



rEAP the Benefits

State Employee Assistance Program 1-800-308-4934

Drunk and drugged driving prevention month

It's 3-D Prevention Month. Help ensure a safe holiday season out on the roads. Plan a safe ride home before attending events where alcohol is served; eat before attending parties; slow your alcoholic intake by alternating between alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks; and bring extra cash in case you need to call a cab. If you're hosting an event, provide a place for overzealous revelers to sleep it off. Collect car keys at the door so that all drivers have to check in with you before leaving.

Freebies for frozen budgets

Looking to trim your budget? Here are six great online services with little or no cost:

- Save money and maintain a clean environment by trading your old books with other readers at paperbackswap.com. You only pay shipping.
- Toss that video recorder and instead log on to hulu.com, where you can watch current and classic television shows. There's also a good movie section.
- If music's more your thing, try slacker.com for access to dozens of free internet radio stations. You can even customize playlists based on your preferences.
- Ugh. Sloppy joes again? Check out allrecipes.com and add a new dish to your rotation.
- Better yet, find a restaurant where your kids can eat free by using kidsmealdeals.com.
- No internet connection? No problem. Wififreespot.com will show you where to find all the local free wireless hotspots.

Shared space squabble busters

Working harmoniously in close quarters requires self-awareness and sensitivity toward others because shared space environments naturally magnify minor irritants and disagreements. Getting along with coworkers is a lot like dealing with family, so take the occasional squabble in stride. Squabble busters: Keep a neat work space and wipe down surfaces once per day to prevent spreading germs. Pitch in on maintaining community areas — those microwave splatters won't disappear by themselves. Dispose of your lunch remains in an outside garbage can rather than towering the trash in a tiny wastebasket and fouling the air. Keep noise levels to a minimum and take personal calls someplace private. Tune in to the mood and stress levels of those around you. A slack period for you may be crunch time for others.

Teaching kids saving skills

If you're determined to teach your child to save money, start early. Consider the following approach if it fits your parenting style: Start with a short-term, easily achieved goal like saving for a special toy. Establish the relationship between work and money by tying an allowance to small household chores. During each payment, separate spending money and savings in front of your child, and place the savings into a clear container. Seeing the coins pile up will provide visual affirmation of progress. Once a savings goal is reached, make a big event of the purchase. Be sure to let your child carry the money and hand it over to the cashier. As your child grows older, you can create longer target dates for purchases and encourage greater responsibility by replacing mandatory savings requirements with matching funds for each saved dollar.

Don't "write off" this skill

If your workplace correspondence generates more head scratching than head nodding, your writing probably needs some improvement. This is no small problem. Business leaders cite poor writing skills as one of their top complaints about employees. Poorly crafted correspondence creates confusion, dilutes your message, and harms your professional image. Managers report that they're more likely to hire and promote those who write competently. Here's how to polish your writing. First, get right to the point. Clarity is more important than style. Do a first draft, and then go back and simplify. Ditch multiple-word phrases like "at this moment in time" in favor of shorter ones like "now." Use positive language like "We're making conservation a company goal" rather than "We need to stop being so wasteful." Use active voice when possible. Active voice means the subject is the doer—"I'm implementing a new policy" rather than "A new policy has been implemented." If you're fumbling for the right words, imagine yourself speaking instead of writing, and then put it to paper. To catch more grammatical mistakes, let correspondence sit awhile, and then do your final proofread. This includes emails. Here's a secret: Read your work out loud away from distractions to catch the smallest errors. A coworker's ear can help ensure that you're using the right tone and that everything makes sense. Remember, mistakes will sneak through, which is why writing is art, not science.

Holiday stress tip: Let go and get going

It's not the chores, shopping, and Uncle Fred's visit that's stressing you out — it's your anticipation of them! The solution? Get moving! Act now by creating a to-do list. Organizing, planning, and prioritizing tasks will help you to thwart your trajectory of negativity. Stress is a mental state, so tackle the stuff you dread first. If your plans seem doomed to failure, review your expectations to make sure that they are realistic. Forget about possible outcomes that are outside of your control. When lapsing into catastrophic thinking, ask yourself, "So what?" Is serving a dry turkey the end of the world? Probably not.

Every life counts, elder suicide

Elder suicide is a very serious problem. Although the elderly (age 65 and older) comprise about 13% of the population they account for over 18% of all suicides. The most common cause for elder suicide, (and suicide in general) is untreated depression. About one-third of those older than 65 experience depressions yet 75% of these are not being treated. Some people erroneously believe that depression is a normal part of getting older, but this is completely untrue. Depression is typically the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain which has nothing to do with age. However, some physical conditions and some medications may cause symptoms of depression.

Many elderly people will hide their depression because they do not want to be seen as weak, crazy, or suffering from dementia. Specific warning signs in the elderly include:

- Cutting back on social interaction, losing interest in things once enjoyed
- Breaking medical regimes (stopping diets or prescriptions)
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Putting affairs in order, giving away things
- Stock-piling medication

Although older adults attempt suicide less often than other ages, they have a higher completion rate. They are less likely to seek mental health help though 75% had seen their doctor within a week before their death by suicide.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) connects both suicidal persons and their loved ones to trained counselors who can offer emotional support and other help. For more information on Elder Suicide in Tennessee go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network web site www.tspn.org.