Pointers for the Perfect Day Off

It’s finally here: Your day off. What are you going to do with this gift of time? If you’re not careful, it could disappear in a cloud of commitments and wasted hours. Use your free time to the fullest:

**Breathe fresh air.** Unless you work outdoors, you’re probably behind walls most of the time. Take a walk in your favorite park, toss a ball, or rake leaves.

**Slow down.** Stretch before you even get out of bed. Linger over the paper or a telephone conversation with a friend. Make an effort to do everything a little slower, even chewing your food, walking and talking.

**Write a letter.** In today’s electronic world, the joy of receiving a handwritten note is almost forgotten. Compose a few meaningful, heartfelt lines to a loved one, even if it’s just a postcard.

**Tap into creativity.** Hone your photography skills by capturing the great outdoors or, if you have children (or grandchildren), have an “art day” and just play.

**Creativity can often go undeveloped in today’s busy world.** Do something today you enjoy. Indulge in a guilty pleasure. It doesn’t have to be useful — just fun!

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EAP Wellness Calendars Are Available

Have you ordered your 2020 EAP wellness calendar yet? There are still some available. These popular, colorful calendars offer an array of tips for your health and well-being, including tasty recipes that will help you throughout 2020 and beyond. To request a copy be sent to you via campus mail, call the EAP Office at 518.442.5483 or click on the “Special Promotions” icon on the EAP website home page. 

One per employee while the supply lasts

www.albany.edu/eap

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

~ Harriet Tubman
How to Talk with Your Supervisor

Talking to your boss effectively takes preparation and good communication:

- Rehearse what you want to say, in your mind or out loud, with a friend.
- Establish the purpose of your conversation—are you asking for something, communicating information, giving a status update, or delivering bad news?
- Place yourself at the center of what you say by making “I” statements, such as “I think” or “I’ve noticed.” Statements that start with “You” sometimes put people on the defensive.
- Note your body language. Avoid fidgeting, looking at the floor, or looking at a mobile device. Instead, make eye contact, and keep your posture confident and relaxed.
- Listen well. Be open to what your supervisor says. Take notes if it helps.
- Stay calm. When you need to discuss a difficult issue, wait until you feel comfortable enough to talk without anger or frustration. Deliver your message calmly to show you have thought through the problem.
- Be a problem solver. Present your ideas, thoughts, and possible methods for improvement, instead of complaining.

These tips can be used when supervisors need to have a talk with their employees, too!

**Rudeness spreads.** A study in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* found that people who witnessed rude language and interactions were more likely to act rudely themselves. When people witness bad behavior, they may start to feel hostile and act badly in turn. Being polite isn’t just nice; it’s key to having a healthy, productive workplace.

Most of us will naturally develop a network of supporters, allies, and potential helpers over the years who can play valuable roles in enhancing our careers and magnifying our influence. Although this is usually a scattered and undefined process, consider making a conscious effort to accelerate this as a practice. Become more “socially aware.” See engaging with others as not just a pleasant social interchange but also an opportunity to consider how you can be of service to them and they to you, now or in the future. The positive benefits of a professional network are, of course, reciprocal. Realize that your address book and professional friends in a membership association or other groups are a virtual gold mine. The hottest tip is to make annual contact with your network by mailing a short postal note with personal news, achievements, and good wishes. Several years of these “touches” will produce tremendous leverage and “top of mind” awareness among your contacts. You can experience a surprising number of opportunities to help others and be helped by them.

Source: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.
Stop the Downward Slide with EAP

Even if you pride yourself on being an optimistic employee with a pleasant disposition, workplace negativity can still affect you in ways that you may not like. Negativity tends to be as contagious as a cold virus, and it can be a self-perpetuating force. The good news is that negativity in the workplace can be beaten. It has weaknesses, and the most important way to beat negativity is by refusing to participate in it. This isn’t easy, of course, and it requires education and individual employees willing to be change agents. Here’s how: Speak up when you spot negativity, not by criticizing but by educating about its impact and suggesting a different approach to communication. Team up with a co-worker to practice this same change-agent role. There is nothing more powerful than peer influence, particularly if you have the right action on your side. Note: If you feel affected by negativity, turn to UAlbany EAP for guidance and support to build your resilience so you don’t succumb to the limiting pattern around you and instead can be a positive force that influences others.

Promoted to Supervisor? Do This Next...

If you are a new supervisor, don’t learn the following skills by trial and error: 1) observing performance; 2) documenting properly; 3) correcting performance; 4) evaluating fairly; 5) giving feedback; 6) praising and inspiring employees; 7) delegating effectively; 8) resolving conflicts; 9) team building; and 10) communicating effectively with upper management. For a better career, seek out ways to gain these skills. Put “how-to” information in an easy-access binder. There are other skills to learn, like helping prevent violence or investigating complaints, but these ten are the building blocks for nearly all others. UAlbany EAP can be a great resource for new and seasoned supervisors. Supervisor consultations are welcomed by EAP. The EAP lending library has a variety of books on supervisory/management topics, too. Contact EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson for more details. bseckerson@albany.edu

Give Your Brain a Break

Be more productive at work by taking breaks. Here’s your motivation if you are inclined to skip them: a neurologic discovery called “voluntary” and “involuntary” attention. Each type of attention engages different uses of your brain. When you focus on work, whether it is a computer or a car engine, you are purposeful, intense, and focused; this is voluntary attention. In contrast, involuntary attention occurs when you walk down a sidewalk; you are not focused, but you are “attending” to the environment as it appears—birds, clouds, traffic, trees, flowers, wind, sunshine, sounds, and sensations. This process of allowing your brain to engage the world this way (being “pulled” along rather than “pushed”) is what relieves your stress and refreshes you neurologically. The payoff is improved memory and attention back at work.

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

Straghten Up. Ohio State University researchers found that people who slouched down and slumped forward in their chairs while working described themselves as having less professional confidence than those who sat up straight. The way you hold your body can greatly affect your concentration, confidence, and performance. Try sitting up a little straighter today, and see how you feel.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (November 2019) TP Top Performance.
Overwhelmed at Home?

If you come home from work and face what feels like a mountain of household, relationship and child responsibilities, you aren’t alone. A Pew Research Center survey, a nonpartisan American think tank based in Washington D.C., found working parents especially feel rushed, tired, and stressed in all facets of home life.

There’s no magic formula for finding a work-life balance. However, the following tips can help you feel less overwhelmed and more able to enjoy your life after work.

- Exercise regularly. Enlist a child, a partner, or your dog for a 20- to 30-minute walk after work to unwind. You’ll boost your mood, energy and fitness.
- Set realistic housekeeping goals. Nobody’s home is perfect. Decide what absolutely must be done and what can wait.
- Discuss household chores with your family. Work together to clearly and fairly distribute home responsibilities with your partner, and teach your kids to pitch in where possible.
- Don’t overdo it. If you’re overscheduled with extra community or social activities, learn to say no when you need to.

"Your body hears everything your mind says." ~Naomi Judd

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (June 2019) TH Top Health.

Parent Prevention of Teen Dating Violence

Don’t have “the talk” about healthy relationships, mutual respect, manners, and appropriate behavior an hour before your teen’s date arrives. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that these discussions begin when your child is in middle school, before dating begins. Modeling also helps young teens practice relationship health. Parents or guardians play a key role, so consider whether physical or verbal abuse poses a roadblock to your ability to communicate a credible message to your teen. A professional counselor or UAlbany EAP can help. If your child is already dating and you have not talked about healthy relationships, now is better than never! Learn more at healthychildren.org.

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

December is Safe Toys and Celebrations Month

Countless toys are given as gifts to youngsters during the holidays, but you can’t always assume those toys are safe. The Consumer Product Safety Commission says hundreds of thousands of American kids under age 15 end up in emergency rooms yearly with toy-related injuries. These are due to playing with age-inappropriate toys and dangerous toy parts. Visit cpsc.gov/Recalls to check the safety status of toys.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (December 2018) TH Top Health.
Give Yourself the Gift of Health

Looking forward to the holiday hoopla—or not? The extra demands can be challenging. To stay positive and enjoy yourself more, put your health at the top of your gift list.

- Don’t let the holidays tempt you to overindulge. Avoid mindlessly consuming sweet snacks and party food, as well as alcohol. Avoid super-sized portions. Eat slowly at festive occasions and recognize when you’ve had enough.

- Don’t skip exercise. A brisk walk may relieve stress, boost energy, and aid sleep. Encourage others to join you. Deflect flu bugs whenever possible by avoiding people who are obviously contagious, coughing, and sneezing. Wash your hands often, and get a flu shot if you haven’t already.

- Unwind. Sitting quietly, close your eyes, and allow each muscle group to loosen and relax, starting with your face, neck, and shoulders with arms and hands loose at your side. Flatten your feet and feel your thighs sink into your chair. Breathe slowly and deeply.

Finally, break with holiday habits that no longer inspire you or choose simpler ones that strengthen the meaning of this special time for you.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (December 2018) TH Top Health.

“An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly.”

~ Unknown

Rental Cars

If you are visiting out-of-town family this holiday season, you may rent a car. Take this safety advice to ensure your holidays are memorable for happy reasons:

- Research the rental cars’ safety ratings at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety at iihs.org or National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at nhtsa.gov.
- Check your personal auto policy to make sure you are covered for rental cars. If not, consider purchasing optional rental insurance.
- Request the specific make and model according to your research results.
- Select the appropriate vehicle size for your family and luggage so everyone has a seat with a seatbelt. Tip: Make sure luggage doesn’t block your rear view.
- Inspect your car before driving it. Check brakes, tires (don’t forget pressure), seat belts, climate control, fluid levels and windshield wiper condition.
- Ensure the vehicle is equipped with important safety features, such as front airbags, electronic stability control, safety belts and LATCH child safety seat system (if necessary).
- Educate yourself about how the vehicle operates before you drive off, especially if it’s a type that is unfamiliar to you.
Are you finding yourself struggling with any of the following?

- Family, parenting, and relationship issues
- Work stress and conflict
- Substance abuse or dependency
- Elder care
- Mental health concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Legal and/or financial concerns
- Grief and loss
- Or anything else related to work or home that is causing you undue stress and affecting your ability to be as productive as you once were?

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 to you as an employee benefit.

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

Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
518-442-5483
bseckerson@albany.edu
EAP Website: http://www.albany.edu/eap

“IT’S NOT WHO YOU ARE THAT HOLDS YOU BACK, IT’S WHO YOU THINK YOU’RE NOT.”
~ Denis Waitley

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

Early intervention is the key! Contact EAP.
Quitline Resources for Vaping and E-Cigarettes

In response to the unsettling news we are hearing about vaping and e-cigarettes lately, Nysmokefree.com includes expanded resources particularly geared toward teens and young adults and their parents. If you are concerned at all with your vaping device or products or just want more information, contact vaping.inquiries@health.ny.gov. For coaching and help with nicotine addiction, call the New York State Smokers’ Quitline at 1-866-NY-Quits (1-866-697-8487) or request a call by filling out the online form.

Breathe Easy... Quitline Resources for Vaping and E-Cigarettes

Breathe Easy...

If you are quitting smoking or trying to limit the amount of cigarettes or e-cigarettes each day, contact EAP to receive a “Quit/Craving Kit” to support your efforts. NOTE: The kits do not contain nicotine replacement therapies (NRT); however, they do contain other helpful items and information to make those cravings subside. bseckerson@albany.edu 518.442.5483

Don’t Mix Alcohol with Psychoactive Drugs

Everyone’s heard it: “Don’t mix alcohol with other drugs.” Despite that being nearly universally understood, little research has existed on this topic until now. A recent study has shown that only one in five nonfatal alcohol overdoses involves only alcohol. The others combined alcohol with drug use. What’s more, any psychoactive drug (e.g., opioids, cocaine, heroin, and other illicit drugs) increases the likelihood of alcohol overdose, and these overdoses are more severe. That was the surprise to researchers. If you are concerned about your use of alcohol and/or psychoactive drugs or that of a loved one, contact UAlbany EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson for support and referrals.

Source: umich.edu [search: “overdose alcohol”]

As the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) states, “Addiction can happen to anyone, any family, at any time.” The OASAS website has important information regarding prevention as well as how to recognize the signs and symptoms of opioid drug abuse.

To access the OASAS resources, click here.

Call the OASAS helpline at 1-877-8-HOPENY (1-877-846-7369).

Contact Brenda Seckerson UAlbany EAP Coordinator, for a confidential conversation if you have concerns about heroin or prescription drug abuse. Support and help is available!

bseckerson@albany.edu 518-442-5483
Health Sciences Campus

6-Hour Defensive Driving Class

This 6-hour class can help to reduce your insurance fees or can deduct up to 4 points from your driver’s license.
NYS requires attendance for the full 6 hours to receive credit.

Course Fee: $25
Paid at time of registration.
Registration deadline: December 11
Make check payable to: SOS
Drop off at EAP Office, MSC Room 200

All UAlbany/RF employees and family members welcome!

Friday, December 13
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM*
Room 110A
School of Public Health
*Includes a 30-minute lunch break

NOTE: Supervisory approval and accrual charge necessary to attend.

To Register Contact:
Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
bseckerson@albany.edu

CALL 442-5483 OR REGISTER ONLINE
www.albany.edu/eap

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

When grieving the loss of a loved one, the holidays can be an especially difficult time. Family rituals take on a different feeling when someone is missing. The expectations of a season that is supposed to be filled with “holiday cheer” can put pressure on those who are not grieving, let alone those who are dealing with loss. For those who are grieving, it is important to be mindful of your needs and to be gentle with yourselves. This article titled “Coping with Grief and Loss During the Holidays” on the Harvard Health Publishing website offers guidance on how to make your way through the season.

Locally, our region’s Community Hospice offers free bereavement support. For information about its services, contact UAlbany EAP.

“Grief is in two parts. The first is the loss. The second is the remaking of life.”
~ Anne Roiphe

Lower the Stress

We read and hear a lot of advice this time of year about holiday-related stress. While the stress of winter holidays can be intense, the truth is that the end of the year can be high pressure professionally and personally, no matter what traditions and holidays you celebrate.

Come December, thoughts turn to wrapping up projects, reconciling budgets, taking stock of the past year, and making plans for the future. Maybe you are ending the year in a different place from where you hoped you’d be when you made resolutions in January. Perhaps you have a deadline to finish a project by year’s end. Family and social obligations might be at odds with what you need to accomplish at work or for yourself—another stressor.

If you’re overwhelmed this month, take a moment to sit quietly and visualize success. Mentally picture yourself completing that big project, closing out the budget for the year, or achieving a personal goal. Visualization lowers stress levels and boosts confidence.

Realize that some pressure you feel in December may be self-imposed. Just because the calendar flips over does not mean you are out of time to make progress toward your goals. Keep your expectations and your to-do list realistic. Take time to be grateful for what you have, instead of worrying about what you lack.

Go easy on yourself and others—this is a tough time of year for many. If stress is making you lose sleep, hope, or enjoyment in life, seek help. A good place to start would be to contact EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson or your health care provider.

Source: Personal Best, a registered trademark of Ebix. (December 2019) TP Top Performance
Tips to Green Your Holidays

Contributed by Mary Ellen Mallia, Director of the UAlbany’s Office of Sustainability

The holidays are filled with joy, fun, and special family traditions. It can also produce a lot of waste! It is estimated that waste generated by a household increases 25% between Thanksgiving and New Year’s. But there are several ways to reduce your waste and environmental impact this holiday season.

Gift giving is a great way to try this out. The “gift hierarchy” places buying new at the bottom of the pyramid as the least preferred method of gift giving. At the top? Give memories such as event tickets or experience days or give of your time. Making your own gifts, upcycling, or buying second hand are other good choices. For a quick gift, combine ½ cup of sugar, ½ cup of oil (olive, melted coconut) or ¼ cup honey and 5 to 10 drops of essential oil or 1 teaspoon of vanilla in an old food jar and you have a nice sugar scrub. You can check out the gift hierarchy at: https://guidetothegood.ca/2018/12/05/on-the-ethical-hierarchy-of-gifting/

When you give a gift, don’t reach for the wrapping paper, especially those that are metallic or sparkly as they cannot be recycled. Instead use newspaper, the comics, old maps, or old cloth material from unwanted curtains, tablecloths, etc. Repurpose Christmas cards you receive into gift tags.

Another way to reduce your impact is using LED lights, including local and sustainably produced food in your meal, using reusable instead of disposable dishes and decorating your table with greenery, pine cones, and berries from around your home.

If you participate in the holiday tree tradition, a real Christmas tree is more environmentally friendly than an artificial one. Most tree farms follow a sustainable harvest philosophy (it’s essential to their existence!). The trees perform some serious carbon sequestration duties while growing. Artificial trees are often made from plastic, which means oil and/or petrochemicals. Plus real trees can be composted or serve as tasty treats for goats on area farms!

Is it recyclable? Below is a quick guide on some common holiday waste streams and how to divert them from the landfill.

- Wrapping paper – Yes, as long as it is not metallic or has sparkles. It is ok if it is crumpled up.
- Bows – In general, no.
- Gift bags – If they are paper, yes. See the rule of wrapping paper.
- Broken holiday string lights – Yes, but recycle with electronics.
- Aluminum foil – Yes, with your single stream material if it is free of food.
- Plastic wrap and zip lock baggies – Yes, if free of food but it has to be recycled with your other plastic bags, NOT with your household single stream material.
- Packing peanuts – No, but some shipping centers will take them back.
- Plastic “air lock” packing bags – Yes, but recycle with your plastic bags.
- Cold beverage cups (plastic) – Yes, with your single stream material.
- Hot beverage cups (paper, wax lined) – No, these go in the garbage. They are the items we find most often in our recycling bins on campus. They are not recyclable!!!

Earth911.com is a great place to see where you can take items to be recycled. You can find more tips at the DEC website: www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8829.html
EAP Lending Library—Book Highlights

Compiled by Marina Nana, EAP Work Study Student

Looking for a resource of inspiration? With time off during the holiday season to relax with a good book and with the start of the new year just around the corner, one of the Artist’s Way books might provide the spark you need to light the flames of creativity to enhance your life. All three books guide the reader along by providing insightful ways to open one’s self up to change. Each book contains inspiring quotes throughout. Exercises and activities are included which provide opportunities to expand your horizons and to tap into parts of yourself you didn’t know were there, or have long forgotten and want to reconnect with. End 2019 and begin 2020 by taking a chance to travel along the path of the artist’s way!

The Artist’s Way: A spiritual Path to Higher Creativity by Julia Cameron is the seminal book on the subject of creativity. An international bestseller, it has inspired millions to overcome the limiting belief and fear that can inhibit the creative process. Julia takes readers on an amazing twelve week journey to discover the inextricable link between their spiritual and creative selves.

In her book The Vein of Gold: A Journey to Your Creative Heart, Julia Cameron draws from her extensive artistic and teaching experience to steer readers toward ever-widening creative horizons. This extraordinary book of learning through doing features inspiring teachings on the creative process and more than one hundred imaginative, involving, and energizing tasks. Whether you already actively pursuing a creative enterprise or are just beginning to nurture your own creativity, this powerful book provides the innovative and practical tools for mining the vein of gold within you.

Julia Cameron’s groundbreaking book The Artist’s Way has helped more than a million people access their creativity and realize their dreams. The Artist’s Way at Work: Riding the Dragon expands on the original Artist’s Way approach with this new program specifically designed for the workplace. The book blends cutting edge ideas on creativity and group dynamics with the timeless values of integrity and simplicity to produce a powerful process that will assist you in whatever you pursue. The result will be a heightened sense of adventure, excitement, creativity, and satisfaction.

Visit the Library page on the EAP website for a full list of topics, books, and DVDs/CDs that the EAP Lending Library has available. Contact EAP if you would like to borrow any materials. bseckerson@albany.edu
Heating Help—NYS Heating Assistance Program

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a federally funded program that issues heating benefits to supplement a household’s annual energy cost. **HEAP also offers an emergency benefit for households in a heat or heat-related energy emergency.**

Additionally, HEAP offers a heating equipment repair and/or replacement benefit for homeowners with inoperable heating equipment. HEAP may help you or those you know pay for electricity, propane, natural gas, wood, oil, kerosene, coal, or any other heating fuel. For all of the details about the various programs available and the income guidelines, go to: [http://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/](http://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/)
Farewell 2019 and Welcome 2020

Unbelievably, another year is coming to a close. It feels like just yesterday we were acknowledging the end of 2018! Now we say good-bye to 2019 and welcome in 2020, the start of a new decade.

The EAP Committee, EAP Ambassadors, and I would like to thank you for your participation at the various EAP-sponsored events this year. As we continue to find new ways to meet EAP’s mission of supporting UAlbany employees’ health and productivity, we hope the wellness and workplace topics that were chosen throughout the year proved to be helpful to you and your family. Additionally, it was always a delight to receive comments from faculty and staff after a new edition of the monthly EAP ENews. The feedback is a great way for us to know that faculty and staff are taking advantage of their EAP benefit and gaining useful wellness and workplace information. Here’s wishing you and your family a safe, peaceful, and joyful holiday season. We hope to see you at an event in 2020 and look forward to continuing to serve you!

EAP Committee Members:
Marcia Catrambone
Angela Fletcher
Toni Gaspary
Nancy Harrigan
Shari Lombardoni
Merissa Mabee
Shatoya Michel
Melanie Pettit
Samantha Rider
Mary Zeno
Joanne Bocchino (recording secretary)

EAP Coordinator:
Brenda Seckerson

EAP Ambassadors:
Kimberly Comproskie
Linda Gallagher
Kathy Gurney
Brendon Phillips
Susan Whiteman
Marlene Williams

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

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