

PATHWAYS

July 2025

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

A Staycation Might Be Just What You Need

Can you really take a vacation in your own town with promises it will be full of fun and memories? Often called a staycation, this budget-friendly idea may sound unappealing at first. If you can manage the cost of a nearby vacation rental and make time to plan daily excursions—such as trying new restaurants, enjoying local festivals, exploring museums, or hiking trails you’ve long ignored—it may surprise you how refreshing and memorable a staycation can be. Being intentional is key to making a staycation work. Be sure to plan just like you would for an out-of-town vacation and establish boundaries keeping you from wandering home and breaking the rhythm. Once you slip back into checking emails, doing chores, or handling work tasks, you lose the “away on vacation” mindset making your rest and renewal possible. Treat your staycation as sacred time—no different than if you had traveled miles away—and protect it with the same commitment.



Learn More: <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/staycation-planning-tips/>

Stress Tips: Establish a Consistent Daily Routine

Many tips help remote workers stay productive. One stands out: establishing a consistent routine. This single habit eventually engages your subconscious mind, signaling your brain it is now time to be productive, automatically turns on your ability to focus, builds automatic behaviors, and creates the foundation making other productivity strategies effective. Whether it’s setting boundaries, turning off distractions, creating a dedicated space, or selecting productivity tools, all are undermined without a consistent daily routine.



<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/search/structure+day>

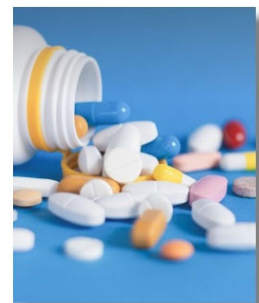
Stop Deadline-Driven Stress and Dread

Call it deadline-driven stress, the procrastination-stress cycle, or last-minute syndrome. Looming deadlines can derail your plans, steal your time, distract you from what you enjoy most, and build a sense of dread and anxiety as pressure mounts. Take steps to prevent this stress. When you are assigned a task, immediately take a first step: Divide the task into sections and give each a deadline between now and the final date. This immediately reduces significant stress of the project because it moves your frame of mind from feeling overwhelmed to having a structured view of the work, which gives you clarity and a feeling of more control. By breaking the task into smaller, anticipated, yet manageable parts, you avoid deadline anxiety and crisis-driven productivity.



Talk to Your Doctor about Vitamins and Supplements

DO you find yourself buying vitamins, minerals, and supplements until you’ve accumulated a basket filled with bottles? While supplements can sometimes be helpful, taking too many can be risky. Too much of the wrong thing can be toxic, cause organ strain, or interfere with the absorption of other nutrients, causing disruption of your metabolism. Vitamins and supplements are a billion-dollar industry, and marketing can lead you to over-purchase these products based on emotion and numerous calls to action instead of medical need or real evidence. Stay safe and consult a healthcare professional before starting new supplements, and share what you are taking at each visit. Your healthcare provider can better advise you on what supplements you do or don’t need.



Organizational Change: Adapt Faster, Thrive More . . .

Organizational change is often difficult because it disrupts your routine, imposes uncertainty and fear about the future, and upsets your sense of control over your life on and off the job. Since you can't stop organizational change, adapting to it faster is one key to reducing stress and taking advantage of it. Tip: Avoid panicking, or fighting change as the first reaction to something new; fully grasp what the change means. If you don't remain calm and formulate a deliberate approach, you can worsen your feelings of fear and miss examining opportunities that may suddenly exist. Find a way to engage with the new reality. Employers often notice and may favor employees who respond to change with maturity and flexibility. Venting is normal, and coworkers are still your best bet for processing feelings. The EAP is likely to have the empathy and resource knowledge you're looking for. Avoid the "way things used to be" syndrome, which can dampen your ability to engage with change and discover how organizational change can work for you.



Coffee without Breakfast: A Risky Morning Habit

Grabbing coffee on the run and skipping breakfast may seem like a fast and easy way to start your day. This habit can set the stage for future health issues like hormonal imbalances, metabolic stress, and increased risk of conditions like Type 2 diabetes. Your body naturally produces cortisol, a stress hormone to help you wake up. Drinking coffee without eating causes your cortisol levels to spike higher. Without food to stabilize blood sugar, a mid-morning energy crash soon arrives and can include fatigue, poor concentration, and irritability. This habit grows riskier as you get older because dizziness, dehydration, or fainting may ensue. It's worse for those with high blood pressure or heart rhythm concerns. Protect your health by eating something to buffer caffeine's effects. If you experience an irregular heartbeat, lightheadedness, or fainting, consult a healthcare provider and share your use of caffeine and nutrition habits so they can offer advice on your specific needs.

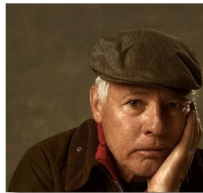
Learn more: rightsrain.uwmedicine.org/body/food/too-much-caffeine



Helping Older Men Face Mental Health Challenges

Years of conditioning have taught many men to deny distress, avoid vulnerability, and see the act of asking for help as a weakness. This mindset can make intervention by loved ones especially difficult when symptoms of mental illness are downplayed, family concern is dismissed, or the idea of treatment is off the table. It's common for older men especially to dismiss symptoms of depression or anxiety as "just stress" or "part of getting older." What a family labels as "stubbornness" is really reluctance undergirded by denial and a fear of being seen as weak. Talk to your EAP if you have a family member with mental health symptoms accompanied by lack of motivation to get help. The best intervention path is usually an empathetic approach, not badgering confrontation. Statements like "Dad, you seem more withdrawn lately" are more likely to be accepted despite initial dismissals. Emphasize that seeking support takes courage; it's not a weakness. A trusted friend or doctor (someone influential or valued) can reinforce this message, often with great impact. None of this is a one-time conversation with sudden insight and success. It takes patience and consistency, when older men feel respected and safe, accepting help is more likely.

Learn more: <https://www.nami.org/anxiety-disorders/ageism-mental-health-and-suicide-risk-in-older-men/>



Be Aware of Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Syndrome

Well over 200,000 emergency room visits each year involve benzodiazepines, and a significant number of the visits are related to withdrawal complications. The most potentially dangerous benzodiazepines to withdraw from include Xanax, Valium, Klonopin, Ativan, and Restoril, despite nearly 90 million prescriptions being filled last year for conditions like anxiety and insomnia. Addiction medicine physicians warn not to withdraw from these medications without medical supervision because, depending on dosage and time used, withdrawal can be riskier than a heroin addict quitting "cold turkey." If you or a loved one are using a benzodiazepine, follow the instructions of the prescriber regarding dosage, use, and cessation to protect your health and well-being. Learn more: www.benzoinfo.com



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