November 2026

PATHWAYS



The Employee Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program

Temptation Bundling: A Little Motivation Goes a Long Way



For many people, exercise feels like another chore requiring loads of discipline bound to fade. To beat this, try "temptation bundling": pairing exercise with something you really look forward to and can't wait to repeat. An example might be saving your favorite audiobook or podcast for a daily walk, then choosing a route that ends at your favorite coffee shop. You get fresh air, entertainment, and a treat to look forward to. Because the walk takes you somewhere you want to be, exercise comes with the journey rather than overwhelming you. If you miss a day, simply resume at the next opportunity. Notice what makes you eager to repeat the experience and build around it. Here is a challenge: How many desirable activities can you combine into one event that flips the script and motivates you to exercise?

Learn more: faculty.wharton.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/TemptationBundling.pdf

Holiday Houseguest: Less Stress, More Joy



"Never again!" is a common outcry after holiday guests leave. A little planning can help you enjoy your guests' company rather than count the hours until they leave. Try these tips: 1) **Set a budget.** Plan for meals, activities, and unexpected expenses. Consider a potluck dinner or sharing meal costs with family. 2) **Share responsibilities.** Give guests specific tasks, such as preparing a salad, setting the table, or helping with cleanup. 3) **Allow time to recharge.** Avoid scheduling too many activities and give yourself time to relax before returning to work. Feeling anxious about holiday guests or difficult family interactions? Contact your EAP for support with setting boundaries, managing expectations, and preparing for challenging situations.

Avoid Caregiver Denial



Family caregivers play an important role, but responsibilities typically grow more strenuous overtime. Self-awareness is key to wellness so you have time for your health, rest, and relationships. Denial is common among caregivers in the beginning. Do you drive a parent to appointments? Manage their medications? Call nightly to check on things? If so, you're a caregiver. Naming the role helps you plan for expanding responsibilities before you're missing work, losing sleep, or feeling overwhelmed. Telling yourself you're "just helping out" or "can handle everything just fine" may delay asking for support. Exhaustion, stress, and resentment can follow. Recognize the role early so you plan on sharing responsibilities and protecting your well-being. Contact your EAP for guidance, and explore education, tips, and others' shared experiences at www.caregiveraction.org/.

Managing Productivity After a Workplace Breakup



Workplace romances happen, and so do breakups. If working with a former partner becomes difficult, tell your boss about specific work problems, such as unanswered messages, delayed assignments, or disagreements that disrupt meetings. Avoid criticizing your former partner's personality or assigning blame for the breakup. Try saying, "Since our relationship ended, coordinating assignments has become difficult. Could you help clarify communication and responsibilities?" Share enough information to address work concerns without intimate details or asking your boss to settle personal disputes. Clarify expected conduct and agree on next steps. Report unwanted contact, threats, or harassment promptly through established workplace channels. Finally, contact the EAP for help managing lingering emotions so you can move forward with confidence and focus at work.

Workplace Soft Skills:
Developing Greater Self-Confidence

Building greater self-confidence on the job is entirely possible, but it requires deliberate intention and action. Ultimately, confidence means trusting yourself to respond effectively, learn from mistakes, and recover when criticism stings. Confident employees contribute ideas, accept feedback, and navigate uncertainty with ease, cultivating this trait benefits both you and your employer. Try these steps to boost your workplace confidence: 1) Complete your commitments. Following through builds personal satisfaction and provides tangible evidence that you are dependable. 2) Prepare for challenging conversations. Thorough preparation helps you contribute meaningfully and increases your chances of success during meetings. 3) Speak up at least once per meeting. "Sitting back" or avoiding participation in a group can reinforce self-doubt. 4) Eliminate self-discounting language. Instead of saying, "I'm not the expert here, but what about this idea?" try, "Here's an approach worth considering." 5) Maintain a "wins" log. Tracking your victories has a powerful impact. Record one small success daily and regularly review your progress. 6) Focus on what is working. Learn from setbacks, block self-critical thoughts, and avoid ruminating on mistakes. Focus your attention to your accomplishments. 7) Accept manageable challenges. Stretching your abilities beyond your comfort zone builds new layers of capability and self-assured thinking. Confidence follows action. It is not something you can simply "psych" yourself into; rather, it is a skill built incrementally through every experience and opportunity you take on.

"Letting Go" to Help a
Loved One Change

"Letting go" means stepping back from rescuing so the person you care about faces the natural consequences of their choices, which often motivate change. Letting go isn't abandoning someone, withdrawing love, ignoring danger, or giving the silent treatment. Instead, it means you stop making excuses for their behavior and allow them to take full responsibility for their own life. While it sounds simple enough, in practice it can be one of the hardest things in the world when you care for someone. Making the change often requires support, counseling, and guidance so letting go does not become an "on and off" behavior that reinforces the problem you are trying to solve. Letting go is a powerful dynamic, but overcoming fear, guilt, and old habits takes immense courage and patience. This is where your EAP can help; professional or group support can assist you setting boundaries and holding firm. Has trying to help a loved one left you feeling exhausted and wondering if things will ever improve? If so, you're ready for the next step in healing: starting with yourself so you stop standing in the way of progress and your goals, whatever they may be.

Men's Health Awareness Month:
Confronting Your Buddy's Use of Alcohol

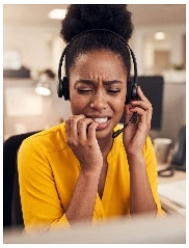


"Where did you say I could get help?"

That call from a friend may come when you least expect it, but only if you've started talking to them about their drinking. Addiction is a chronic condition, and continued alcohol misuse increases the risk of further incidents, including conflicts with others, strained relationships, and problems at work. Each incident temporarily lowers their defenses and opens a window to urge counseling or treatment. However, that window closes quickly, and the next incident is often worse. Start now. Talk privately when they are sober. Stick to what you've seen and why it worries you: "Last night you couldn't remember how you got home. I'm worried. Will you talk to someone?" Expect denial or digs at your own drinking, but don't take the bait. Each conversation adds to the last so when the crisis comes, you're the one they call. Call your EAP first. A counselor can help you plan what to say and line up help so you have an answer ready.

Learn more: niaaa.nih.gov/health-professionals-communities/core-resource-on-alcohol

Managing a Tough
Customer Experience



Customer service employees become more valuable with experience, so managing stress helps you stay longer and find meaning in your work. Are you still arguing with that difficult customer in your head? Frustration can sneak into your tone with the next caller or coworker. Make sure to change gears after tough interactions. Take a slow breath, loosen your shoulders, stretch, or step away briefly if work allows. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to give the next customer a fresh start?" Don't "play tough" and dismiss your reaction. Ignoring stress can let it build toward burnout. Develop a personal routine that helps you keep one upsetting experience from driving your next interaction. Still stewing? Speak privately with your supervisor. Connect with coworkers for mutual support, and use your EAP for confidential help and stress management tips.

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

BOCES Employee Assistance Program

5018 Expressway Drive South, Suite 204, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779 (631) 289-0480
154 Commack Road, Suite 210, Commack, NY 11725 (631) 218-5445
188 W. Montauk Hwy, Suite E1, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 (631) 728-2008

BOCES Western Suffolk