



The EAP
is a **free** service
for you and your
eligible family members.

All EAP services are
**completely
confidential.**

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Warm Up to Winter Safety

Winter often brings thoughts of skiing, hot chocolate and maybe even a “snow day” off from work or school. But the season can also carry special risks.

Carbon monoxide: A poisoning threat

As we turn up the heat, light fireplaces or use space heaters, we increase the risk for carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide is the top cause of accidental poisoning deaths, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. The gas kills more than 500 people a year.

“We definitely see an increase in carbon monoxide incidents when the weather gets cold,” says Firefighter Christopher Millay of the Penn Wynne-Overbrook Hills Fire Company in Pennsylvania. “People are using all types of heating devices, and they are more likely to keep all the windows in the house closed. Both these things increase the risk.”

Carbon monoxide is a tasteless, colorless, odorless gas created when fuels burn incompletely. Any fuel-burning appliance can release carbon monoxide, but you can cut your risk.

“The most important thing is to have a carbon monoxide alarm in the home,” Mr. Millay says. Have chimneys, fireplaces and heating appliances checked yearly to make sure they work properly. Be sure to follow manufacturers’ guidelines when using charcoal broilers, gas barbecues and gasoline engines, such as those that power generators. None of these devices should ever be used in an enclosed space or indoors.

Holiday decor

Take care to prevent a fire involving decorative lights, trees and candles.



“An ignited Christmas tree will set an entire room on fire in about 15 seconds,” Mr. Millay says.

Buy a fresh tree and water it regularly so it doesn’t dry out, or use an artificial tree. Check decorative light strings for loose bulbs and frayed wires. If a fire breaks out, leave the house at once and call 911.

“Never try to fight the fire yourself,” says Mr. Millay. “It is a battle you won’t win.”

Snow shoveling

Shoveling snow can bring on aches and pains, often in the lower back. Even worse, shoveling can bring on a heart attack, especially if you’re out of shape. Keeping fit can head off some of those problems. But get a physical checkup before shoveling if you have a medical condition, don’t exercise regularly or are over age 40. If you do shovel:

- Bend at the knees.
- Don’t take too much snow on the shovel at one time, especially wet snow.
- Take frequent breaks.
- Drink plenty of water. ❄️

Krames Staywell

STAYING WELL

Exercise: Make it Regular

We are a nation that seems to choose inactivity over an active lifestyle. That lack of exercise, coupled with excess calories, has led the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to say that deaths from poor diet and physical inactivity may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death.

Reasons to get moving

Regular physical activity offers many health benefits, the CDC says. Regular exercise:

- Reduces the risk for dying prematurely
- Reduces the risk for dying from heart disease
- Reduces the risk for developing diabetes
- Reduces the risk for developing high blood pressure
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have high blood pressure
- Reduces the risk for developing colon cancer
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety
- Helps control weight
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Promotes psychological well being

The CDC defines regular physical activity or exercise as an activity that causes light sweating or slight to moderate increase in breathing or heart rate for at least 30 minutes each time. It should be done five or more times a week. ❄

Less Is More: How to Simplify Your Life

Life today is complicated. Most Americans are pulled in multiple directions every day by commitments to their families, workplaces and communities.

Many people have responded to the pressures of modern life by seeking ways to consciously simplify their routines and attitudes at home and work.

“The goal of living a more simple life isn’t to arrive at a static point in your life but to become skilled at balancing your personal relationships, workplace issues, finances and other demands,” says Heather G. Mitchener, coauthor of *The 50 Best Ways to Simplify Your Life*.

Being in the moment

One way to simplify your life is to practice mindfulness -- to slow down and recognize and appreciate the simple things in life. To be mindful instead of mindless, stay in the moment and be conscious of what you’re doing. Don’t think ahead or look back.

“When we look ahead constantly, we not only rush through the less pleasant tasks, we also tend to hurry through the things we love to do, because we’re always thinking or worrying about what we have to do next,” says Ms. Mitchener.

A good way to practice being in the moment is to follow your breath, a technique that doesn’t require any special training or self-consciousness. To breathe mindfully, take notice of your breaths and try to make them as calm and even as possible. Your breaths should be long and slow and should come from your diaphragm rather than your upper chest. Pay attention to each breath, letting thoughts fall away.

“You can do this exercise any time you think of it,” says Ms. Mitchener. “Make it a goal to be mindful, in general, but also set aside short periods to practice. This will improve your ability to make mindfulness a habit. As you learn to live this way, you’ll feel more centered.”

Slow down

If you feel like you have too much information in your life, stop subscriptions to magazines, newspapers or e-mail newsletters you rarely have time to read. Leave the radio and TV off unless you’re really listening to something that matters to you. Turn off your cell phone unless you’re making a call or waiting for one that’s important.

To reduce the amount of “stuff” in your home, ask yourself these questions before you buy something: Do I really need it? How often will I wear or use it? Where will I store it? Is there a reason why I must buy it?

Get organized

Begin by sizing up the problem areas in your home or workplace and making a plan of attack. If you’re easily discouraged, start with a small, confined area, such as a single drawer. Otherwise, target an area that gives you the most grief. Your goal should be to clear out clutter that causes you to waste time -- a hall closet that has become a catchall for everything from clothes to sports equipment.

Learn to focus at work. Multitasking can be an asset, but often the lack of focus it requires means you actually get less done in a day, or less done well. To increase your focus and break free from distractions:

- Begin each day by setting priorities on what you want to accomplish.
- Check e-mail at set times, rather than letting each new message interrupt you.
- Set aside a time to retrieve voice mail and return calls.
- Keep a calendar of your deadlines and obligations. ❄

Krames Staywell

Prepping for Your Annual Review

If it's time for your annual employee review, you're probably filled with anxiety. You hate sitting down with your boss and being judged.

However, this year it can be different because when you know how to prepare for your review, you can look forward to it with excitement. This year you can be prepared with the essential information that will show your value to the company and increase your opportunities to advance your career.

"The annual review is the most widely used vehicle to assess employee performance and set future performance objectives," says Bill Copeland, marketing manager for NuView Systems, a provider of a Web-based employee-review system. "From an employee perspective, this is often the main or only feedback mechanism they have to tell them how they're doing."

Mr. Copeland recommends employees prepare in advance by writing and bringing to the review the following essential information.

Accomplishments

Review your calendar, e-mails and files for the past year to make sure you record all your accomplishments. Some may not have been observed by your direct supervisor and may be overlooked if you don't mention them.

Awards and compliments

This includes anything you received via letter or e-mail from peers, managers and others within or outside the company that recognizes your efforts. Include such things as letters of appreciation and certificates.

Key strengths

How does your job affect your company's success? Is your work aligned with company objectives? Look honestly at your personal strengths. Do you have creative ideas? Do you excel at dealing with difficult customers? Are you detail-oriented and able to catch

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Keep the Holidays Stress-Free

The holidays are supposed to be a time of warmth, joy and excitement. And for many people, they are. Still, the anxiety of having too much to do in too little time, the pressure of unrealistic expectations and the tendency to overeat and overspend can easily overshadow holiday happiness. The following suggestions will help you enjoy the season to its fullest with a minimum of stress.

Eat smart

- Don't arrive at a party starving; you're likely to overeat. Instead, before you leave home eat a piece of fruit, a small salad or a cup of low-fat yogurt.
- Avoid handfuls of anything. At the appetizer table, fill your plate three-quarters full with fresh vegetables and fruit. Reserve the remaining quarter for anything you want, even if it's high in fat, so you don't feel deprived.
- Don't feel obligated to eat everything on your plate or to have dessert. And think twice before going back for seconds.

Shop smart

- Give yourself plenty of time to complete your holiday shopping. Shop with an itemized list of what you'll buy for each person and a ballpark figure of what you'll spend.
- Brainstorm for gift ideas. If you're stumped on what to buy, consider what's important to the gift recipient. To personalize a gift that isn't personal, give the story behind it. For a book, write an inscription that explains why you're giving it or mention specific pages the recipient may find interesting.

Party smart

- Keep parties simple by having a buffet instead of a formal sit-down dinner. Serve uncomplicated dishes (made with six ingredients or less) that you've made before.
- Buy nonperishable party items such as groceries, beverages, candles, napkins and decorations days in advance. Save the day before to buy items with a short shelf life, such as fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers.
- Cook ahead. On the day before your party, prepare salad dressings, stews, casseroles, cold sauces, soups, desserts and dips.
- Hire a helper. Employ a teenager or a catering waiter to help you serve during the party and clean up afterward.
- Devise games guests can play to help spark conversation.
- Be sociable. Attending parties when you don't know many people can be stressful. To break the ice, elect yourself the official introducer. If you see someone standing alone, go over and ask nonthreatening openers. For example, at a corporate function you might ask: How do you fit into the company? Are you a spouse or an employee? What do you do? What does your spouse do? ❄

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mistakes? List how your strengths help your company succeed.

Areas for personal improvement

Nobody is perfect. It's easier for you to state where you need improvement than to hear it from your boss. What's more, your boss will be impressed by your objectivity.

Additional training

What training would help you do your job more efficiently or would help you achieve your goals? Ask for additional training in graphics, word processing, Excel, PowerPoint and other applications.

Management potential

"Would you like to be a manager? If so, let it be known!" says Mr. Copeland. Companies often hire managers from outside the company when they could promote from within. List experiences you've had with leadership, either within your company or in your personal life. For example, you may have had a leadership position in a professional or charitable organization.

Workplace improvements

Recommend improvements to make your job, the department or even the company more efficient. It's the employee performing the day-to-day tasks who can often suggest realistic improvements.

Take time to plan

Start collecting this material several weeks before your scheduled review. Type your notes and give your boss a copy.

"Having this information ahead of time will ensure you're recognized for your work, that you put your goals on the table, and that you're properly aligned with the company mission, business and objectives," says Mr. Copeland. "You'll impress your boss with your preparation and vision, and you will have taken advantage of this once-a-year opportunity to put your best foot forward and advance your career." ❄

Krames Staywell

How to Use Your EAP

When help is needed call 800-433-2320. The intake counselor will ask for your name, employer and a brief description of your presenting concern. If an emergency exists you will be given immediate assistance. If your situation is not an emergency, you will be offered telephone assistance and/or in-person sessions to complete an assessment and make a referral for treatment if needed.

Meetings with your counselor are completely confidential. Your employer will not know you have used the EAP. No one will be provided any information about you without your written consent. Exceptions would occur only in the event of you being considered dangerous to yourself or someone else.

At the first appointment you should be prepared to give the counselor some background information to assist in formulating an action plan. Many people find it helpful to prepare a list of things they wish to discuss at each session.

For Assistance Call: 800-433-2320

Or Text: 503-980-1777

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