

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

## Feeling Singled Out at Work?



**A** common complaint among employees is feeling singled out at work, through more scrutiny, negative feedback, more work, and higher expectations than asked of peers. This experience is stressful and can leave you uncertain about your future. The good news is there are constructive ways to navigate it, leading to a better relationship with your supervisor. Experience shows these steps work best: 1) Give yourself permission to consider whether any feedback, however uncomfortable, might be useful. This can be difficult because when you feel attacked, the tendency is to defend yourself rather than consider the other person’s point. 2) Request a calm, private one-on-one with your supervisor to clarify expectations. 3) Talk to a trusted coworker who can offer an honest outside opinion. 4) Meet or speak with the EAP. They can help you sort through issues, stay objective, and prepare for a productive conversation with your supervisor.

## Recognizing Alcohol Creep



**Do** you unwind in the evening with a drink after work? Has it become a nightly pattern you increasingly look forward to? If you notice needing more alcohol than before to achieve the same relaxing effect, it may be an early sign of growing Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). This “alcohol creep” can begin years before a diagnosis and may reflect nervous system adaptation to alcohol. AUD is widely understood to be influenced primarily by biological and genetic factors that contribute to the progression of the illness. While stress and personal problems may increase alcohol use, they are not considered the primary cause of the disorder. If alcohol-related problems run in your family, your EAP can help assess your relationship with alcohol and if needed explore available supports. Doing so will help you better understand AUD, interrupt growing dependency, and reduce denial later, making treatment more difficult.

Learn more: [asam.org/quality-care/definition-of-addiction](https://asam.org/quality-care/definition-of-addiction)

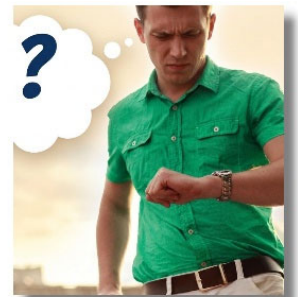
## Intervene Early in the Stress Spiral



**M**ost people do not get help with workplace stress or burnout right away. It’s human nature to assume it is part of the job, or the stress you’re experiencing will soon pass. It’s important to be aware of your body and minds ability to adapt. Adapting to stress can be a slippery slope because the process is to normalize irritability, fatigue, poor concentration, sleep problems, or emotional exhaustion (which means denying its severity). This is called the “stress spiral.” Intervene with this cycle early. You want to reverse the pattern before it affects your health, relationships, and job performance. Get early help from your EAP. Early support is often easier to implement and can lead to faster, more effective results.

Learn more: [apa.org/topics/healthy-workplaces/workplace-burnout](https://apa.org/topics/healthy-workplaces/workplace-burnout)

## Ghosting and the Workplace



**G**hosting means ending contact without explanation, especially when future communication was expected. Although often linked to dating, ghosting happens at work. Employees may ghost customers, coworkers, emails, or difficult conversations. Have you been a ghoster or the ghostee? Research suggests that 75% of people have ghosted or been ghosted. The person ghosted often experiences confusion, self-doubt, and anguish. Many view ghosting as psychological mistreatment. People remember who follows through and who disappears. Consequently, ghosting can damage reputations and opportunities. If you ghost others, it may cause people to see you as unreliable. Fear, immaturity, low empathy, poor communication skills, conflict avoidance, and a culture with less social accountability may contribute. If disappearing feels easier than facing an unpleasant interaction, consider how the EAP can help.

Learn more: [routledgeopenresearch.org/articles/2-3](https://routledgeopenresearch.org/articles/2-3)

# Perfect Friend Syndrome: The AI Relationship Trap

**D**on't be tempted to form artificial relationships with artificial intelligence (AI) as a substitute for real human connection. Although engaging with AI online may feel satisfying because it can appear to offer empathy and patience, AI does not know you as a real person. Research shows what experts long theorized: These digital relationships cause psychological harm. The risk of connecting to AI as a substitute for a real person is losing social skills or not developing a deeper sense of interpersonal need and vulnerability that we all need. Loneliness can worsen. This is called "parasocial attachment to AI", a behavior defined as a one-sided emotional bond in which a person develops feelings of closeness, trust, and connection with AI that cannot genuinely reciprocate or even recognize the relationship. AI's responsiveness can create the illusion of a mutual relationship, making the attachment feel real. This "perfect friend syndrome" doesn't push back. It doesn't experience bad days. It never demands something from you. This "no friction" experience is the problem, as real experiences are what make us human. AI can simulate conversation, but it will never offer warmth, share life history, or invest in you as a person. This is what makes human connection so special and irreplaceable. Is finding a meaningful relationship a goal in your life? Talk to the EAP to discover how to build real human connections that matter most.



[unesco.org/en/articles/ghost-chatbot-perils-parasocial-attachment](https://unesco.org/en/articles/ghost-chatbot-perils-parasocial-attachment)

# Communication Habits that Backfire

**C**ommunication habits cause many problems at work. The following are infamous for creating conflict and regret and contributing to a less-than-positive workplace. Do you recognize them? 1) Responding to an email when you're angry. Typing that pithy reply feels like a release when you are doing it, but experience shows it's better to draft it, save it, and then sleep on it. 2) Copying your boss's boss on an email to expose your supervisor or make a point. Trying to gain leverage through a next-level leader often backfires. Most leaders see it as manipulation or an attempt to undermine authority, and your reputation can suffer regardless of the concern. 3) Going silent when you can't make a promised deadline. When a deadline slips, don't make people wonder, give a heads-up early rather than making them wonder what's going on. 4) Being more selective with the phrase "That's not my job." Remember: Even if it isn't your job, people may remember your response long after the task is forgotten.



Learn more: [dalecarnegie.com/blog/eight-tips-for-effective-communication-in-the-workplace/](https://dalecarnegie.com/blog/eight-tips-for-effective-communication-in-the-workplace/)

# Men's Health Month: Unhealthy Habits that Hurt Men Later

**G**uys, the habits you build today can have a lasting impact on your health tomorrow. 1) Don't ignore routine medical check-ups. Thinking "no symptoms, no problems" can shorten your life. Many conditions, including high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, and liver disease have few early signs. These can damage your body for years even while you're feeling fine. 2) Don't ignore sleep issues or chronically sacrifice sleep. It can lead to weight gain, memory problems, faster aging, and heart issues. 3) Build habits for managing stress now. Denying or internalizing stress creates irritability, fatigue, anxiety, unhealthy coping, and relationship strain. 4) Don't ignore exercise. It helps fight disease, depression, and declining energy. The longer you wait, to get started, the harder it will be to establish a healthy habit. 5) Watch poor eating habits. Convenience foods and large portions add up and contribute to long-term health problems.



Learn more: [medlineplus.gov \[search "Screening Tests for Men Quiz"\]](https://medlineplus.gov/search/Screening+Tests+for+Men+Quiz)

# Building a Positive Reputation at Work

**S**taying composed, competent, and self-assured can take you far in your career, but the real leverage is a strong reputation built through how you interact with and treat others. The most powerful ways to achieve a good reputation are being reliable, communicative, and consistent. These qualities have everything to do with how others experience you on the job. They cost nothing to achieve, but they shape whether you are perceived as trustworthy and valuable. Reliable means following through consistently. Communicative means you share information clearly. Consistent means you show high-quality performance over time. Here's the leverage: When people can count on you to follow through, communicate clearly, and show up consistently, you're trusted and recommended. So, when opportunities arise, your name is more likely to be considered first. These habits help your team, but their power comes from how they influence conversations about you.



Learn more: [blog.talentech.com/en/10-qualities-of-good-employees](https://blog.talentech.com/en/10-qualities-of-good-employees)



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