



PATHWAYS

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Wellness, Productivity, and You!

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

Sleep—A “Fountain of Youth”



Although there is no such thing as a “fountain of youth,” many researchers are convinced that quality sleep comes closest to its benefits. Seek help for sleep troubles from appropriate health resources. Start with a doctor, EAP, counselor, credible book, or your health and wellness advisor. Research studies on those who get better sleep show improved memory, reduced depression, improved self-confidence, lost weight, looking younger, increased creativity, improved mood, increased energy, prevention of cognitive decline in later life, reduced pain, better work performance, and even positive benefits in decision making leading to business and financial success. One study showed that 17 hours without sleep equates to an impaired brain with a .05 percent blood alcohol level.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> [Search PMC 1739867]

Salt and Heart Health



February is Heart Health Awareness month. You already know that you should exercise regularly, but let’s discuss your salt intake. Your heart and salt are not buddies. Reducing your use of salt, especially if you have a family history of high blood pressure or heart disease, could help save your life. When you consume salt, you make it more difficult for your kidneys to gather fluid and for you to urinate, which leads to fluid retention. This fluid raises your blood pressure and, in turn, puts strain on your heart. The tiny blood vessels that lead to your kidneys are also strained.

Perfectionism: A Chronic Health Issue



New research from a sampling of over 40,000 college students in the UK, Canada, and the USA shows young people are agitated and struggling with perfectionism. Each participated in a survey called a Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. Perfectionism is having excessively high personal standards and being overly critical of oneself. Health consequences from perfectionism can include anxiety, depression, eating disorders, suicidal thinking, and physical illnesses. Young people perceive that others are more demanding of them, but they are also more demanding of others and themselves. See the research, and if you are a parent or concerned person, consider advocating to help young people balance success with acceptance.

Source: <http://www.apa.org> (search “perfectionism”)

Are Smartphones the New Water Cooler?



It’s easier to text to a coworker down the hall than to stand at a water cooler, but is your texting interfering with productivity? It’s a growing topic of discussion among employers. Like when you’re hanging out at a water cooler, time can pass by when the topic of conversation is compelling. Some companies have policies about texting while others do not. But even if yours doesn’t, come up with your own personal texting management rules or—even better—create some rules among your coworkers to put boundaries on the time spent and the amount of texting so your organization isn’t robbed of productivity.



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Dealing with Difficult Situations at Work



Difficult situations at work—major errors, sudden change, conflicts, and emotional meltdowns—affect every workplace. A popular question in employment interviews is “Can you give me an example of a difficult situation and how you handled it?” Often full of drama, difficult situations (you know them when you experience them) require maturity, skill, and a cool head. Minimizing disruption to the workplace is the goal, and bosses typically know who they will turn to for help in managing difficult situations. Here are a few tips to help that person be you: 1) Challenges and curveballs happen at home and at work. Don’t be surprised by them. See conflict as normal and change as inevitable. 2) Accept these realities when they happen, and resist the impulse to emotionally respond to them. 3) Avoid being pulled into the drama of a difficult workplace situation. 4) Maintain a cool head by understanding that all crises, large and small, have beginning and end points; a resolution will come. 5) When focusing on resolution, avoid blame and over-attention to symptoms. Think: “What’s the real problem here?” to help identify the best approach. 6) Maintain an attitude of “opportunity found.” This “lens” or point of view will help you spot opportunities to make things better that can help prevent a recurrence of a similar difficult situation.

Building More Authentic Relationships



Authentic relationships are those that allow us to show our true selves. Authentic relationships at work have value because they reduce stress, allow us to feel more connected, and give our jobs meaning. It can be riskier at work to let our guard down and allow our limitations and vulnerabilities to show, so building authentic relationships must be a conscious process. Step one is do your job well. Be a team player. Getting the work done is still priority one, and it’s critical to building a foundation of trust. Second, be genuine. People are attracted to those who are genuine because they project safety, honesty, acceptance, and a willingness to be vulnerable; in turn, their real personality becomes more visible. Genuine people are approachable, so growing relationships with them is easier. Third, show genuine interest in others’ needs and concerns. Then, notice how the reciprocity of coworkers grows more authenticity in your relationships with them.

Shun Shortcuts to Prevent Workplace Injuries



On-the-job shortcuts are one of the most common causes of workplace injuries. A shortcut places a priority on speed over safety. Employees who take shortcuts believe they are aware and savvy enough to avoid injury in exchange for saving time, hassling with safety gear, meeting quotas, or some other advantage. Insurance companies, which calculate risk, protect businesses, and make a profit when fewer claims are paid, will tell you that the increased risk from an “unsafe work practice” is about 600 percent higher than doing it safely. When you bypass a safety step, you automatically enter a world of probability called the “Law of Large Numbers.” Also called the “law of averages” or “gambler’s fallacy,” it states that you may escape injury once or twice, but your chance of injury becomes nearly certain as time passes.

Source: <http://www.selectinternational.com> [visit “blog,” then search “no short cut”]

Flu and the Workplace Don’t Mix



The worst of the flu season is not over. If you get the flu, stay home. If you know others who are sick with the flu, urge them not to come to work. The flu is not like a “super cold.” This year’s strain has killed even some who were extremely physically fit. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends you see your doctor if you have difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, chest or severe abdominal pain, confusion, or sudden dizziness. Don’t try to tough it out. Flu symptoms may be delayed for days after you are infected, but you can infect others before you know you are sick. To help avoid the flu, wash your hands; use disinfectant wipes; and avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes. Yes, the flu virus can enter your body through your eyes—for example, from rubbing your eye after touching an infected elevator button.

Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/spread.htm>.