



Office of
Employee Relations
Work-Life Services

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www.oer.ny.gov/eap

FrontLine Employee

Wellness, Productivity, and You!

Practical Steps to Financial Wellness

The worst part about financial stress is not necessarily the unpaid bills; it's the toll on your mental health. When stressed about finances, money may be the only thing on your mind. Other parts of life can suffer as a result, including physical health, relationships, work productivity, and sleep. Contact your EAP coordinator for help and referral to expert resources, such as a consumer credit counseling agency near you or online. These nonprofit, nonjudgmental resources can help you regain control of your finances. Professionals evaluate your situation, help set financial goals such as reducing debt and preventing future crises, assist in designing an action plan, and coach you to ensure it works. Best of all, you'll improve your mental health and sleep better as a result.



Winter Blues and Personal Workplace Energy

During winter's shorter days, sadness, low energy, and the blahs are common complaints for many people. Here are a few of the latest evidence-based ways to help overcome the effects of this condition, also called seasonal affective disorder (SAD): 1) Expose yourself to early morning sun to elevate your mood. 2) Move; take walks on your breaks. 3) Aim for a consistent bedtime; your circadian rhythms want predictability. 4) Avoid comfort foods that can worsen low energy, such as baked goods, pasta, pizza, fries, fried chicken, sugary cereals, pancakes, candy, chips, crackers, and chocolate. 5) Prioritize protein, fiber, and hydration to avoid energy crashes. 6) Work in blocks with breaks to prevent exhaustion. 7) Interact socially; it boosts emotional energy.



Is Your Computer Getting Hacked?

Viruses and malware are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Protect yourself and your employer by strictly following all security rules regarding the use of computers and digital devices.

They can infect your system and stubbornly reappear even after being removed by standard antivirus software. Some can search for passwords stored anywhere on your computer, including files or notes you may have created to help you remember them (never do this!). It can then use these credentials to access your bank and credit card accounts, as well as online shopping sites. Always use two-factor authentication (also called multifactor authentication) for your personal and business online accounts to trigger a message or code sent directly to you that must be entered to gain access.



Reconnecting With Co-workers After the Holidays

It's not unusual for the holidays to disrupt everyday work routines. You may notice some physical and emotional distance between co-workers until everyone gets back in sync. Be intentional about strengthening workplace relationships so morale and productivity return with the promise of a positive new year. Consider the following:

- 1) See the readjustment period as usual. You may be ready to dive into work, while others take longer to regain a foothold with routines.
- 2) Check in with co-workers to see how they are adjusting.
- 3) Give co-workers a brief adjustment period instead of expecting peak performance immediately.
- 4) Don't shy away from communicating about priorities and deadlines. Respectful, courteous reminders help everyone move forward and reestablish a shared sense of purpose.



Achieve Success with Your January Reset

New Year's resolutions often don't succeed because they are too sudden and extreme, making failure more likely. Example: *"Starting January 1, I'm going to wake up at 5 a.m. every day, work out for an hour and cut out all sugar!"* Such a resolution flops because it requires sustained initial motivation rather than starting with a slower approach that incrementally adds new habits needed for success. The key is an approach that builds your confidence with quick wins (critical!) while reinforcing your motivation. These early wins lower resistance, reinforce your desire to change, and build momentum. Start with tiny steps that represent actual change but seem almost ridiculously easy. For example, practice setting an alarm for 5:00 a.m. to wake up early for a week, nothing more. Does it sound too easy? If yes, that's the point. Repetition and habit formation are the goals. Add another step—perhaps prepare your exercise clothes the night before, then go outside in the morning and stroll for 3-4 minutes. Then, try longer walks. With incremental steps, you avoid the temptation to go further and skip to the final step. Your goal is to form habits, and this missing piece may explain past difficulty in achieving your health goals.



Count the Benefits of Exercise

Simply knowing that exercise is good for you never fired up anyone to get off the couch. But understanding more about the actual benefits of exercise just might. Get your doctor's okay for an exercise regimen, but see whether these many reasons don't spur more enthusiasm. Exercise can

- 1) make you happier generally, and improve your mood quickly.
- 2) help you achieve weight loss;
- 3) increase your energy level and help eliminate that sluggish feeling;
- 4) decrease your risk of chronic disease from diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and hypertension, and help alleviate symptoms, like pain; and
- 5) improve your brain health, including memory.



What You Don't Know about High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure affects about 70% of adults age 60 and older, but it is not just an older person's health problem. Nearly one in four adults in their 20s to early 40s already has high blood pressure. Left untreated, it becomes a long-term predictor of dementia and causes cumulative damage to arteries, the heart, brain, and kidneys. Many adults in their 40s have experienced strokes and, because of paralysis, require long-term care. Know your blood pressure numbers. Visit your doctor regularly, and if medication is prescribed, do not dismiss it because you feel fine. High blood pressure is typically symptom-free. Many believe strokes occur only after a single bad day with extremely high readings. This is a myth. Blood vessels weaken gradually, and a stroke can occur even at moderately elevated levels. These risks are why high blood pressure is called "the silent killer."



Start Your Day Off Right

Can a morning routine influence the happiness and the productivity of your coming day? Research-based evidence says yes, it can. A good morning, of course, starts with adequate sleep the night before, a nutritious breakfast, and a regular wake-up time. However, add the following mental health and productivity boosters for added push, and notice the impact on your life after one week:

- 1) Spend a few moments focusing on things you are grateful for to improve your mood;
- 2) expose yourself to sunlight or bright daylight for few moments;
- 3) make your bed;
- 4) write down your goals for the day;
- 5) take a few minutes to meditate or practice mindfulness. (This last mental application develops a skill that allows you to calm your mind and reduce stress when needed quickly.)

