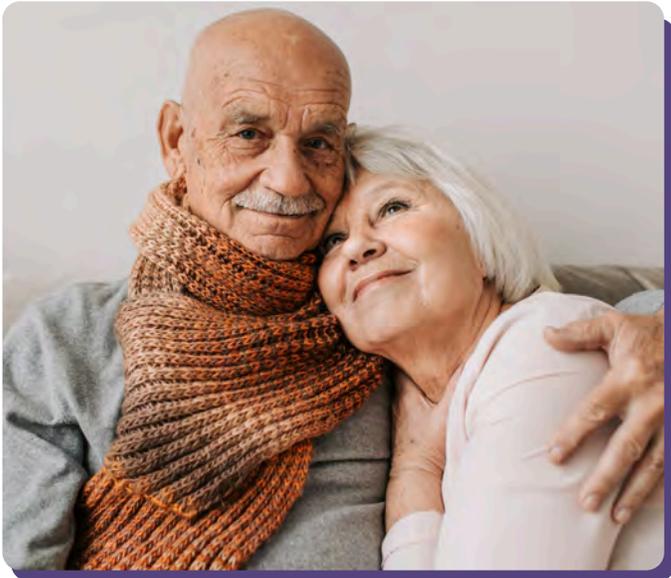


Congratulations, You're Retiring, But . . .



Retirement feels like the dream: total freedom, no deadlines, and enough financial security to do whatever you want each day. But heads up—for many people, that freedom eventually brings a surprising kind of dread. The human brain loves structure, purpose, and identity. Your job likely provided these things, but the need won't vanish. If you ignore this reality, you may discover that days blur together and you lose direction.

The excitement of “doing anything” is replaced by subtle restlessness. Boredom may follow. Some may feel guilty for not feeling happier. Prevent this drift by building a new structure with goals, creative projects, volunteering, or learning. Take advantage of financial health counselling or ways to manage transition and change through your EAP.

Don't Suffer from Inadequate Sleep Syndrome

Finishing work assignments into the wee hours, socializing, or enjoying bedtime procrastination places you at risk for “Insufficient (or Inadequate) Sleep Syndrome.” It's a condition caused by lifestyle choices that disrupt sleep, creating daytime sleepiness, fatigue, and poor concentration.

During the week, you may get only five to six hours of sleep instead of seven to eight, then catch up on weekends, but that's the problem: Your body can adapt to this pattern in unhealthy ways and incur long-term health risks. Beyond lower productivity and accident risk at work, serious conditions like dementia become more likely.

If you're over 40, especially, form brain-protective habits. One is getting seven to nine hours of sleep consistently.



Managing “Background Stress”

Feeling tense when nothing's wrong? It might be “background stress.” Background stress is all the stuff that can wear you down but flies under the radar. You aren't fully aware of it, but it's taking a subtle toll on your mental health anyway. Common background stressors include noisy traffic outside, a dripping faucet, or a noisy washing machine. Others include pollution, poor working conditions, pings on digital communication devices that needle you for attention, and forgetting sunglasses on a sunny drive to work. Background stress can wear away at your mental well-being as these grinding irritants make you more irritable, add to your sense of anxiety, and activate your stress response system.

The result is feeling more tired, having less resilience, being less tolerant of coworkers, having sleep disturbances, and feeling a vague sense of unease that's hard to shake off. To intervene, take a day to notice what background stressors you've “gotten used to.” With this awareness, choose interventions: Digitally declutter by turning off devices, tuning out noise with the help of noise-cancelling headphones, taking two-to-five-minute micro-breaks to interrupt the buildup of background stress, or better optimizing your environment to make it more calming and supportive.

Communicating with Those with Developmental Disabilities



March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. In daily work life, your words and actions can promote empathy and inclusion for coworkers with developmental disabilities. Demonstrate understanding by listening patiently, speaking at an appropriate pace, and using respectful, person-first language that acknowledges individual needs.

Don't turn to a friend, supervisor, or another coworker to speak for an employee with a developmental disability unless the employee has clearly requested or given permission for that support. Affirm employees by saying “I believe in you” or “Would you like to join us?” The bottom line: Think “full participation” in the workplace as a rule. Being authentic is key. You'll be a powerful change agent and help create a culture of belonging that benefits everyone, including your employer's bottom line.

Supporting Wellness with Chronic Conditions

Chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, autoimmune conditions, and arthritis affect a growing number of individuals and families. As our population ages and lifestyles evolve, supporting overall wellness has become increasingly important.

The good news is that many chronic illnesses are influenced by everyday habits, including nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and stress management. Working with a qualified professional can help improve energy, manage stress, and enhance overall quality of life. Small, consistent changes can make a meaningful difference. Reach out to your EAP to start building a strong foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing.

