

PATHWAYS

August 2025

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

Beat Heat Exhaustion

If you work in summer heat—rooftops, roads, landscaping, construction sites—you know how brutal hot, humid days can be. Staying hydrated is essential, but you need to do more to prevent heat illness. Hydration and “powering through” won’t prevent heat exhaustion, which can leave you weak and tired, and even lying down at day’s end offers little relief. Don’t be fooled—even if you’re young and fit, heat exhaustion stresses organs and may increase your risk for cardiovascular or kidney issues later. Here are OSHA’s tips for avoiding heat exhaustion: 1) Let your body build heat tolerance by gradually increasing your exposure over several days. 2) Drink water every 15–20 minutes, not just when you’re thirsty. Avoid caffeine, which dehydrates you faster. 3) Schedule breaks out of the sun and find ways to cool off. The hotter it is, the more frequent the breaks. 4) Know the symptoms of heat illness and watch coworkers for signs of dizziness, heavy sweating, nausea, or confusion.

Source: [osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/3431_wksiteposter_en.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/3431_wksiteposter_en.pdf)

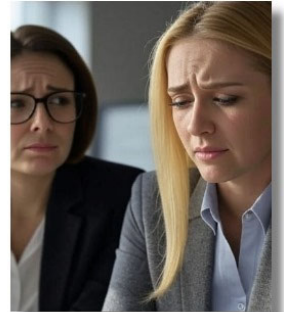
Micro-breaks— Stress Management in 30 Seconds

Micro-breaks are short, intentional pauses in your work lasting 30 seconds to 5 minutes. They interrupt the buildup of physical and mental stress. Take them throughout the day to reset focus, lower tension, and improve performance. Stretch, stand, walk, breathe deeply, or sip water. Many skip micro-breaks because they are caught up in the intensity of their work. Being in “go mode” reduces awareness of your need to recharge. Mini-breaks help prevent burnout and boost productivity. Set a phone timer if needed, or take a break when you notice mental fog, forgetfulness, irritability, impatience, eyestrain, body tension, slumping, or dozing off.



Make a Peer Referral to the EAP

Ongoing performance issues in a coworker may signal deeper problems. You might not know what’s wrong, but you’ll likely notice symptoms—such as missed deadlines, mood swings, frequent absences, or others’ complaints. Since denial is common, how do you help? Start by showing concern. A calm, caring comment makes a stronger impression than showing frustration or criticism. It also makes you more likely to be seen as someone safe to talk to if things get worse—which they often do. Chronic issues can lead to crises. Any incident may open a brief window when your coworker is willing to accept help. That’s your opportunity to suggest the EAP. This simple step—an “EAP peer referral”—can be the turning point leading your coworker to needed support and recovery.



Credit/Identity Theft Tips

Identify theft happens when someone uses your personal information—like your name, Social Security number, or credit card details—without permission to commit fraud or other crimes.

Victims often spend months or years trying to repair costly damage to their credit and reputation. If you suspect identity theft, contact one of the three major credit bureaus to place a fraud alert on your credit file—not just your bank or credit card company. That bureau will notify the other two. A fraud alert requires creditors to verify your identity before opening new accounts or changing existing ones. Each bureau will send you a free credit report. You can also request a “security freeze,” which prevents new accounts from being opened in your name until you lift it.



Learn more: consumer.ftc.gov (search “what’s in your credit report”).

Personal Wellness Matters in Customer Service

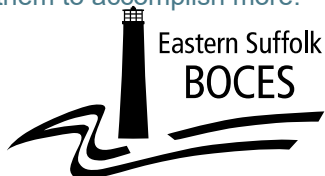


There's a connection between personal wellness and your ability to deliver great customer service. In turn, a positive customer service experience helps you feel more excited and motivated to do your job. Taking care of your mental health and well-being is key to job satisfaction, and it makes you more resilient when coping with difficult customers. Here's the point: See personal wellness as a professional responsibility with big payoffs—not just for giving you more energy, but also for handling workplace challenges. Much lip service is given to wellness, it influences how well you focus, respond emotionally, stay patient, listen better, avoid burnout, and act professionally in tense situations. This includes not just external customers, also coworkers and the teams you support—your internal customers. Ready to be more intentional about wellness? Focus on these five areas: mental and emotional wellness—managing stress and nurturing a positive mindset; physical wellness—getting enough sleep, ensuring hydration, and eating well; social wellness—building support and positive relationships; work-life balance—creating boundaries between energy spent on your job and personal time; and values alignment—clarifying goals and direction based on where you are now and where you want to go.

Resilience Tip: Optimize Your Energy



Being productive isn't just about goals, organization, motivation, and time management. It's also about managing the energy you have to accomplish tasks. Physical, emotional, and mental energy are your three "energy spheres." Nurture them, replenish them, and be aware of their peak periods. This is the art of energy optimization. The goal is to align tasks with the times of day when energy spheres are strongest so you can work efficiently and keep your momentum. When energy is low in one area—say, mental clarity—it's smarter to shift to a task requiring physical movement. For example, postpone a project until tomorrow morning if this is usually when your mental energy peaks. For now, with 30 minutes left in your day, straighten your desk to prepare for tomorrow when physical energy is more available. Paying attention to energy optimization can help prevent overexertion, reduce mistakes, and boost productivity. Try this: During the day, log and rate your energy using a scale ranging from 1 to 10—physical, mental, and emotional. Patterns will reveal your peaks. Once you know them, you'll likely use them to accomplish more.



BOCES Employee Assistance Program

NEW: 5018 Expressway Drive South, Ste. 204, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779 (631) 289-0480
(address changed but our phone numbers did not)

154 Commack Road, Suite 210 Commack, NY 11725 (631) 218-5445
188 W. Montauk Hwy, Ste. E1, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 (631) 728-2008

The Power of Decisiveness



Being decisive means you can make a decision, but also be timely and confident about it. Decisiveness is a soft skill that can be honed, and the more decisiveness you practice, the less wavering you will experience. Effective leaders are noted for their decisiveness. Decisive employees reduce delays, take action, model positive behaviors for peers, and tend to excel at seeking clarity, which means better decisions. It's easier to be more decisive if you intervene when there are roadblocks like fear of failure, overthinking, perfectionism, and fear of not getting recognition. Self-awareness is key. Simply examining these roadblocks weakens their grip. Naming these culprits puts you in control. Remember, no decision is without risk and uncertainty—you may not know or guess what will happen. Learning to tolerate this is part of the journey, even for the greatest leaders. Need help? Talk to the EAP.

Avoid Five Missteps with Workers' Compensation

Your organization's workers' compensation (WC) program is a key benefit if you're injured on the job. It can be a lifeline during recovery, making the most of it requires following a few important steps. Conflicts or delays can arise when communication breaks down or when procedures aren't followed properly. Avoid these common mistakes: 1) Delaying reporting a work-related injury or illness. 2) Ignoring your doctor's advice, missing appointments, or not following treatment plans. 3) Withholding details about the injury or failing to respond to necessary questions. 4) Resisting return-to-work efforts or not cooperating with those helping you transition back. 5) Overlooking emotional support if overwhelmed, depressed, or dealing with family tension during time off. Disruption is common after a workplace injury. Bottom line: Staying proactive, informed, and responsive helps ensure a smoother recovery and better outcome—exactly what you want.

