



rEAP the Benefits

State Employee Assistance Program 1-800-308-4934

Taking charge of your life contest

The Employee Assistance Program is calling for entries in its “taking charge of your life” contest. Write your account of how you have taken charge of your life successfully this past year in 2008. Describe how you mapped out your life goals and used your goals to achieve success in one or all of the areas — financial planning, job skills, improved health or stress reduction. How did you do it? What were your resources? What were your obstacles? How did you persevere and accomplish your goal? We would like to hear of your success in your work or home life in 2008. The most creative entry is sought. Only individual essays will be accepted.

All entries will become the property of the State Employee Assistance Program. Entries should be typed consisting of one page (8.5 x 11) single or double spaced (maximum length). Entries may be emailed, faxed or mailed. The deadline is March 31, 2009. Please include your name, addresses (street and email), agency/department and telephone number. A winner will be selected and receive a Prize at the awards ceremony in April.

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Facts about suicide

Misinformation about suicide stands in the way of saving lives. It is important to dispel the myths about suicide with some basic facts. Knowledge about suicide gives us the confidence to recognize suicide warning signs and intervene in constructive ways. Some important facts about suicide:

- Talking about suicide or asking someone if they are thinking of suicide will not put the idea in their head. In fact, talking with depressed and/or suicidal people about the things that are bothering them may be the first step to preventing a suicide attempt.
- Few attempted suicides happen without some kind of warning—withdrawing from friends and family, statements about not being able to go on, putting affairs in order, giving away prized possessions, etc.
- People who talk about suicide may very well attempt or complete suicide—in other words, it may not be “just talk” or a way to get attention.
- Suicide is not automatically “inherited,” even though depression and mental illness may run in families.
- Contrary to popular belief, most suicides are preventable...but when a suicide does occur, the family and friends of the deceased are not automatically responsible.

The national suicide prevention lifeline (1.800.273.TALK) offers 24-hour access to trained counselors at area crisis centers. This number has the potential to save lives. For more information about suicide, go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network’s website at www.tspn.org

Answering tough teenage questions

Is your youngster an expert at catching you off guard with tough, uncomfortable questions? These questions often start out with "Mom (or Dad), did you ever..." "What if..." "What happens when..." Do you think these questions over so you can deliver an effective answer later, or do you throw out the first thought that comes to your mind in the hopes that honesty and directness will trump all? It can be a tough call. It's okay to tell your teen that you'd like time to consider the question, and then schedule a time when you can follow up. When faced with difficult or uncomfortable subjects, don't hesitate to seek help with answers or how to answer them. One comprehensive resource is www.4parents.gov, a web site that addresses issues such as teen sex, risky youth behaviors, and other thorny topics. Once you've researched your answer and approach, be sure to follow up on your commitment to talk things over. Don't be tempted to dismiss your teen's question with relief that perhaps it was forgotten. It wasn't. Your child may not ask it again, and instead go to a less credible source for the wrong answer.

Slay the energy vampires

Are energy vampires invading your home? Anything in your house that's plugged in is busy wasting energy, even when not in use. Up to 5 percent of your energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, is from these devices. The worst offenders are your television, VCR, and computer, but the little things add up too. Your best defense? Pull the plug. Especially on things you rarely use — like the hedge trimmer recharging in the garage in mid-January. For more savings, only buy new appliances that have the Energy Star label, and use a power strip for appliances with a lot of peripheral devices so you can shut down everything at once when you've finished. That coffeemaker may not look sinister, but it's quietly using energy while you sleep. You don't feel a thing...until the electric bill comes. Learn to have a "green finger" for the earth and your pocketbook — flip the switch.

Staying up during the downturn

Financial worries create tremendous stress and can result in collateral damage to your health and personal relationships. Navigate today's rough economic seas by being willing to talk about your fears with your spouse or close friends. Don't beat yourself up over past mistakes. Review your household expenses and start cutting the fat. Add whatever you can to cash savings. Create a "worst-case scenario" plan. Make a pact with family members and friends to provide aid and support to one another, if needed. Take full advantage of your company's employee assistance program. Talking out concerns will often lead to new and useful solutions. Lean times are no fun, but historically, they may lead to helping you reorganize your priorities and make needed course corrections for the future when the next economic down cycle returns. Use your leaner entertainment budget to find creative, family-oriented activities that don't cost money. If hiring freezes exist, consider looking for ways to expand your influence and productivity. This storm, like others, will pass, but with perseverance and a positive attitude, you'll emerge from it stronger.

Go natural in your spring cleaning

Don't cart a cornucopia of harsh chemicals into your home — a few common household products are all you need to make your home sparkle this spring. For a general cleaner and disinfectant, just mix 1 cup of borax with 1 gallon of warm water. Create window cleaner by combining 2 tablespoons of white vinegar with 1 quart of warm water. Mix equal parts vinegar and warm water for tub and tile cleaner, and use baking soda for scouring. Clean your toilet bowl with 1 part baking soda to 4 parts vinegar. For dishwashing detergent, go with equal parts borax and baking soda. You can use this combo for the laundry, too. If you'd rather avoid the work, you can buy your green products at many specialized, earth-friendly web sites.