Laughter: A Way to Brighten Your Day

The winter months can bring some extra challenges for many of us, so laughter may be just the thing to help brighten the day. Additionally, laughter has been linked to disease prevention, pain relief, and stress relief.

Think about the things that make you laugh. Try to include them into your schedule even if it is only for five minutes a day. Then try to build that up to fifteen minutes a day. You may want to write a couple of jokes or funny stories in a journal and have them available when you need a little break. Find a few great websites that tickle your funny bone. Yes, some of those online cat videos do the trick for many! Make time to watch your favorite sitcom that always cracks you up. Keep some fun props around like goofy stress balls or funny glasses. Moments of levity can help to raise your mood and the mood of those around you.

The Employee Assistance Program Office has some great wellness brochures. One such brochure is titled “Laugh Long, Live Longer.” It outlines the “7 Ways to Shape Up Your Sense of Humor.” Try shaping up with these ideas!

1. Find humor in the silly and absurd goings-on in daily life.
2. Look at the world through the eyes of children. The simplest things make them laugh.
3. Flip through your high school yearbook and think of how far you have come.
4. Enjoy the comedies...joke books, sitcoms, funny movies or cartoons.
5. Surround yourself with cheerful and funny people who like to laugh and who make you laugh. Laughter can be contagious.
6. Play simple board games with friends. Forget competition; relax and be silly together.
7. Remind yourself that having fun is a healthy activity that everyone deserves. Get reacquainted with the child in you.

For some additional ideas and the benefits of laughter, check out these links.
http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/give-your-body-boost-with-laughter
http://www.helpguide.org/articles/emotional-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm

Article submitted by Linda Gallagher, EAP Committee Co-Chair, UUP Representative

Disclaimer: Material presented in this newsletter is intended for educational or informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your qualified health professional.
Managing Your Brand

You surely know that Nike’s motto is, “Just Do It,” and “McDonald’s motto is, “You Deserve a Break Today.” You, too, have a brand motto. That’s right - your reputation. What do you think it might be right now? Think about this: You either control this message, or you let it emerge by default. A blind survey might tell you what it is right now, but you can decide what you want it to be. Your tools are your words and the actions you demonstrate as you interact with others on the job. Everything you do, say, and produce is an unwitting pitch of your personal and professional brand. Gain control over this message. What must you do to communicate your brand accurately to others?

Plan Your Time Off

Here’s a switch: Make a goal this year to commit to planning your time off more effectively and start checking off some items from your “bucket list” or “life list.” Avoid the consequences of not thinking through your time off. Often it gets nibbled away only to have Monday morning sneak up on you. You plan your work day, so why not plan your leisure time? If your answer is, “no way, that’s the one part of my life I don’t want planned,” think again. Memorable leisure activities become the anchors you rely on to feel balance in your life. We know recreation is beneficial for both your physical and psychological well-being, and this makes you more productive at work. Start planning more exhilarating weekends and maximize your time off, so it will carry over to make your Monday mornings more cheerful.

Boosting Self-Confidence to Achieve Goals

No matter what your goals are in 2015, getting pumped and staying energized usually begins with an inspiring moment, but action steps maintain the momentum. Remember this: “Success is attracted to action.” To boost self-confidence, take action steps by steps, so you don’t feel overwhelmed. Anticipate the inevitable lulls in motivation, and you will persevere through them instead of giving up. Hang out with like-minded persons who are pursuing goals like yours. Celebrate each milestone and give yourself the earned rewards.

Resource for Articles: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.
Have you noticed that it is staying lighter longer?

The winter season—a time known for hibernation—has many of us tuned into how dark it is. But...have you begun to notice that it is staying lighter later now? Remember, since the winter solstice in December, we started to gain more minutes of daylight!

Noticing little changes in our environment like increased daylight at the end of the day can help us shift our perspective and provide us with hope and a moment of joy. Slowing down a bit, paying attention, and being mindful of these little reminders that nature brings us about the rhythm of life are important ways to support our health and well-being. Spring will come! It always does!

Turn Negativity Around

Are you aware that the “lens” through which we view the events of our lives impacts the way we think and feel? And the way we think and interpret things affects our emotional well-being. Want to gain a more positive perspective and adjust the lens from which you view life? There ARE steps you can take to shift away from a more negative view to a more positive one. Contact the EAP Office at 442-5483 or email bseckerson@albany.edu to request a copy of the “Turn Negativity Around” brochure. Or, make an appointment for a confidential conversation for additional resources that EAP can provide. Benefits to turning negativity around and practicing this new mindset include enhancing your health and well-being, bringing you more moments of joy and gratitude, and building your sense of resiliency when dealing with the challenges that life can bring. All positive outcomes! Change your perspective to change your life.

Be sure to check out the EAP Lending Library book list to discover what materials are available that can support your efforts to keep learning and growing. Make arrangements to stop by the EAP Office to browse, or you may request materials be sent to you via campus mail.

Every day is a second chance.
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sometimes an issue at home or work can have an effect on your ability to be as productive as you need to be. You don’t have to deal with it alone. Support is available through UAlbany’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The mission of UAlbany EAP is to provide services to support a healthy, productive workforce. Available to all employees is the voluntary, confidential Information, Assessment, and Referral Service provided by UAlbany EAP Coordinator, Brenda Seckerson. Take advantage of this confidential assistance available as an employee benefit.

Here are just a few of the concerns or stressors that might prompt an employee to reach out to EAP for information and support:

- Family, parenting, and relationship issues
- Work stress and conflict
- Substance abuse or dependency
- Elder Care
- Psychological Concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Legal and/or financial concerns
- Grief and loss
- Therapist referrals

Early intervention is the key! Contact EAP.

To schedule an appointment for confidential Information, Assessment & Referral session, contact:

Brenda Seckerson
EAP Coordinator
442-5483
bseckerson@albany.edu

EAP Website:
http://www.albany.edu/eap

Employee Assistance Program-sponsored events and services are open to UAlbany and Research Foundation faculty, staff, family members, UAS employees, GSEU members, and retirees.

“Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end.”

~Seneca
Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, & dramatist (4 BC—AD 65)
Coping With Loss in Divorce

If you are facing divorce, you'll experience a variety of emotions and stresses, but one of the most underestimated feelings is loss. Even amicable divorces can be affected by loss—loss of a shared vision of the future, financial security, experiences and routines, and possessions. Time with children and identity as a couple are also subject to loss. Loss is not just giving up something tangible like a house; it also encompasses things that are part of you and your daily experience. You may not give much attention to things like a routine, an expectation, or a pleasant view out a window, but all are at risk of loss. During a divorce, a lot of losses can hit you at once, but with awareness, you can master challenges in your life. Remember that big changes often require investing time and attention to recovery, and divorce is one of these changes. Get support or see a loss counselor, especially if you experience anger, anxiety, and fear as a result of these losses. Contact the EAP Office if you would like referrals and resources that offer support.

bseckerson@albany.edu  442-5483

Reducing the Risk for Dementia

Research continues to increase our understanding of Alzheimer’s. The strongest risk factors are age and family history. No cure exists, but research suggests that onset may be prevented or delayed by keeping your mind active by:

1) engaging in stimulating activities such as puzzles and word games;
2) staying physically and socially active;
3) quitting smoking;
4) lowering your blood pressure, since high blood pressure may lead to damaging effects on the brain that increase risk;
5) pursuing education - there is some evidence that a lower rate of dementia exists among persons who have more education;
6) maintaining a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids, commonly found in fish and other foods; and
7) getting plenty of quality restorative (deep) sleep.

Source: Lack of Sleep During Critical Period of Night Linked to Dementia Risk
Source: bit.ly/1AbDs1J

For additional information on Alzheimer’s and dementia, explore the Alzheimer’s Association Website.
The Greater Capital Region Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope (CASH) program provides FREE tax preparation services from IRS-certified VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)/AARP volunteers. All you need to qualify for free tax preparation is an annual household income below $53,000. That’s it!

- To find a VITA location, go to: http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/

- Or, for FREE tax preparation sites in Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Schoharie, and Saratoga counties, call (518) 694-8900. If you would like further information dial 2-1-1, the United Way Helpline, for all of the details. Or, check out the United Way website: http://www.cashgreatercapitalregion.org/

Additional Tax Preparation Resources:

- Visit www.myfreetaxes.com/NYCapRegion for FREE do-it-yourself state and federal income tax filing. People and families with an annual income under $60,000 are eligible to use www.MyFreeTaxes.com

- Or, go to the NYS Tax & Finance website to see if you qualify for a FREE tax return this year: http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/efile/freefile_eligibility1.htm.


- Questions about preparing your taxes? Connect with the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service at www.irs.gov/advocate.

Have you checked your credit reports?

The Fair Credit Reporting Act guarantees you access to your credit report free of charge from each of the three nationwide credit reporting companies (Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion) every 12 months. AnnualCreditReport.com is the ONLY authorized source for the free annual credit report that you are entitled to by law. A common practice is to check one company every four months to make sure your credit is in order. Take advantage of this opportunity to gain access to your report and look for mistakes or irregular listings. For more information, click on Federal Trade Commission.
Steps to Securing Your Privacy and Data

Part I: Email

The wonderful thing about the Internet is that it makes so many global resources available in an instant with a few strokes on a keyboard. Unfortunately, the reverse is also true. Criminals worldwide that you would never expect to encounter over several lifetimes can now come into contact with you. All it takes is a few strokes of a keyboard.

In fact, an Internet connection makes it many times more likely that you will be threatened by a cyber criminal. They will present themselves in three ways:

1. Via email
2. Via your web browser
3. By telephone in a blended attack

These threats will consist of social engineering and technical components. The social engineering component is designed to get you to launch the technical element, i.e., install malicious software on your computer. Let’s look at these three threat models and talk about how you can defend against them. In this issue, we'll focus on email.

It's probably no exaggeration to say that everyone reading this article has been subject to spam. Most of it is annoying, but some is considerably more dangerous. However, if you keep in mind the two phases of an attack (social engineering leading to technical execution) you will become better at recognizing the threat and not succumbing to the social engineering component.

Cyber criminals will go to great lengths to craft email messages designed to convince you to click on either a link embedded in the message or an attachment. They will incorporate convincing graphics, make the subject relevant to you, make it look like it was sent by a friend, colleague, or superior, try to convince you that inaction on your part will result in financial loss or some other harm. All of these elements are working together to persuade you to click.

**If they are successful—if you click—game over (i.e., you lose).**

So how do you protect yourself? Keep in mind that this is a social engineering attack, so relying on technical protection is a mistake. Antivirus will more than likely fail to prevent the malware from installing on your computer. You have to assume that.

When you encounter a message that is trying to convince you to click on something, get up and walk away from the computer. Ask yourself if you were expecting this message. Do you recognize the sender? Does it feel a bit strange? Is there a way for you to independently verify the validity of the message?

Remember, first and foremost, this is a social engineering attack. Someone is trying to convince you to do something that will harm you. Your best defense is to step out of the context the message is trying to create, and ask some straightforward, critical questions about the credibility of the email.

**If you don't fall victim to the social engineering phase of the attack, game over—and you win!**

There are technical tricks you can employ to test the validity of an email, but these are best demonstrated in a class. For a list of scheduled security classes open to UAlbany faculty, students, and staff, please see: [https://wiki.albany.edu/display/askit/Information+Security+Class+Schedule](https://wiki.albany.edu/display/askit/Information+Security+Class+Schedule).

Part II of this three-part series will be in the March edition of the EAP ENews.
Your Resource for Safety

The University Police Department is committed to providing important safety information to the University community. Police officers often conduct safety presentations, drug and alcohol education classes, and other informational sessions at various locations both on and off campus. In an effort to expand these vital education initiatives, safety-related material may also be found:

On the UPD website: www.police.albany.edu

Twitter Feed: @UAlbanyUPD

UPD Facebook and YouTube pages

Check out these locations for videos on the dangers of heroin and opioid drugs, support information for sexual assault victims, response to an active shooter incident, and knowing your rights, to name a few.

**Sites are updated regularly with emergency and safety-related information.**

So Stay Informed!

The University at Albany Police Department is staffed 24/7, 365 days a year. Please make sure you note our emergency numbers and store them in your phone. 518-442-3131 or 911 from any campus telephone

Five Pathways for Managing Stress

Consider five intervention channels for managing stress: Focus, Interpret, Prepare, Process, and Distract.

⇒ **Focus** means giving attention to what you can control (e.g., finding ways to make dollars stretch further so you worry less about bills).

⇒ **Interpret** means redefining stress (e.g., looking on the bright side of a problem).

⇒ **Prepare** means taking action to ward off stress in the future (e.g., doing holiday shopping early).

⇒ **Process** means communication (e.g., discussing stress and solutions with others).

⇒ **Distract** means diverting attention from the stress (e.g., listening to pleasant music, taking a walk, etc.).

When under stress, consider these pathways of intervention and you are more likely to find the one that works best for you.

Resource: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.
With Valentine’s Day being celebrated this month one can hardly think about this particular holiday without contemplating all things sweet. When I refer to sweet, I mean to imply those sugary edible delights. You know, those heart-shaped cookies and candies that seem to be everywhere this time of year. With added temptation around us this month, I’m thinking it may be helpful to arm you with some knowledge regarding the basics of sugar and sugar substitutes found in food.

Let’s start by bringing your awareness to what the daily recommendations for sugar intake are: for men the daily recommendation is no more than 9 teaspoons of added sugar a day and for women it’s no more than 6 teaspoons added sugar daily. Most will agree that too much of anything is never a good thing, and the same holds true for sugar consumption. Tracking your sugar consumption by keeping a food log or by using an online app such as MyFitnessPal can be a helpful tool for bringing awareness of your personal daily intake.

There are two types of sugars you find in your diet. These are either naturally occurring sugars, or they are added sugars. The key word to focus on is added. Naturally occurring sugars come from foods such as fruit (fructose) and milk (lactose). Added sugars are sugars or caloric sweeteners found in foods and beverages that are added during processing or preparation. This means adding sugars sweeteners to your coffee or to a bowl of cereal in the form of natural sugars such as white sugar, brown sugar, or honey as well as chemically manufactured like high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) that may be found in the cereal. Understand that there is no significant difference between sugar and HFCS. Neither contains vitamins or minerals, and both are made up of approximately half fructose and half glucose. Sugar can show up on a food label in many forms. Some examples are HFCS, agave, raw sugar, cane sugar, date sugar, fruit juice concentrate, and ingredients that end in “ose,” such as dextrose, isomaltulose, high-maltose corn syrup, and trehalose.

According to the American Heart Association major sources of added sugars in the American diet include regular soft drinks, sugars, cakes, cookies, pies, candy, and fruit drinks as well as dairy desserts such as ice cream, sweetened yogurt, and sweetened milk. Most of our artificial sweeteners are found in products like diet soft drinks, but sugar substitutes can be found in a growing number of foods today - so check your ingredient lists carefully! Also be aware that sugar substitutes can be found in toothpaste, mouthwash, and many chewable vitamins.

Did you know that many healthy food options are available right here on campus in any of our quad dining rooms or campus center venues? Don’t have a meal plan? Contact the SUNYCard office today for information on how you can get one. http://www.albany.edu/uas/sunycard_services.php

Your Voice Matters! We want to hear from you. Please contact us with your questions and/or suggestions on how we can improve our dining offerings. https://ualbanydining.com/people/feedback.html
February is American Heart Month, conjuring up different thoughts for different people. You may think of the more physical aspects of the heart, such as preventing heart disease. Or you may think about the heart in a more emotional context, such as experiencing a warm feeling or perhaps a sad feeling when something or someone symbolically touches your heart. Both are important elements of desirable heart health, and we should keep both aspects in the forefront of our minds as we work to maintain a healthy heart.

We are all familiar with information that encourages pro-active behavior to reduce physical risk factors to the heart such as diet and exercise, avoiding smoking, maintaining healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels, etc. These are pretty straightforward recommendations, ideally followed under a doctor’s supervision. However, when it comes to the emotional aspects of a healthy heart, it can be challenging to control our responses to difficult life events. For instance, experiencing any type of loss (e.g., a loved one, a job, a relationship, or a beloved pet) may continue to weigh on our hearts and minds and feel seemingly outside of our control. This can begin to take a toll on our health and well-being. How can we take care of our heart when we are feeling distressed by the circumstances of our lives? Some basic and simple ways to address these underlying feelings include being optimistic, having hope, staying connected, expressing gratitude, finding purpose and meaning, exercising regularly, and practicing mindfulness. Sometimes reaching out for professional help like seeking counseling, attending a support group, or contacting UAlbany’s EAP Office can assist us in taking those important steps to address what is on our hearts and minds.

Another helpful way of coping with emotional issues might be as simple as reading thoughtful “words of wisdom” expressed by others. Below are a few examples you may find worth pondering that may touch your heart in some way. Be good to your heart, and it will be good to you!

“We cannot tell what may happen to us in the strange medley of life. But we can decide what happens in us —how we can take it, what we do with it —and that is what really counts in the end.” —Joseph Fort Newton

“Instead of resisting any emotion, the best way to dispel it is to enter it fully, embrace it and see through your resistance.” —Deepak Chopra

“Experience is not what happens to you - it’s how you interpret what happens to you.” —Aldous Huxley

For additional information on taking care of your emotional well-being, go to:

The University at Albany EAP Committee Needs You!

Please join us for our 1st Community Service Project

UABy’s DawnMarie Helin has graciously volunteered to teach Beginners’ Crochet to the EAP Committee and the UABy community. Friends and family members are encouraged to participate. We also invite any and all experienced crocheters and knitters to join us in helping us to reach our goal of creating

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handmade potholders/trivets to be donated to the Albany non-profit Grassroot Givers for their family boxes. If you prefer, in lieu of attending, you may donate yarn for this event. Unused yarn will be donated to the Albany County Nursing Home.

Supplies to bring:

- One skein of cotton yarn
- One crochet hook in the size indicated on yarn band (H or J).

TIP: Check your newspaper for local craft store coupons for discount savings.

For questions about supplies and the project, contact Pamela Moniz, EAP Committee Member, M/C Representative. pmoniz@albany.edu

Project Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 15</td>
<td>UAB &amp; MSC/ University Administration Building (UAB) Room 433</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
<td>A great turn out! Fun had by all!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, February 13</td>
<td>Downtown Campus/Draper 115</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, February 23</td>
<td>Uptown Campus/Campus Center Assembly Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 6</td>
<td>Uptown Campus/Campus Center Assembly Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, March 11</td>
<td>East Campus/School of Public Health Room 110A</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 27</td>
<td>22 Corporate Woods/Training Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 23</td>
<td>Uptown Campus/Earth &amp; Wellness Day/Lecture Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 noon to 1 pm</td>
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To register for any or all of the sessions, go to EAP Event Sign Up. Register early to reserve your seat! Additional project information can be found on the EAP website at: http://www.albany.edu/eap/lunchtime_programs.htm
Sleep 101

Research indicates to us how important sleep is to our overall well-being. But are you really taking the need for sleep as seriously as you should? Do you feel sleepy, fatigued or have difficulty concentrating during the daytime? Do you have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or wake earlier than desired? Do you snore, or have you been told you gasp, snort, or stop breathing at night? These and other questions can help you determine if you have a sleep disorder or if you need to address some basic sleep hygiene techniques to enhance your ability to get quality sleep. Join us for this “Sleep 101” presentation by St. Peter’s Sleep Center to learn more about sleep disorders, insomnia, sleep apnea, and sleep hygiene. Bring your questions!

Presenters: Jean Porter ANP-BC, RN, MS and Jill Sullivan ANP-BC, RN, MS from St. Peter’s Sleep Center.

To Register Contact:
Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
bseckerson@albany.edu
call 442-5483 or register online

http://www.albany.edu/eap/event_sign-up.htm

Wednesday, February 4
12:00 - 1:00 pm
Room 375 Campus Center
Registration Deadline:
Tuesday, February 3

THE WORLD WITHIN REACH
As SUNY and New York State employees, the New York State Deferred Compensation Plan is available to us as a way to save for our retirement years. Not sure what the Deferred Comp Plan is all about? Join us for this informative session which will cover the following:

- The advantages of pre-tax and after-tax investing for retirement
- Education on paycheck impact
- How to identify retirement income needs and prepare an action plan
- The differences of the NYS Deferred Comp Plan and your other retirement plan options

NOTE: If you think you might want to enroll, bring your last pay stub. If you are currently enrolled and have questions, bring your last statement.

Presenter: Gene Nescot, CRC, Senior Account Executive for the NYS Deferred Compensation Plan

To Register Contact:
Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
bseckerson@albany.edu
call 442-5483 or register online
http://www.albany.edu/eap/event_sign-up.htm

12:00 - 1:00 pm

**East Campus** - February 9
SPH Conference Room 110A

**Uptown Campus** - February 18
Campus Center Assembly Hall
Save the Date:

EAP’s next lunchtime Art Break
at the University Art Museum

The Ties That Bind: Artists and Archives

Showcasing seven artists who use the archive in its myriad forms to explore our collective histories and shared humanity.

For information about the exhibit, go to:
http://www.albany.edu/museum/exhibitions/20150204_ua.shtml
With the beginning of the new year, the EAP Office is updating its email list. Three to four times during the month - between the deliveries of the monthly EAP ENews to your inbox - EAP sends out announcements that contain such things as wellness tips, community resources, EAP program registration information, and inspirational quotes. If you do NOT receive these emails and would like to, please register to have your name added to the EAP distribution list by clicking here.

Or, go to the EAP Website and click on the Special Promotions icon. http://www.albany.edu/eap/

Take advantage of your EAP benefit and keep informed about ways to be healthy and productive!

Make a Great Plate...Dip carrots, celery, or apple slices in a healthful dip snack!

For recipe, go to: http://www.personalbest.com/extras/BUDWC/Images/CC4February15h.jpg

EAP-sponsored events and services are open to UAlbany & Research Foundation faculty, staff, family members, UAS employees, retirees, and GSEU members.

EAP is a joint labor/management program and is part of the NYS Employee Assistance Program - CSEA/C82/GSEU/MC/NYSOPBA/PEF/UUP. Contact Info: 1 Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235. 518.486.9769