



Volume 26, Issue 4

Balance

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

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Acentra
HEALTH

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.

STRESS TIPS FROM THE FIELD: THE MAGIC OF "ME-TIME"

"Me-time" is that period you set aside for yourself to experience relaxation and personal fulfillment—whether through stress management, exercise, meditation, or simply doing nothing at all. Me-time requires detaching from stressors and responsibilities to recharge. Don't let me-time happen by chance during a lull in your schedule; instead, make it a regular part of your day or week. It can reduce stress, prevent burnout, and give you a boost, knowing that something enjoyable, fun, fulfilling, and uplifting—just for you—is soon at hand. This stress management technique is called "anticipatory coping" or "positive anticipation." A near-future enjoyable activity becomes stress relief by giving you something to look forward to, delivering emotional relief, and motivation in the present to help you tolerate current stress more easily.

NIX PROCRASTINATION WITH THE FIVE-MINUTE RULE

The "five-minute rule" is a tool to help you stop procrastinating and act on a task that you have been postponing. The idea is to take just five minutes to start a task or make progress on a decision. By setting a small, manageable time limit, you

reduce the overwhelming feeling that often comes with larger tasks or choices. In effect, you are breaking a deadlock with yourself. Once you start on the task, you might just continue past five minutes. The five-minute rule can be applied to both small decisions and larger ones that are prone to "decision neglect," a more serious form of procrastination, such as starting a will or seeing a doctor for a serious symptom or medical condition.

SNEAK EXERCISES INTO YOUR WORKDAY

A desk, a chair, the stairs, and waiting time can be your best friends for sneaking exercise into your day. Here's how:

1. Take the stairs instead of the elevator to boost your heart rate and strengthen your legs.
2. Do periodic squats in front of your desk.
3. Strengthen your arms by doing "chair pushups."
4. Set a timer for quick five-minute walks several times a day, which is also a great way to zap drowsiness and improve focus.
5. Try a walking meeting vs. the conference room.

These five exercises add up, won't interrupt your workflow, and may improve productivity.

Source: ymcany.org [search "chair exercises"]



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GUARD YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AS A CAREGIVER

If you're a caregiver for a loved one, are you overlooking the importance of your emotional well-being? Your primary focus is often on physical tasks like feeding, bathing, and medical care, which can create a sense of "caregiver tunnel vision," where the emotional toll on you is easily overlooked. You may be experiencing physical exhaustion. To prevent burnout and maintain your health, reach out to your EAP for guidance on managing stress and staying at your best for those you love. Symptoms of burnout may include detachment, feeling indifferent or unable to emotionally connect, or feeling like you are just going through the motions of meeting the needs of your loved one. You may feel trapped, helpless, or overwhelmed by the demands of caregiving. These emotions are normal, but it's important to recognize them early. To avoid or recover from burnout, seek support when you need it, and remember that taking care of yourself is also a way of taking care of your loved one.

RECOGNIZING PARENTAL BURNOUT

Just like workplace burnout, parental burnout is a state of chronic physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. It typically stems from the relentless demands of parenting. Mid-fall, when home, work, school, and community activities pull in all directions, it can feel nearly impossible to catch your breath. Parental burnout can manifest as feelings of emotional detachment from your children, going through daily routines on autopilot, increased irritability, or a sense of inadequacy, as if you're falling short of being the parent you want to be.

You also might find it more difficult to join in your interactions with children. If you're experiencing any of these burnout symptoms, talk to your EAP about taking control of a downward spiral and discover solutions you can use now and in the future.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TIPS: UNDERSTANDING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Enhance your workplace environment by exploring the concept of unconscious bias. These biases are automatic assumptions or judgments we may make about others, often shaped by our past experiences, stereotypes, or societal beliefs. Recognizing unconscious bias can be a challenge, as it often operates beneath our conscious awareness. Here are four common workplace inter-actions where self-reflection may reveal different perspectives:

1. **Listening to Coworkers:** When listening to a coworker, are you assigning less or more value to their input or comments based on differences?
2. **Organizing Social Gatherings:** When planning social events are you actively considering the participation of colleagues with diverse backgrounds, or do you find you gravitate to those who are like you?
3. **Providing Feedback:** When giving feedback to a coworker, do you offer more or less constructive praise based on differences?
4. **Forming Workgroups:** When collaborating, do you form a team or workgroup with those who are more like you?

By engaging in this self-reflection, you can identify opportunities for growth and contribute to fostering a more inclusive workplace for everyone.



USE YOUR VACATION TIME TO REJUVENATE!

Don't undermine your ability to rejuvenate and revitalize yourself when you go on vacation or even a staycation if you are taking time off but not necessarily going somewhere. View vacation time as a type of necessary therapy that can improve your well-being, functioning, and quality of life.

Avoid these pitfalls that reduce a vacation's positive impact:

1. Feeling guilty about being away and unable to relax unless you "check in."
2. Not planning a "bridge day" to ease back into the fray. Use this time to take care of personal and family needs before jumping back into work.
3. Not taking long enough vacations. To experience true detachment, you need more than an extended weekend.
4. Staying "plugged in" by routinely engaging decisions back at the office.
5. Feeling anxious when leaving, because you did not plan well for being away and letting go.

If you feel like you could use some help prioritizing yourself and planning vacation time, contact the EAP for some additional support.

Employees 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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