

PATHWAYS

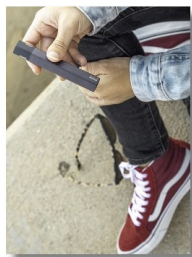
October 2025

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

Helping Teens Say No to Vaping

If you are a parent concerned about helping your teens avoid vaping, you need to clearly communicate your disapproval. Parents who educate their children and set boundaries—even if teens seem not to listen—have the most influence on preventing vaping, drug use, or other risky behaviors. It's not just about giving information; parents have a strong say in shaping choices. Clear communication, staying informed, understanding what your teen is doing, and setting consistent expectations form the most effective strategy. For example: "I love you and need you to be healthy. Vaping damages lungs and can hook you on nicotine. My expectation is clear—I don't want you using e-cigarettes." Research shows parents' consistent disapproval significantly reduces teen vaping and helps teens make safer choices.

Learn more: www.lung.org/quit-smoking/e-cigarettes-vaping/lung-health and pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19011969/.



Productivity Tip: Overcome Workplace Distractions with the Two-Minute Rule

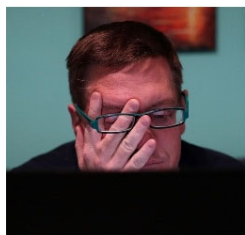
If you must work amid environmental noise and other distractions, try the "two-minute rule" to maintain productivity and reduce frustration. Credited to David Allen in "Getting Things Done," the rule suggests never delay a task taking less than two minutes. In noisy or distracting workplaces, it can be adapted to help focus when attention is limited. With determination, two minutes of concentrated effort are achievable. Start by deciding which task must be done now, then break it into two-minute segments. Fully focus on each segment, completing it before taking a brief mental break to reset. This approach creates continual small wins, builds momentum, and helps you tolerate interruptions. Over time, these small bursts of focused work improve productivity, reduce stress, and make a disruptive environment more manageable.



Stress Tips : Intervene with Zoom Fatigue

Zoom meetings may not include much physical exertion, but they can leave you feeling drained or burned out. You could be experiencing "Zoom fatigue" if you have been engaging in long and frequent videoconferences or virtual meetings, such as those held on Zoom. The fatigue stems from the high cognitive demand of having to process multiple faces and nonverbal behaviors on-screen, and of monitoring your own behavior, appearance, and nonverbal actions while online, which might include forcing yourself to stay awake. Symptoms of Zoom fatigue include struggling to maintain attention during calls, dreading video calls, or avoiding video altogether in favor of audio-only interaction. Other symptoms, such as impatience and irritability during virtual meetings, might also be problematic.

For solutions go to: news.stanford.edu [search "Zoom fatigue fixes"]



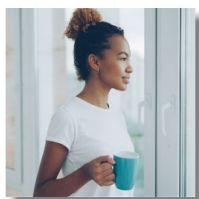
The Power of Accountability Partners in Exercise

If you struggle to stay motivated with a regular exercise program, teaming with an accountability partner or buddy can double your chances of success. Exercising alongside someone reinforces commitment naturally, while relying on each other for scheduling and progress tracking strengthens accountability. The combination of social connection and the obligation to keep promises increases the likelihood of reaching fitness goals. This shared responsibility helps you stay motivated, even on days when you'd rather skip a workout. For best results, choose a friend or colleague rather than a virtual partner. Online connections can help however they often lack real-time interaction and the relationship-building dynamics making accountability and long-term adherence to your exercise program more effective.



Learn more: sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/10/161004081548.htm

A Better Morning Routine May Change Your Day



Take charge of your mornings in order to reduce stress, avoid rushing, and starting the day feeling behind. For starters, plan to wake up at a consistent time. At night, lay out your clothes and write a short to-do list for tomorrow. Add one small chore you might otherwise ignore taking ten minutes or less to complete. Why? Completing a simple chore—decluttering or tidying up a kitchen—helps you build a habit loop. The visual completion of a chore prompts a small, gratifying dopamine boost. This is how your brain responds to small wins. The feeling of accomplishing something early in the morning helps you anticipate other successes in your day. The feeling of being in control of the direction of your day is likely to stay with you. Your mental clarity will carry into the office. Instead of being on edge, reactive, and easily triggered, you will be more solution-focused and harmonious with coworkers and others because you will be calmer and more patient. Beginning your day as described is about “intention,” and this primes your brain for focus and productivity. Try it for a week. See if you notice the positive domino effect a morning routine and small chore bring.

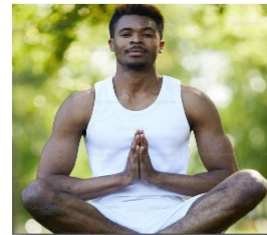
psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201207/the-amazing-power-of-small-wins

Beginning the Journey to End Domestic Violence



Domestic abuse is a devastating violation of trust and safety making a person feel trapped in their own home. Victims may feel isolated from the world and silenced by fear. If you're a victim of domestic violence—even if you are not ready to act—reach out for confidential support. A single call, experience shows, can be life-changing because very specific guidance speaking to your unique situation may be the missing piece of help, the idea, or the step allowing you to move forward now. Your EAP or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) is always available. Making yourself heard and having support are your first steps. You may hesitate or fear the abuser could somehow find out and retaliate. You might feel embarrassed or believe you should handle the situation on your own. You might even question whether what you are experiencing is really abuse, or you might hope things will improve soon. These are all common roadblocks to making your first call for support. Victims often remain silent, but to delay getting help can increase the risk of further harm or make it harder to break free from the cycle of abuse. Learn more: thehotline.org [search “plan”]

Embrace Digital Wellness



Digital wellness involves intentionally setting limits on when, where, and how technology is used to protect your mental, emotional, and physical well-being. “Digital mental health” is a rapidly growing field of study. It examines how virtual reality, smartphones, apps, social media, artificial intelligence, and 3D interaction affect wellness. Can placing personal boundaries on digital engagement help protect your well-being? Could it improve relationships and productivity, reduce stress, lessen anxiety, and improve sleep? Research has shown technology boundaries reduce screen fatigue, improve focus, increase productivity, and boost real-world relationships. They provide for rest and more time for hobbies and mindful engagement. Start with a simple digital boundary to observe its positive effects. For example, take a walk in nature without a smartphone. Create a “technology-free zone” in your home. See if you feel calmer, more focused, and more connected to the world around you in healthier ways.

Learn more: pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12079407/

The Silent Struggle of High-Functioning Depression



Some individuals with major depressive disorder may not seek help because they don't recognize their symptoms and seem to function well socially and at work. They may appear happy and cheerful outwardly yet struggle internally with persistent sadness, low self-worth, anxiety, inadequacy, and despair. Does this sound like you? People with atypical or “high-functioning” depression might avoid seeking support or fail to recognize their condition, often attributing symptoms to other personal challenges rather than a diagnosable disorder. Discuss your experiences with the EAP. Don't let this condition cloud your thinking or keep you from getting help. Don't struggle in silence. The EAP offers a free, confidential screening. Complete an assessment of your needs, and take the next step toward support and treatment. Learn more: psychologytoday.com [search “smiling depression”]



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

