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Balance

A newsletter to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance



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Balance is a newsletter produced by your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that spotlights relevant issues related to personal and professional wellness. The EAP is a confidential and free resource, available to you to help manage life's various challenges. If any of the topics below resonant with you, consider contacting your EAP for more information, including referrals for local EAP counselors.

CONDUCT A WORKDAY STRESS AUDIT

Small stressors can add up. Regularly assess your workday to identify stressors and make “mini-interventions” to manage them. Start by gaining awareness. Over the next few days, pinpoint demanding tasks, conflicts with colleagues, excessive workloads, tight deadlines, poor time management behaviors, lack of resources, noises, examples of poor communication, and desk clutter that inhibits workflow. Then, consider how these stressors affect you. Now, find solutions to mitigate their impact. For instance, if excessive workload is a stress factor, consider delegating. Noise? Try headphones. An unresolved conflict with a coworker—iron it out. These stressors might seem minor on their own, but when experienced repeatedly, they can impact overall well-being and productivity. By efficiently managing stress with this strategy, you will experience an improved well-being and a bit more joy at work.

STRESS TIPS FROM THE FIELD: TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME

Taking life “one day at a time” is a common saying, meaning to deal with each day’s problems as they come instead of worrying about the future. But it means much more, like pausing and engaging with what is happening

right now, thereby appreciating the present moment. This reduces anxiety, produces a calming effect, and puts the brakes on catastrophizing. Instantly, you cease magnifying potential negative outcomes of a stressor, crisis, or concern that you face. You discover that you can control your responses to these things and not be swept up by them. Consider using the “one day at a time” stress management strategy more often. It doesn’t mean neglecting goals or plans or necessary interventions. It simply encourages balanced living right now and maintaining perspective.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF VIRTUAL COUNSELING

Virtual or telehealth counseling has gained popularity worldwide, but a few challenges exist. Compared to in-person sessions. These few tips will maximize the benefits of your experience:

1. Be sure to select a quiet and private space for your sessions so your confidentiality is ensured. You’re likely to be more open about issues of concern.
2. Turn on your camera. This better facilitates the relationship building necessary for an effective counseling experience.
3. Remember to communicate openly. It’s easier to hide feelings, thoughts, and reactions online, so try to be fully present—show the real you as you engage with the professional. This includes your tone of voice and emotional state.
4. After a session, jot down some issues you want to address next time while they are fresh in your mind.

Bad habits

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OVERCOMING AN UNWANTED HABIT

Well-researched strategies exist for overcoming unwanted habits (procrastination, nail biting, poor eating habits, spending, negative thinking, etc.). When you logically combine various techniques, you increase your odds of success.

1. Understand your triggers—pay attention to what prompts you to engage in your habit. Keep a diary for a few days. Note what happens the moment before the behavior happens.
2. Your goal is to interrupt and replace this trigger-response dynamic. Do so by substituting the unwanted habit with a healthier, more positive behavior as quickly as possible (e.g., put your running shoes on the sofa cushion where you normally sit after arriving home to remind you that going for a run is a better choice than engaging in your habit).
3. Track your progress and put it in writing. This “action” sustains motivation.
4. Define your goal. What will success look like, and how will you behave when you overcome the habit?
5. Use mindfulness techniques, like meditation, to heighten self-awareness. This trains your brain, enabling you to spot triggers and patterns associated with the habit.
6. Can you find a support group where you can share your experiences and gain strength and hope? If so, this is one of the greatest strategies to help you be successful.
7. Employ external influences to help break the habit. For example, if your goal is to reduce time on your phone, use apps or tools to control access to the device.

8. Be kind to yourself if setbacks occur—keep going.
9. Consider professional counseling to achieve your goal, which includes your EAP.

A substance use disorder is not considered a habit by medical experts but instead a disease process for which appropriate treatment is recommended. Reach out to your EAP for resources to get started.

Learn more by searching: scholar.google.com, “overcoming unwanted habits”

MENTAL HEALTH TIPS FOR THOSE INTERFACING WITH THE PUBLIC OR CUSTOMERS

Learn how to develop emotional resilience if you are in a position where you interface with the public or customers. Inevitably, you will deal with challenging individuals. Emotional resilience is your ability to adapt and bounce back from stressful interactions.

How can you develop emotional resilience? Practice recognizing your emotions, triggers, and stress responses. Do this for a few weeks. Keep a log of your observations. Doing so will help you develop keen self-awareness that allows you to spot early signs of emotional distress and empower your ability to intervene and manage this state of mind. You will also be able to appropriately detach from emotionally charged situations and enjoy your job more. In turn, this will boost empathy skills—your ability to understand, connect with, calm, and serve your customers.



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SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WHO HAS CANCER

Upon learning that a loved one has received a cancer diagnosis, you may find it challenging to determine the most supportive and comforting words to express and offer your support.

1. Be positive and encouraging. Don't allow fear of unintentionally causing distress to keep you from this role.
2. "Being there"—meaning listening—is your most crucial role.
3. Discard the notion that you must produce a "right" answer or "solution" to what the person is experiencing.
4. Don't back away or be avoidant, but make visits and contacts purposeful.
5. Don't say, "If you need me for anything, just ask." Instead, offer what you can do to lessen a burden.

Use the EAP for help in navigating your emotions about the diagnosis and you'll feel more empowered to be supportive during this critical time.

Learn more:

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/caregivers/how-to-be-a-friend-to-someone-with-cancer.html>

Employee Assistance Program

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a complimentary service available to you through your employer. The EAP provides counseling sessions at no cost to you, as well as offering a wide variety of services to enhance overall wellbeing and support healthy work/life balance. The program is completely confidential and available to you, your household family members, and dependents.

Access the EAP anytime for free, confidential support from a master's-level counselor or visit the website tools and information designed to address life's pressing concerns.

 **Phone: 1.800.833.3031**

 **Website: www.EAPHelplink.com**

 **Company Code: IOWA**

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