

# PATHWAYS

September 2025

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

## Saying “Yes” to an EAP Supervisor Referral

**I**f your supervisor suggests visiting the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) because of performance, attendance, or a personal concern, don't hesitate. You might think, “I should handle this on my own,” but EAPs exist to make getting help simple, confidential, and effective. EAPs quickly connect you with the right resources—saving time, reducing stress, and preventing procrastination. Every contact is private, free of charge, and focused on getting you the right help. Managing difficulties alone often allows them to grow worse, precipitating a crisis. EAP professionals use proven approaches and referrals you may not easily find on your own. Employees who use the EAP often wonder why they didn't call sooner, realizing what once felt overwhelming is now manageable. Saying yes to the EAP means choosing a faster, easier path to solutions with trusted guidance.



## Learn to Neutralize Stress Triggers

**L**earn to manage (neutralize) stress triggers and you will better control your emotional response to them. A diary will help you discover what consistently creates irritability—traffic, a looming deadline, unexpected expenses, or communication challenges with loved ones. Neutralize these triggers by first recognizing your reaction—sudden irritation or resentment; feeling disrespected or dismissed or ignored; feeling judgmental; having an urge to argue, criticize, or withdraw. This self-awareness is half the battle. It allows you to take control of your response more easily. Then discover what works for you: counting to ten, letting go, laughing it off, taking a walk, reframing, or taking slow breaths. Neutralizing triggers is a life skill building resilience. Try it to improve relationships and make work and home life more rewarding.



## Signs of Substance Abuse Parents Overlook

**E**arly warning signs of teen substance abuse are often subtle, but patterns emerge—and that's the key. Overlooked symptoms include: 1) Insomnia, erratic sleep, or daytime drowsiness dismissed as normal adolescence; 2) Longtime friends abandoned for new groups they won't discuss; 3) Secretive phone use and reluctance to share daily activities; 4) Use of eye drops, heavy cologne, or perfume; 5) Declining grades; 6) Loss of interest in favorite activities; 7) Irritability, anxiety, mood swings, or changes in appearance and hygiene; and 8) Missing money or valuables. Isolated, these signs may seem minor, but together they warrant serious concern. Stay engaged, keep conversations open, and you'll improve the chance for earlier, possibly lifesaving intervention.



Learn more: [www.kenoshacountywi.gov](http://www.kenoshacountywi.gov) [search “learn more substance abuse”]

## Healthy Aging Month: Top Regrets Facing Adults as They Age

**W**hat do people in their 60s, 70s, and 80s say they wish they had done earlier to improve their health? Research on aging and regret may inspire you to prepare for a healthier future. The following were frequently mentioned: Joint health should have been prioritized. Preventive measures such as strength training, early treatment of back pain, and maintaining flexibility are frequently overlooked. Balance training and fall-prevention practices are also neglected. In addition, vision and hearing care are often postponed, leading to limitations in driving and reduced social connections. Health screenings may be skipped altogether, causing conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or cancer to go unmanaged when early detection could have allowed for more effective treatment. Commonly cited regrets were neglecting friendships or missing opportunities for gatherings while friends were still active; not preparing one's home for aging-in-place; or not accepting mobility aids sooner, which could have prevented falls and the isolation that followed.



Learn more: [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19711617/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19711617/)

# Exercise and Creativity Can Help Ease Financial Stress

**F**inancial stress and the weight of having no immediate solutions can feel crushing. It's easy to think the only answer is "more money." Yet research shows exercise and creative pursuits sharpen focus, boost resilience, and spark problem-solving skills—all of which can indirectly improve financial outlook. Under stress, motivation for these activities often disappears. It feels counterintuitive to focus on them when money problems demand urgent answers, these very habits can act as catalysts for change. Exercise lowers stress hormones, improves sleep, and sharpens focus, giving you the clarity needed to think strategically about money. Creative pursuits engage problem-solving skills and encourage new perspectives. The bottom line... Don't put your life on hold. Even small steps—ten minutes of movement or another healthy pursuit—can restore a sense of control and momentum. This renewed energy often carries over, helping you tackle financial challenges with resilience. The irony is while these activities don't directly earn money, they build the mindset making solutions possible. Try it: If you're weighed down financially and feeling stuck, choose one healthy habit this week—exercise, journaling, or a hobby—and notice how it shifts your perspective on financial challenges.



Learn more: <https://www.activecanterbury.org.nz/being-active/> [search "earning potential"]

## Suicide Prevention In the Workplace

**T**he workplace can play a strong role in suicide prevention. We spend much of our lives at work, and as a result, those around us often notice changes in our mood, behavior, and performance, possibly before others outside of work do. These early observations can open the door to support. Add a welcoming workplace encouraging employees to get help from the EAP for mental health issues, along with making it easy to do so, and you produce a strong foundation for prevention. Many suicide attempt survivors report a shared awareness regarding prevention. Many did not think their personal problems were severe until they grew worse. Others believed their problems were ones they had to resolve on their own. Education to understand not all problems are "do-it-yourself" projects would have played a key role in reaching out. Tip: Break the isolation. If you notice a coworker struggling, reach out privately with concern rather than judgment. You might say, "I've noticed you seem stressed—would you like to talk?" Simply listening, without feeling a need to "have the answer" helps reduce isolation—a major factor in lowering suicide risk.



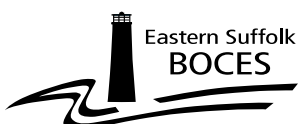
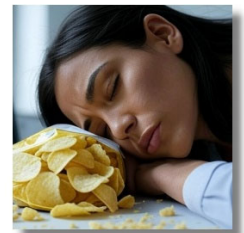
# Empathy's Power in the Workplace

**T**he importance of empathy in the workplace can't be overemphasized. How would you rate your ability to sense others' unspoken concerns, recognize when a coworker is struggling, or adjust your communication style so it matches the needs of a coworker at the moment? If your ability is high, coworkers are probably more inclined to share their ideas with you, admit mistakes, and trust your advice. Here's why: Your empathetic style creates a psychologically safe workplace. To grow empathy skills, be genuinely interested in maintaining positive relationships with coworkers. Slow down, give full attention, and resist the urge to interrupt or plan what you are going to say while they're speaking. Ask clarifying questions, and if you are sure you understand what your coworker just said, reflect back (i.e., "I heard you say that..."). This reflection is experienced as validating, and it will deepen your relationships, and you'll witness positive effects ultimately making your job more meaningful.



## Prevent the Afternoon Crash from Carbs

**Y**es, you can snack for improved mental focus in the afternoon. Best bets: 1) Nuts and seeds like almonds, walnuts, or pumpkin seeds deliver protein, healthy fats, and magnesium. 2) Greek yogurt with berries. The protein and antioxidants in Greek yogurt fuel the brain. 3) Hummus and carrot sticks, bell peppers, or cucumber provide fiber and healthy fats. 4) Apple slices with nut butter offer complex carbs, fiber, and fat to prevent sugar spikes. 5) Whole-grain crackers with cheese or turkey deliver protein and carbs. 6) Small amounts of 70% dark chocolate can boost mood and alertness. 7) Hard-boiled eggs supply protein and nutrients to support memory and cognition. Dehydration often explains grogginess, therefore drink water to stay hydrated in order to maximize alertness. Learn more: [everhour.com/blog/brain-food-snacks/](http://everhour.com/blog/brain-food-snacks/)



### BOCES Employee Assistance Program

5018 Expressway Drive South, Ste. 204, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779 (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

