

PATHWAYS

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

Start Healing Yourself Now

If you're in your 40s or 50s, you're probably noticing signs of aging, such as a knee that aches when climbing stairs, blood pressure creeping up, or more fatigue after mowing the lawn. This is when small issues left unchecked stop staying small and chronicity accelerates. What you do now matters more than ever, since your habits may determine how many health conditions you're managing in your 70s and 80s. Some habits can limit your independence or shorten your life. You've had your fun with fast food, overindulgence, and convenience eating, and that's okay. Start eating foods that heal you now instead of foods that just satisfy. Add more vegetables, lean protein, and fiber. Move your body most days outside of work. Don't skip medical screenings or avoid doctors. A slight shift now may limit aging's signals, reduce their severity, and lower the number of serious issues you face later.

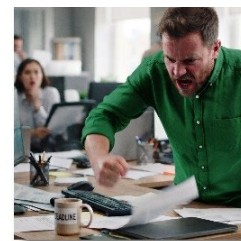
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40984636/>



Disproportionate Anger at Work

The distinction is not whether an employee experiences anger—anger is a normal human emotion. Rather, the concern lies in how the anger is expressed, whether it is proportionate to the situation, and whether it persists or escalates over time. These factors help distinguish ordinary workplace anger from concerning anger that may indicate an elevated risk for aggressive or violent behavior. The key difference lies in proportionality, which occurs when the size, intensity, or duration of a reaction does not match its cause. That's the difference between ordinary workplace anger and the anger that warrants concern. You will recognize concerning anger when you sense something colder, more personal, or fixated beyond normal frustration. The bottom line is trust your gut. Do not dismiss flickering sense of unease because you assume it is drama or you don't want to overreact. Instead, talk to your supervisor, human resources, security, or other leadership staff.

socialskillscenter.com/how-to-deal-with-explosive-behavior-in-the-workplace/



Reducing "Mental Noise"

Mental noise is the constant low-grade clutter of deadlines to remember, unfinished conversations, worries, and half-done to-dos. Also known as "cognitive load," it adds up, quietly draining energy on a normal day. When cognitive load stays high, your brain has fewer mental resources available for problem-solving, creativity, memory, concentration, and emotional self-control. Making everyday tasks feel more difficult than they actually are. When your mind feels overloaded, try performing a "brain dump" by writing every task and worry down on paper. Putting your thoughts into writing helps free up mental space and allows you to focus on what matters most. Additionally, challenge yourself to limit how many things you try to mentally track and juggle, and build short mental reset pauses into your day. You can even set a timer for just a minute or two to help make these pauses happen, and simply notice the relief that follows.



Learn more: ahrq.gov/diagnostic-safety/resources/issue-briefs/dxsafety-cognitive-load2.html

What Counseling Is Really Like

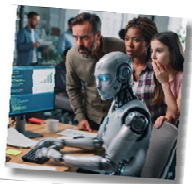
Many people have never been to professional counselor, not because they are not interested or would not benefit, but because they feel anxious about what counseling might involve. Much of that anxiety comes from the inaccurate portrayals often seen in television dramas. The reality is very different. You do not have to discuss your childhood, have a major crisis, or confront painful experiences before you are ready. You will not be analyzed with a stream of psychological labels or diagnostic terms. Instead, counseling is typically a focused, collaborative conversation. You do most of the talking while a trained professional listens, asks thoughtful questions, and helps you identify goals, develop practical strategies, and work toward meaningful solutions. For many people, counseling feels like the most honest and productive conversation they've had in a long time, leaving them feeling relieved, hopeful, motivated, and genuinely heard.



Managing AI Anxiety

Helping employees manage AI anxiety is a relatively new but growing topic of concern. While no single source has all the answers, there are strategies you can use to manage this change and address how AI may be affecting you. First, nail down your specific fear rather than letting it stay vague, for example “I’m worried AI will replace part of my role” can be examined, whereas a general sense of dread can’t. Naming a problem shifts your attention toward solutions. Second, focus on what’s in your control. You can’t change AI, but you can research which job skills pair well with it; some of these skills may excite you, match your abilities, and offer real possibilities for your future. Third, instead of losing sleep over worst-case guesses, ask your leader directly how AI fits into your team’s plans. Fourth, protect your health when anxiety feels overwhelming by prioritizing sleep, taking regular breaks, maintaining healthy boundaries, eating a balanced diet, and staying physically active. If your health slips, managing anxiety becomes tougher. Fifth, if worry affects your sleep, mood, or focus, visit the EAP to process stress and consider solutions. Uncertainty is the hardest part, but you don’t have to face it alone. The EAP can help you find answers and a path forward as we all navigate an uncertain future with AI.

AI anxiety: meditopia.com/en/forwork/articles/ai-anxiety



Women and ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is frequently associated with boys and men who have symptoms of restlessness, impulsivity, and difficulty sitting still. Those symptoms are common, but ADHD can look very different in women, making it easier to overlook these differences in symptoms, combined with gender bias in diagnosis, leave many women undiagnosed. Symptoms in women tend to be inattentive: difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, disorganization, and trouble managing time. Without answers, many women blame themselves instead, assuming a personal flaw, character weakness, or lack of effort. Rarely do they consider that their struggles could stem from an underlying, treatable condition. If you’ve spent years feeling scattered, overwhelmed, or like you’re working twice as hard just to keep up, don’t assume it’s simply who you are. Start with your EAP and a confidential assessment to find the medical expertise needed for a clear diagnosis and effective treatment. You can stop blaming yourself, end the confusion, and thrive in your career. Learn more at additudemag.com/adhd-in-women/.



National Wellness Month: Surprisingly Small Habits with Big Health Payoffs

Some health habits are small and easy to implement, yet have huge payoffs. Create habits from any of the following and start improving your health tomorrow. 1) Take a 10-minute walk after meals to blunt blood sugar spikes and support heart health; research shows it beats a 30-minute walk taken later. 2) Sleep with regularity, not just duration. Consistent sleep and wake times are just as important as getting enough hours and can improve mood, metabolism, and focus. 3) If you sit during the day, set a timer to stand and walk for 1–2 minutes every hour. It’s not the standing but the movement that counts and enough can offset the negative effects of prolonged sitting. 4) Drink a glass of water before your morning coffee. Mild dehydration upon waking is normal but can stimulate hunger or fatigue; water hydrates while curbing appetite, potentially helping weight management. 5) Take a couple of minutes daily to jot down what’s going well in your life. This isn’t journaling; it’s training mental reflexes, building an automatic habit of looking for the positive when adverse events occur. The good news is that none of these habits require tremendous willpower or significant extra time. Contact your EAP for more tips on building healthier daily routines! Learn more at: glycemicsnap.com/blog/walking-after-meals-blood-sugar.



Sources: Walking after meals: glycemicsnap.com/blog/walking-after-meals-blood-sugar; Sleep habits: mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379; Sitting less: mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005; Water: cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/water-healthy-drinks/index.html; Gratitude: greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude

School’s in Session: Bullying Prevention

Don’t wait for a bullying incident to occur before teaching your child how to respond. Research shows some children say nothing about being bullied and simply tolerate it, sometimes with long-term consequences. Talk to your child ahead of time in age-appropriate terms about what bullying looks like, why it happens, and what to do if it happens. Pace the conversation to match the child’s age and level of understanding, this can help manage anxiety. A gentle proactive discussion is far better than the alternative: a child with no actionable plan who blames themselves and stays silent. The goal isn’t to alarm your child, it’s to make sure they know what to do before they need it, and that telling you is always okay. This same principle applies to teaching teenagers to speak up early about inappropriate behavior in dating relationships because, silence only protects the problem, not the victim. Learn more at StopBullying.gov (search “children”).



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