Will You Be “Unplugging” While on Vacation?

Having our vacation dates circled on the calendar, or most likely, input into our Outlook calendar, always gives us something to look forward to. Ahhh...vacations! A time that offers us a chance to unwind, replenish, have fun, travel, connect with family and friends, and meet new people. Vacations are important to our health and well-being. Without an occasional break from our daily routines, burn-out can occur. But in today’s technologically-geared world, taking a break, i.e., “unplugging”, takes a concerted effort. If we don’t take steps to minimize the use of our gadgets while on vacation, we never do take “a break” from our work and routines.

How do we best do this without feeling like we are having withdrawal symptoms or letting down our boss or co-workers? Here are a few ideas to consider:

- **Plan ahead.** One reason you might feel insecure about going on vacation, thus feeling the need to stay in contact with the office, is that there are a number of tasks left undone. Try to catch up before leaving, or let others know your timeline for when projects will be finished before you head out.

- **Use the “out-of-office” email response and update your voice mail with information about when you will return and respond.** Be specific so those contacting you will be aware that you will not be checking your messages regularly; or, if you really need to, indicate the frequency by which you will do so.

- **Establish rules about when you can use your gadgets.** If you absolutely need to check your work email and/or voice mail, set a limit to once a day. If you create a rule ahead of time, you can also inform your supervisor and co-workers so they will know your accessibility. This frees you up.

- **Leave as many of your gadgets at home as possible.** The laptop is the biggest culprit when it comes to dragging you into the digital abyss! Not to mention, it’s a hassle to travel with and carry!

- **Ban gadgets during meal time.** Actually, this is a good rule of thumb even when NOT on vacation!

- **Get family and/or traveling companions to offer support and help each other to “tune out” technology and “tune in” to the vacation experience you’ve been looking forward to.**

So, this year, start the practice of having a “digital detox” during your vacation. Make the commitment to yourself that you will use your time off as just that—time off to replenish so you can return to work refreshed and ready to go!

Assertiveness Skills

What is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is the ability to state positively and constructively your rights or needs without violating the rights of others. When you use direct, open, and honest communication in relationships to meet your personal needs, you feel more confident, gain respect from others, and live a happier, fulfilled life.

Benefits of Assertiveness

Acting assertive helps maintain honesty in relationships, allows you to feel more in control of your world, and improves your ability to make decisions.

Roadblocks to Assertiveness

Fear that you will harm others, or that you will experience rejection and feel shame, may prevent you from acting assertive. This is based upon a belief that other people’s needs, opinions, and judgments are more important than your own. Believing assertiveness hurts another person can keep you from meeting your legitimate physical and emotional needs. As a result, you feel hurt, anxious, and angry about life.

Lessons learned from parents or caregivers contribute to your beliefs about the legitimacy of your personal rights. This can cause you to act passively to conform to these beliefs. A few examples include the right to decide how to lead your life, the right to pursue goals and dreams, the right to a valid opinion, the right to say how you want to be treated, the right to privacy, the right to ask for help, and many more. Acting to assert any of these rights leads many people to think they are acting selfish.

Is Assertiveness Selfish?

Selfish means being concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself. This is not assertiveness. Being assertive does not dismiss or ignore the needs of others. Assertiveness focuses on legitimate or important needs.

Is Assertiveness Aggressive?

Assertiveness is not aggression. Aggressive means that you express your rights at the expense of another or forcibly deny the rights of others. If you struggle with being assertive, you may have mislabeled assertive behavior by others as aggression. This may help you feel justified about not being assertive. However, believing assertiveness is aggressiveness can prevent you from taking steps to improve your assertiveness skills.

Practice Makes Better

Recognizing what causes your lack of assertiveness is helpful, but committing to change is more important. Practicing assertiveness skills helps you confront old ways of thinking, helps you become more naturally assertive, and is self-reinforcing. Keeping track of your progress is helpful. Be patient. In the beginning, you won’t be assertive at every opportunity. And you might be assertive in some situations where it isn’t necessary. It’s all part of the process of growing to be more assertive. Notice the general trend of your success, and give yourself a pat on the back!

Simple Assertiveness Formula

Each time an opportunity occurs to be assertive, make notes in a small notebook. Record: (1) the specific event that called for an assertiveness response; what personal right was involved (i.e., the right to say “no”); (3) how you responded; what you said. (4) what you did well in this situation; and, (5) reminders to yourself about what you will do the next time to be assertive if this situation is repeated.

A Few Assertiveness Tips

Assertiveness frequently means using “I statements” combined with a word that describes “what” you want. For example, “I want”, “I need”, “I would prefer”, “I do not like”, “I am upset about”, etc. Be careful not to minimize such statements by couching them with questions that subdivide your needs. Example: “I don’t want to go to the store with you — do you mind?” or “I’m tired, can you do the dishes tonight — is that okay with you?”

Article Resource: WorkExcel.com (formerly EAPltools.com)
For more information on assertiveness skills, contact UAlbany EAP. bseckerson@albany.edu
Top Travel Tips to Keep In Mind

*Keeping you safe while on vacation*

As many of us plan summer vacations, do yourself a favor and take a few minutes to review some travel tips provided by Mark Broadhead, *Lonely Planet* author, in his online article titled “Top Tips for Safe Travels.” In a sometimes humorous manner, Broadhead reminds us of some common sense practices to keep in mind while traveling. See how safe and savvy you are as a traveler, and check how many of these tips you already follow!

**Back (packer) glance.** Get in the habit of looking back when you get up to leave somewhere. Travel is very distracting. You’re probably carrying more stuff than when you’re at home, so you’re more likely to leave a jacket or journal at that Parisian cafe table where you were people watching.

**Separate your sources of money.** You know how you keep all your bank cards in your wallet/purse when you’re at home? Well, don’t do this while you’re travelling. Keep at least one in a different place, preferably not on your person. If you lose all your cards on the road, it is very difficult to get replacements. Being without money in Timbuktu can be kind of unfun.

**Don’t keep your wallet/purse in your jeans’ back pocket.** To avoid being pickpocketed, keep your wallet in your front pocket, especially a pocket that can be buttoned up. Best of all, use the inside pocket of your jacket. There are also a load of different ‘money belts’ that either hang inside your shirt or wrap around your waist (under your shirt), etc. Make sure it’s waterproof because travelling can often be sweaty/perspiring work. I’d advise against the bum bag/fanny pack varieties. There is no better way to advertise the fact that you have a load of valuables on you… and, of course, they were never ever cool.

**Scan all your major documents.** Scan your travel documents and email them to yourself. It was traditional to photocopy your passport and visas, travel insurance, etc., and keep them in a separate part of your luggage, but that’s old school. These days, digital is best — that way your documents won’t go missing even if your bags do.

**Don’t trust strangers who wear turtle neck/polo neck tops.** Only kidding about the turtle necks. It is hard to get to know the locals at a destination if you don’t trust them, but there are limits to how much you should trust them when it comes to your personal safety (going with them into a risky area of town), money, and consuming their food or drink (if they are not consuming it themselves).

**Avoid PDAs.** I mean Public Displays of Affluence (not affection). If you’re traveling abroad, then you’re more than likely to be richer than most of the locals. But advertising this fact by wearing gold jewelry or carrying an expensive camera around your neck is not advisable. It makes you a target for thieves. Leave your jewelry at home, and keep your camera in a bag when you’re not using it.

**Be wary of using your credit card at an internet café.** Computers at Internet cafés may have keylogger software or hardware that records your key strokes, so unscrupulous characters (not necessarily the owners of the café) can see the username and password to your online accounts (banking, email, etc.) or grab your credit card details. A good trick to make this more challenging for them is to open a couple of other browser windows (for the website you are using) and half way through entering your passwords or credit card information, type incorrect information into these windows.

**Happy trails and safe travels this vacation season from EAP!**

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 an Information, Assessment & Referral session, contact

Brenda Seckerson,
UAlbany EAP Coordinator
Call 442-5483
or email bseckerson@albany.edu

Confidential support, information, and referrals are available to assist you in finding a way to address your concerns.

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

When the world says, "Give up," Hope whispers, "Try it one more time."

~Author Unknown
Never been to the University Art Museum? Here’s your chance to check out this inspiring campus resource. Join us for our summer EAP Art Break. You’ll go back to work feeling more energized and having had the chance to connect with other UAlbany employees!

**Summertime Art Break**

Wednesday, July 24, 2013  
12:00 – 12:45  
University Art Museum

Please join Museum Director, Janet Riker, as she presents the new art exhibit featuring William Lamson and Michelle Segre.

This exhibition will include recent videos, photographs, and site-specific installations, idiosyncratic sculptures and drawings that continue to elude easy categorization.

Please Register by July 22, 2013

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
The EAP Lending Library covers a variety of topics. See if any of the titles below might be of interest to you this summer!

- The Art of Emotional Healing: Over 60 Exercises for Exploring Emotions Through Drawing, Painting, Dancing, Writing, Sculpting, and More
- The Autism Mom’s Survival Guide (for Dads, too!): Creating a Balanced and Happy Life While Raising a Child with Autism
- Circles of Care: How to Set Up Quality Care for Our Elders in the Comfort of Their Own Homes
- Creative Recovery: A Complete Addiction Treatment Program That Uses Your Natural Creativity
- The Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD: An 8-Step Program for Strengthening Attention, Managing Emotions, and Achieving Your Goals
- Quick Team-Building Activities for Busy Managers: 50 Exercises That Get Results in Just 15 Minutes
- The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships
- Screamfree Parenting: The Revolutionary Approach to Raising Your Kids by Keeping Your Cool

New CD’s:

- Authentic Happiness: Using the new Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment
- Men, Women, and Worthiness: The Experience of Shame and the Power of Being Enough
- The New Frugality: How to Consume Less, Save More, and Live Better

To discover what materials are available from the EAP Lending Library, go to the EAP website. Contact the EAP Office to make arrangements to stop by to browse. Or, you may request materials be sent to you via campus mail. bseckerson@albany.edu
Dealing with Summertime Pests

DIY Non-Toxic Ant Control Treatments

As summer weather lures many of us outside, this time of year is when ants are attracted inside of some of our homes. Did you know that there are many remedies for driving ants away? I’m not talking about those store-bought bait traps and other poisons that can be dangerous to our families and pets. There are green alternatives as well. You probably already have the ingredients in your kitchen cupboard. If you have an ant problem, give some of these ideas a try.

Place the following near entry points:

- Cucumber peels (Ants seem to detest these!)
- Fresh peppermint and spearmint
- Fresh basil
- Dried crushed bay leaves
- Cinnamon sticks
- Black pepper

One final idea is to make friends with the ants. If they aren’t causing any structural damage to your home, just make peace with them, and they will most likely evacuate your premises on their own come fall. After all, ants play an important role in our ecosystem by aerating the soil, recycling dead plants and animals, pollinating flowers, spreading seeds and being a food source for many animals.

Article Resources: http://www.edenpest.com/blog/post/5-diy-green-pest-control-remedies
http://smallnotebook.org/2010/04/21/5-simple-natural-ant-control-remedies/
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ant

Tick Patrol — People and Pets

Checking ourselves and our pets for ticks is serious business due to the prevalence of Lyme disease. According to the NYS Department of Health, “Lyme disease is a bacterial infection caused by the bite of an infected deer tick. Untreated, the disease can cause a number of health problems. Patients treated with antibiotics in the early stage of the infection usually recover rapidly and completely. Since Lyme disease first became reportable in 1986, over 95,000 cases have now been confirmed in New York State.”

To help you keep on top of tick removal, EAP has free tick removers available. If you did not have a chance to pick up one at the Earth and Wellness Day or at the Summer EAP Meet and Greet, contact the EAP Office to request one be sent to you via campus mail. Click on the Special Promotions link on the EAP website.

For more information on ticks and Lyme disease, go to: http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2813.pdf
Is it Time for a Monday Makeover?

Mondays are notorious for being disliked, but you can make them more tolerable or even favored as your most thrilling day. Spark this excitement by making Monday more fun. For example, consider accomplishing a new goal in five days, and then reward yourself for the effort at week’s end. This simple challenge can rally your motivation to complete a task or chore, start or finish a project, or enhance your life. Take a new side trip on the way home from work, visit friends to extend your weekend, get a haircut or manicure, or shop for something fun. The leverage lies in “enthusiastic anticipation.” This makeover technique for better Mondays can have you arriving at work in a more positive mood, give you a more optimistic glow, improve productivity, and, best of all, avoid the dread of getting out of bed.

Article Resource: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.

Friends of Recovery

Supporting a Vision of Recovery from Addiction for New Yorkers

Friends of Recovery - NY (FRNY) “is comprised of NYS residents who are in long-term recovery from addiction, their families, friends and allies. FRNY represents all sectors of the community, all regions of the state, and the numerous and diverse paths to recovery. Its mission is to demonstrate the power and proof of recovery from addictions and its value to individuals, families and communities throughout NYS and the nation.”

Friends of Recovery organizes community events throughout the year. It is currently calling for artwork for the 10th Annual New York State Recovery Fine Arts Festival. The festival highlights artistic expressions from those in recovery.

In addition to events, FRNY offers a Recovery Coach Academy. As explained on its website, “this training is for individuals who are involved in the recovery initiation of others and/or are in sustained recovery themselves and want to become a personal guide and mentor for people seeking or already in recovery.”

For additional information on addiction and recovery, contact UAlbany EAP.

"When everything seems like an uphill struggle, just think of the view from the top.” ~ Overcoming Addiction Quote by Unknown

The New York State Employee Assistance Program is a joint labor/management program and a negotiated benefit. EAP Coordinators are a confidential and neutral resource for employees. The use of EAP is on a voluntary basis.