



Office of
Employee Relations
Work-Life Services

FrontLine Employee

Wellness, Productivity, and You!

1-800-822-0244

www.oer.ny.gov/eap

Empathy Overload in Customer Service

Customer service effectiveness depends on the ability to show accurate empathy, even when it is not appreciated. Interpreting and responding to emotional cues all day takes great mental effort, so if you're a customer service or human service worker, you have a special job. But dealing with difficult tones, frustration, and customers or clients feeling states like hesitation, urgency, anger, and even rage can create "empathy overload." If you've experienced empathy overload, don't confuse it with burnout, but be aware that it is still an energy-depletion state. Although temporary, typical symptoms of empathy overload include lingering fatigue, a short fuse with co-workers, or dreading the phone ringing. Quick and sure rejuvenation tips: Don't wait for symptoms to appear. Plan brief recovery breaks with supervisor approval—even a couple of minutes will build resilience. Try meditation, staying hydrated, and a quick walk after tough calls to reset your focus. When things get tough, don't forget your EAP coordinator.



The Power of "Exercise Snacks"

If you have only a few minutes to spare at different times during the day, capture the moments to improve well-being with "exercise snacks." Exercise snacks are brief bursts of physical activity that lasts only a few minutes. They boost energy, support cardiovascular health, and counter the effects of prolonged sitting. You may not be able to exercise as regularly as you should, but you can sneak in short, practical movements at opportune moments during the day to deliver meaningful health benefits. There are dozens of one- to five-minute exercise snacks. Get a list by googling: "Exercise Snacks Poster" and find workplace appropriate exercises. Print and post near your work location.



Congratulations, You're Retiring, But...

Retirement feels like the dream: total freedom, no deadlines, and enough financial security to do whatever you want each day. But heads up—for many people, that freedom eventually brings a surprising kind of dread. The human brain loves structure, purpose, and identity. Your job likely provided these things, but the need won't vanish. If you ignore this reality, you may discover that day's blur together and you lose direction. The excitement of "doing anything" is replaced by subtle restlessness. Boredom may follow. Some may feel guilty for not feeling happier. Prevent this drift by building a new structure with goals, creative projects, volunteering, or learning. Take advantage of employer resources like the pre-retirement planning webinars: <https://oer.ny.gov/register-pre-retirement-webinar>



Don't Suffer from Inadequate Sleep Syndrome

Finishing work assignments into the wee hours, socializing, or enjoying bedtime procrastination places you at risk for "Insufficient (or Inadequate) Sleep Syndrome." It's a condition caused by lifestyle choices that disrupt sleep, creating daytime sleepiness, fatigue, and poor concentration. During the week, you may get only five to six hours of sleep instead of seven to eight, then catch up on weekends, but that's the problem: Your body can adapt to this pattern in unhealthy ways and incur long-term health risks. Beyond lower productivity and accident risk at work, serious conditions like dementia become more likely. If you're over 40, especially, form brain-protective habits. One is getting seven to nine hours of sleep consistently.



Learn more at: nih.gov [at search "sleep, dementia"]

Managing “Background Stress”



Feeling tense when nothing’s wrong? It might be “background stress.” Background stress is all the stuff that can wear you down but flies under the radar. You aren’t fully aware of it, but it’s taking a subtle toll on your mental health anyway. Common background stressors include noisy traffic outside, a dripping faucet, or a noisy washing machine, pollution, pings on digital communication devices that needle you for attention and forgetting sunglasses on a sunny drive to work. Background stress can wear away at your mental well-being as these grinding irritants make you more irritable, add to your sense of anxiety, and activate your stress response system. The result is feeling more tired, having less resilience, being less tolerant of co-workers, having sleep disturbances, and feeling a vague sense of unease that’s hard to shake off. To intervene, take a day to notice what background stressors you’ve “gotten used to.” With this awareness, choose interventions: Digitally declutter by turning off devices, tuning out noise with noise-cancelling headphones, learning how to interrupt the buildup of background stress, or better optimizing your environment to make it more calming and supportive.

Problem Gambling Awareness Month

Illogical Thinking and Unseen Symptoms



All addictions are destructive, but gambling has unique features that make it especially harmful. Gambling entraps the reward centers of the brain like alcohol/drug addiction, but it is accompanied by severe cognitive distortions, which are completely illogical ways of thinking—for example, “I’ve lost so much, a huge win must be coming soon.” This and many other cognitive distortions trap compulsive gamblers or gambling addicts in states of denial that last longer than most addictions. Shame, anxiety, panic, depression, and feelings of hopelessness also contribute to a far higher risk of suicide than the general population. Apps and online betting platforms allow individuals to gamble privately and secretly, making the behavior largely invisible and leaving few observable warning signs—unlike substance use. Compulsive gamblers have common experiences like failed promises and attempts at quitting, restlessness when trying to quit, constant gambling to cover losses, preoccupation with gambling and past wins, or planning the next bet. If any of these symptoms match your experience, contact your EAP coordinator today. They’ll assist you in finding your way to becoming a recovering compulsive gambler, and with a commitment to change, your probability of success will have excellent odds.

Family Goals: Making Good Stuff Happen

Helping to ensure plenty of happy, memorable moments with your family is something no one would consciously shy away from; however, most people do just that, by default. Busyness gets in the way. Time passes and it is finite, so don’t let happiness be something that happens only by accident. 1) Decide what you and your partner or spouse want to do for the family. Try making weekly, monthly, and yearly goals. 2) Get everyone involved in the discussions and decisions. 3) Conduct these discussions at regular intervals as part of a larger family meeting. 4) Get things scheduled. 5) Consider scrapbooking everything so memories stick around. For more ideas, search Family-goals online.



Stress Tips from the Field: Spot Your Growing Burnout

Ignoring job stress

because you feel in control of your workload is a decision you should make with awareness.

The path to burnout is a slow boil. It often builds quietly. Manageable at first, physical fatigue, emotional detachment, or reduced effectiveness soon appear, making it clear that the warning signs were easy to overlook. If you are under especially difficult job stress, it doesn’t mean you are going to burn out, but it does mean your stress deserves attention before it compounds. Burnout is not a buzzword. It’s a recognized occupational phenomenon. Your EAP coordinator can offer support, guidance, or practical tools to help you manage stress early. It’ll help you maintain balance and prevent small pressures from escalating into sustained stress, which increases the risk of burnout.

