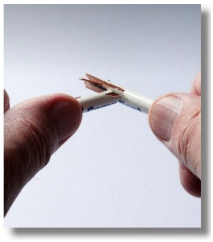
PATHWAYS

June 2024

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

Stay Calm Under Pressure



Staying calm under pressure is an acquired skill. But it is unlikely you were taught how to do it. Work deadlines, facing irate customers, family emergencies, and public speaking are all examples of where staying calm under pressure counts. Remain calm under pressure by replacing negative thoughts with positive affirmations. Say to yourself, "I've done this before and will do it again this time." Focus on action steps to solve the problem or situation. Don't dwell on the magnitude of what you face. This practice reduces panic and emotional stress. It reinforces a feeling of empowerment to help you feel in control. While solving the problem, practice deep breathing to reduce anxiety. Hint: Regularly practicing mindfulness and meditation can help you quickly switch from panic to calm mode when under pressure because it conditions the part of your brain associated with awareness and attention.

Be a Better Listener at Work

At work, you will build stronger relationships, solve more problems, and help others feel valued if you practice "active listening." Active listening is a communication technique that demonstrates you are fully and effectively listening to another person. While listening, they know you understand what they are saying because you are reflecting their message and recognizing their verbal and nonverbal cues. Finally, you give feedback that reassures the speaker you have a mutual understanding of the discussion. Here are the keys: Demonstrate attention, actively show understanding of what is being communicated, respond to nonverbal cues, validate the speaker's feelings by expressing empathy, and paraphrase what you heard.

Enhancing Your Relationships at Work: Share Personal Interests

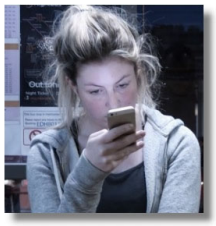
These days, most leaders are aware of the risks associated with asking employees personal questions. Your leader may wonder about your personal interests outside of work but be understandably reluctant to probe. This is an opportunity for you. Tip: Consider sharing personal interests and hobbies with them in casual conversations. It sounds simple, but it has a profound rapport-building effect because it helps your leader see you more as a whole person and builds a more personable relationship beyond just work-related interactions.

Life-Saving Health Tests Men Often Ignore

Some men avoid health tests due to a fear of diagnosis, the potential of bad news from a test, or anxiety about medical procedures. Others are just unaware of the medical screening tests that could detect a health condition many years before it is too late to save their life. It's time to stop this practice. The leading causes of death for men for which there are medical tests for early identification and treatment include heart disease/hypertension, cancer, stroke, chronic liver disease/cirrhosis, chronic lower respiratory diseases, diabetes, related kidney disease and depression. Which one of these tests or health screenings could help you live a longer life?

https://www.med.unc.edu/menshealth/why-men-avoid-doctors-wral/

Understanding Cyberstalking:
Steps to Protect Yourself and Stay Safe



Out of the blue, you receive an unwanted and intimidating text from an unknown phone number. Cyberstalking involves repeated, unwanted, and threatening behavior over a period of time. Yet a single intimidating message can be serious and should not be ignored. While cyberstalking can affect individuals of any gender, statistics consistently show women are disproportionately targeted and experience higher rates of harassment and intimidation online. Digital communication and online social media have increased everyone's vulnerability to cyberstalking. Stalkers may use fake profiles, invade privacy, and even threaten your safety. Here's what law enforcement, related associations, and other professionals recommend: 1) Don't respond to or otherwise engage with the harasser. It may prompt continued harassment. 2) Block the number. 3) Take screenshots of the message as evidence for potential legal purposes. 4) Although technically cyberstalking is repeated unwanted behavior, if you are concerned, contact the police for guidance and the next steps regarding prevention and safety. 5) Some cyberstalking events are initiated by locating someone's phone number or through public records; reviewing your social media accounts and privacy settings to determine if personal information about you is too easily available. 6) Don't keep your experience a secret. Tell someone like a family member or friend. A single incident of cyberstalking can frighten you and cause you to lose sleep. Sharing your experience with a trusted friend can reduce the distress of the event.

Source: www.safehome.org [search "cyberstalking statistics"]

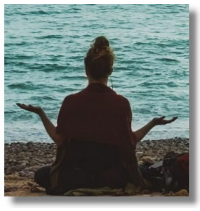
PTSD Awareness Month:
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Affects Millions

PTSD is commonly associated with war veterans, but anyone could suffer from the condition following a traumatic event. About 7%-8% of the population will experience PTSD at some point, and research shows millions of people who suffer symptoms years later may not associate them with a past trauma. Lingering symptoms of PTSD decades later may be blamed on other conditions, like stress, anxiety, or depression. Some of these may include being easily startled, having nightmares, fearing closeness in relationships, or engaging in negative thinking. But, it's a myth traumatic events always cause PTSD. Likewise, you are not "in denial" if you claim to not experience PTSD following a traumatic event. For a full list of symptoms, visit the National Center for PTSD at www.ptsd.va.gov or contact your EAP to learn more.

Myths Keeping You from Psychotherapy Help

If you ever decided against seeking psychotherapy, was it because of one of these myths? 1) The therapist will examine every detail about my past. Fact: Professional counselors help you decide what you want to accomplish in counseling, and your past may play no role in achieving these goals. 2) Only those with severe mental illness seek professional counseling. Fact: The majority of psychotherapy clients are not suffering from severe mental illness. They are seeking solutions for life's challenges. 3) The professional counselor will judge or criticize me. Fact: Professional counselors are trained to be nonjudgmental and supportive. They try to make you feel safe and can work through your issues. 4) Seeing a professional counselor means I am weak. Fact: Seeking professional counseling shows a willingness to address problems and work toward a healthier, more balanced life. 5) Therapy takes a long time, and it might change my personality. Fact: Therapy can vary in length, often leading to positive changes in only a few sessions. However, the focus is on coping and solving problems, not changing your personality.

Researched Method for Managing Stress:
Mindfulness Meditation



One of the most researched and proven techniques for managing stress – yet one of the least known and least practiced – is "mindfulness meditation." Mindfulness meditation involves paying close attention to your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations in a calm and intentional way. Do it by sitting quietly, eyes closed, and gently bringing awareness to your breath. When distractions arise, acknowledge them, but gently redirect your attention. This practice cultivates mental clarity, emotional balance, and well-being. Regular practice may improve concentration, reduce stress, and build emotional resilience. Resource (book): "Deeper Mindfulness: The New Way to Rediscover Calm in a Chaotic World," May 2023. (2) www.mondaycampaigns.org [search "mindfulness introduction"]

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