing to speak up, dialogue about issues, and find solutions. This shortens the life of conflicts and helps avoid damage to relationships.

Osteoporosis: Out of Sight, Out of Mind



Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens bones and contributes to fractures. It's a myth only the elderly are affected, although they do experience increased risk. Young people are also affected by conditions impeding bone health. For example, a young person suffering from bulimia may sustain a bone fracture due to adverse effects of the condition interfering with the absorption of calcium and essential nutrients. Hormonal disorders, diabetes, celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, and conditions like rheumatoid arthritis can play a role in weakening bones. Certain medications also weaken bones, especially if they affect calcium or vitamin D absorption. Brittle bones in osteoporosis are comparable to dried twigs that snap easily when bent or stepped on. This fragility has implications for everyday activities, as even minor stresses could fracture a bone. Work closely with your medical doctor, know your risk for osteoporosis, and follow their guidance.

Learn more: www.columbiapsychiatry.org [search "ssri osteoporosis"]

How to Fix Your Day



Experiencing a negative event can disrupt your day. Causing your previously uplifted mood to seemingly vanish. Take these actions to restore your positive mindset: 1) Admit things have been thrown out of whack and your feelings are normal. 2) Attempt a short "geographic" change (like a walk outside to change visuals away from the scene of the event). 3) Identify negative thoughts reverberating from the event. 4) Challenge the negative thoughts to disrupt their effects. 5) Identify positive thoughts to make #4 a speedier step. 6) Focus on what you can control—reaction, perspective, prevention, improvements, boundaries, self-care, etc. This gives you a constructive outlet to match your need to respond. 7) Plan a good thing or two—events, experiences, and treats—to rebalance the day. 8) Need support? Reach out to a friend to vent. 9) Find the lesson. Discover or consider what positive outcome exists indirectly or directly because of the event? 10) Celebrate the fact you fixed your day!

Mental Decluttering— a Different Kind of Spring Cleaning



Mental clutter is overpowering stress created by the daily demands of modern life. Our multiple roles, to-do lists, thoughts, emotions, responsibilities and the constant influx of information build up and become clutter. Enter the self-help concept of decluttering to reduce stress, improve concentration, enhance creativity, and cultivate a greater sense of well-being. Mental decluttering is about creating space for what truly matters and letting go of what no longer serves us mentally and emotionally. Signs indicating the need for mental decluttering include difficulty concentrating, experiencing a lack of creativity, and feeling disconnected from a positive sense of well-being. The practice of mental decluttering may involve various techniques, such as mindfulness meditation, journaling, prioritizing tasks, setting boundaries, and letting go of negative thoughts or emotions. New resource: "Declutter Your Mind and Stop Overthinking: 87 Tools & Techniques to Calm Your Mind & Improve Your Wellbeing (2023)"



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