

PATHWAYS

September 2026

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

Building Your Workplace Reputation

What price can be put on a highly respected workplace reputation? It's safe to say it's invaluable. A valued reputation is not derived from positive personality traits or being likable. It's built with intentionality. Here are five ways to grow your reputation as a valued worker. 1) Do what you say you will do. When people know they can count on you, trust develops naturally. It takes only three or four positive experiences to build, but one failure to follow through can be a significant setback. 2) Acknowledge people when they interact with you. Don't leave them hanging. Respond quickly or let them know when you can respond. The analogy is sitting in a restaurant with a server who is not acknowledging your presence. 3) Don't hold on to information. Stay aware of others' needs, and if you can solve a problem or have information that will make someone's life easier, step in. 4) Maintain composure under pressure. This requires practice, self-awareness, and a conscious choice to pause before reacting. How you respond under pressure is modeled by others, making it an important reputation builder. 5) Practice consistency. One great performance isn't likely to cement your reputation. Rather, it's the small, consistent efforts that do it. Think of your reputation as a tangible asset, and with the tips above, experience the payoffs for your career.



Learn more: [ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/\(ASCE\)CO.1943-7862.0001459](https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/(ASCE)CO.1943-7862.0001459)

Indoor Gardening for Nutrition and Managing Stress

Tending indoor plants has been shown to lower stress and improve mood. Gardening's hands-on nature provides a positive distraction, clear focus, and the satisfaction of nurturing growth. Other benefits include greater self-confidence from your successes, goal-directed activity, and the rewarding experience of enjoying what you have grown. That is a lot of benefits! Even in the fall and winter, you can easily make gardening part of your stress management strategy. You don't even need an outdoor garden. You only need a jar and some water to get started with over a dozen different vegetables and herbs.



Learn more: youtube.com/watch?v=Wv4fnLtw6AM

Five Steps to Help Prevent Suicide

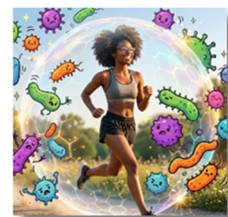
September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Here's what the National Institute of Mental Health recommends if you're concerned that someone may be thinking about suicide. Remember these five action steps. 1) Ask: "Are you thinking about suicide?" Asking directly does not increase suicidal thoughts or behavior. 2) Be there: Listen without judgment. Talking openly about suicide may help reduce suicidal thoughts. 3) Help keep them safe: Ask whether they have a plan and help reduce access to lethal means. 4) Help them connect: Encourage contact with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, a mental health professional, a trusted family member, a friend, a spiritual advisor, or their EAP. 5) Follow up: Stay in touch after the crisis. Ongoing contact can make an important difference. Most important, don't let fear of saying the wrong thing prevent you from reaching out.



Learn more: nimh.nih.gov [search "five action steps suicide"]

Manage Stress to Reduce Risk of Flu and Colds

Managing stress deserves a place in your strategy for avoiding flu and cold viruses. When stress becomes chronic, elevated cortisol suppresses immune cell production; including the white blood cells that serve as your frontline defenders against viral infections. Do you only associate stress with emotional symptoms like anxiety, irritability, and feeling overwhelmed? Many people believe that if they aren't experiencing these states, stress isn't affecting their immune system. This is a myth. Stress physiology, cortisol elevation, and immune suppression happen silently at the cellular level. Talk with your doctor if you feel a high stress level is making you sick and reach out to your EAP for stress-management strategies.



Learn more: www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJM199108293250903

Preventing Accidents by Reducing Distractions

You've heard it before: "It only takes a second of distraction for an accident to happen." So why is it hard to ignore them, even when performing a dangerous task? One reason is the "normalcy bias" our tendency to assume all will remain well because nothing bad has happened before.



Hence, we engage in distracting activities while driving. You might also tolerate distractions because you know your job too well. For example, removing the safety guard increases production, why not work without it, since you still have 10 fingers and nothing bad has happened yet? Familiarity allows you to operate on autopilot, making distractions harder to notice. Start treating distractions as the key safety hazard and create a habit of consciously asking yourself, "Where is my attention right now?" Risk factors for asking this question include rushing, accepting interruptions, experiencing fatigue, engaging in conversations, using a phone, or experiencing emotional preoccupation.

Managing the September Family Calendar Explosion

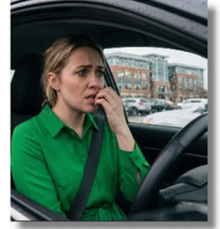
September is an explosive month with abrupt changes for many families. Are you facing school schedules, sports, homework, child-care, transportation, medical appointments, work responsibilities, and household chores vying for attention? Consider these tips to reduce tension in September. 1) Put every family and work commitment on one calendar in a central location. This helps stop everyone from asking one person what is happening, where they need to be, and who is driving. 2) Block small amounts of unscheduled time into each week. A calendar packed from morning to night leaves no room for the unexpected. 3) Plan personal downtime, even 15 minutes can be rejuvenating. Make it completely free of tasks, use this time to rest, read, take a walk, enjoy a hobby, or meditate. 4) Learn to delegate and manage stress by visiting your EAP or ask for resources. If you're a mom, it might interest you to know that the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey conducted by the Gender Equity Policy Institute, reports that mothers spend more than double the time fathers do on domestic labor.



Learn more: thegepi.org/free-time-gender-gap/

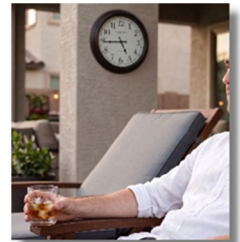
Managing Your New Employee Fears

If you're a new hire, you likely have a few normal fears: making mistakes, appearing unqualified, asking the wrong questions, or not measuring up. Most employers have one overriding goal, your success, so relax. New employee mistakes happen, and you're likely more prepared than you think. Trying too hard to prove what you know can make you seem too eager to establish yourself. Your knowledge helped you get hired, but thoughtful questions that show you are listening and engaged will make a stronger impression than simply demonstrating what you know. So during your first few weeks, count on making a few mistakes. Learn quickly from them, and don't let one awkward moment feel like a foreshadowing of your future with your new employer.



Concerned About That After-Work Drink?

"I'm just unwinding." "It takes the edge off." For some, having an after-work drink may begin as an occasional way to relax, but then it becomes routine. When should you be concerned? Those recovering from an alcohol use disorder (AUD) and who are therefore abstinent from alcohol and mood-altering substances have some advice: notice when *wanting* that drink becomes *missing* it, and eventually feeling its absence when you don't have it. No, you're not necessarily in withdrawal, but your nervous system may be growing accustomed to alcohol's presence. This is called nervous system adaptation. It signals tolerance of ethanol, typically a prerequisite for AUD, a potentially chronic disease. Don't dismiss that small voice of concern. An EAP evaluation is confidential and quick, and you'll know what to do next if there is an issue. This early intervention can interrupt progression of a serious problem that can become more difficult to treat. Learn more: "Under the Influence," James R. Milam, PhD



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