



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

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Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



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Addressing Grief in the Workplace

Acknowledge the loss. It's important to personally acknowledge the death has occurred. This can be a simple "I'm sorry," or ask "How are you today?" rather than "How are you?" because it allows the person to answer honestly beyond just responding, "I'm fine". It shows you care about your colleague as a person. If available, organize company support or other appropriate acknowledgment from the office as a whole such as a handwritten note or signed card. These gestures are never forgotten.

Understand grief. Managers tend to impose unspoken deadlines for healing, but it's important to understand that grief is rarely neat and tidy. Be patient, and give your colleague the time needed to get better. Understanding that a colleague will experience stages of grief—denial, anger, depression, bargaining and acceptance—will help in finding ways to be supportive.

Remember that returning to work doesn't mean the grieving process is over. Everyone grieves in their own way, in their own time. Grief over the loss of a loved one can hit with such staggering force that the ability to work is altered for months or years. In some cases, a grieving

worker may find solace in returning to work and appear almost normal for a while, only to fall deeper into grief months later.

Be flexible. Communicate with team members about what has happened and figure out ways to share the load until the grieving person returns to full strength. One suggestion is to get the team together and explain the need to compensate for a member who's grieving, to be sensitive about work demands and to understand it will take time for the person to get back to full productivity.

Denying an employee compassion and adequate time to grieve may complicate and slow his or her healing process. This can be a prescription for rendering an effective worker incapable, in addition to risking the loss of a productive and loyal employee.

If you are concerned about your mental wellbeing, don't hesitate to seek advice. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.



Autism and the Workplace

As an increasing number of organizations commit themselves to workforce diversity and inclusion initiatives, growing attention has been given to supporting individuals on the autism spectrum.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a broad range of neurological developmental disabilities that can negatively impact communication skills, social behaviors and sensory sensitivities. Autism is understood as a “spectrum” disorder because the symptoms and abilities of individuals with autism vary widely from person to person, ranging from mild to severe and debilitating.

While every individual’s experience with autism is different, challenges most often identified with ASD include varying degrees of:

- Sensitivity to sounds, textures and pain
- Intense interest in a narrow range of topics
- Rigid attachment to routines, pattern or behaviors
- Difficulty communicating and interacting with others

As ASD is becoming better understood, many are recognizing that the neurological differences associated with ASD can also translate into valuable workplace skills. For example, a strong awareness of patterns means that many individuals on the spectrum excel in math, sequencing, coding and other data-driven processes. In fact, 16 percent of students with autism who pursue postsecondary education choose computer science fields.

Even though an estimated 60 percent of individuals with autism have an average or above-average intelligence, the unemployment rate for people on the spectrum is high, even for those who graduated from college. It is thought that traditional methods of recruitment and hiring, including the emphasis on social engagement, put individuals with ASD at a disadvantage.

In recent years, several major corporations, including Microsoft, SAP, and JP Chase Morgan, have developed neurodiversity inclusion programs to recruit and support employees who are on the autism spectrum. For these organization’s, the investment has aligned with their organization’s culture and social responsibility efforts and met their talent needs.

Organizational leaders say that individuals on the spectrum are not only helping address talent shortages in areas that are typically difficult to fill, but they are also providing a more diverse workplace experience for all employees. There are unexpected benefits as well. Once organizations created more inclusive environments, they found that existing employees began to self-disclose their own autism diagnoses, which they had previously kept hidden. Communication across the organizations improved as well, and managers involved in the program became better leaders overall.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers a robust network of providers tailored to your specific needs and preferences. Call Behavioral Health Systems available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-245-1150.



3 Simple Strategies to Help You Focus and De-Stress

Does it seem like you can't complete even the simplest task without being distracted? If you're looking to figure out how to handle distractions and improve your ability to focus, take comfort in the fact that research has shown a way forward by practicing mindfulness.

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-to-moment awareness of where you are and what you're doing. At work, for instance, it means you're focused on the project in front of you. While walking with a friend, it gives you the ability to really focus on your surroundings and your conversation. Scientists have shown that you can actually train your brain to become more mindful.

Ready to get started? These three practices have all proven useful in building mindfulness.

1. **Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)** MBSR training has become a recognized way to help people learn to avoid distractions and increase their attention on the task in front of them. It can also help improve memory, motivation and autonomy—all things likely to make you (and your boss) happier. MBSR programs typically include breathing, stretching and awareness exercises.

2. **Meditation** Meditation aims to increase your awareness of the present moment and help you develop a gentle, accepting attitude toward yourself. Regular meditation practice has been shown to actually alter the brain—in a good way. One study showed that the area of the brain dedicated to regulating your emotions was significantly larger in meditators. In other words, in a world determined to trip you up with distractions and unpleasant surprises, meditation can help you stay more positive and more focused.

3. **Mindful movement** The hallmarks of mindful movement, or yoga—structure breathing, controlled movement, mental focus—make it sound like the perfect antidote to stress and distracted thinking, but does science back that up? Yes, over and over again. In fact, yoga's been found to be even more beneficial to people who're highly stressed.

In today's so-called attention economy, the world is actually being designed to distract you. Everybody wants your attention, and they want it right now. But you can take back control of your focus, shed that stress, and wake up happier to meet your day.

Ready to commit to becoming more mindful? Great, go for it!

EASY RECIPE: Classic Creamed Corn

2 tbsp butter; 2 tbsp flour; 1 tsp salt; 1 cup half and half; 1 tbsp white sugar; 1 package 16oz frozen corn

1. In a sauce pan, add butter and melt over low heat.
2. Stir in flour, salt and half and half.
3. Heat over medium heat, whisking constantly until mixture begins to thicken and bubble.
4. Stir in corn and sugar and continue to heat over medium low, stirring frequently until corn is no longer frozen and mixture is hot. *Source: <https://bubbapie.com/classic-creamed-corn-recipe/>*

