

Working Solutions

Is Your Teenager Bored? How About Volunteering?

It is a fact that in the United States, many teenagers and young adults have a considerable amount of “spare time,” particularly in the summer and during school breaks. As a parent, you should encourage your child to take advantage of these times by exploring a new interest, planning for future college or career, pursuing a hobby or skill, or by volunteering time for a worthwhile endeavor.

Although it is not frequently considered as an option for many adolescents, volunteering can give your child the opportunity to develop interests, challenge capabilities, and identify new strengths and talents. You may wish to speak to your teenager about the reasons that people volunteer their time including the opportunity to learn about an organization or to learn how to do activities that interest them. Since National Volunteer Week is celebrated in April, there may be some special celebrations happening in your community this month.

Getting involved with an organization like Special Olympics International will expose your child to a year-round sports training and athletic competition designed for children and adults with special needs. Volunteer activities could include such tasks as athletic training, fund raising, administrative help and competition planning.

Gain a new perspective on life. Homeless shelters are located in most cities and welcome volunteers to assist with meal preparation, organizing a food drive, or working behind the scenes in the business office. Spending a few hours at a senior citizen’s center will expose your child to the world of the “mature adult” and help them become more sensitive to elder challenges and issues.

Beat boredom. Teenagers can reshelve books at the local library. They can care for abandoned dogs and cats at a local animal shelter. Many state parks

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offer volunteer opportunities, where teenagers can be involved in educational programs, trail construction or grounds maintenance. If your teen is skilled at creating or maintaining Web sites, many smaller charities and organizations would be very grateful for assistance in this area. Your child could also help by raising money to pay for the Web site, as funds are limited for these organizations.

Overcome a loss they might have experienced. Perhaps a best friend moved away, or a romantic breakup occurred. Or, even worse, your child may be grieving over a relative or friend who died. One of the best ways to overcome the feelings of pain and loss is to help other people. Staying busy and keeping the mind focused on others allows your child to deal with, and heal from, the void that has been created.

Help others. Volunteers at a local Ronald McDonald House prepare meals, do household tasks, and visit with the families of seriously ill children. Habitat for Humanity groups build and provide housing for economically disadvantaged people. The "Reading Is Fundamental" (RIF) literacy programs are always in need of volunteers who can tutor illiterate children and adults.

To locate organizations or associations that can assist you in finding volunteer opportunities, contact:

- City government offices
- Chambers of commerce
- Community centers or community service offices
- Community colleges and universities
- Hospitals
- The United Way
- The Salvation Army
- Churches and synagogues
- Newspapers
- Police and fire departments
- Veterinarians
- Radio and television stations
- Park and recreation offices
- Reserve Officer Training Course (ROTC)
- YMCA/YWCA
- Boys and Girls Clubs

- Mentoring programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
- State or county employment development departments
- High school career centers
- Amusement parks, local festivals and fairs
- Political campaigns (during an election year)
- Hotline phone banks

Be patient. One of the most difficult parts of volunteering can be finding a situation that best fits the personality of your teenager, but it is worth the effort. Volunteering will teach them a lot about themselves and about others, and they will get to know some interesting people in the process. They really will be helping themselves as they are helping others. ■ *Source: Accor Services North America, Inc. (2004). Is your teenager bored? How about volunteering? Retrieved September 27, 2005, from the Accor Services North America database.*

Find a Volunteer Gig Online!

One of the best volunteer

Web sites today is

Volunteer Match

(www.volunteermatch.org).

With just a few clicks,

Volunteer Match provides kids, teens, seniors, and groups access to many volunteer opportunities in their own communities. Search on zip code, distance, and interest areas including, but not limited to:

- Advocacy and Human Rights
- Animals
- Arts and Culture
- Board Development
- Children and Youth
- Computers and Technology
- Education and Literacy
- Environment
- Homeless and Housing
- Sports and Recreation

Volunteer Match not only provides access to volunteer opportunities, but it also allows nonprofits to post their volunteer needs and helps corporations implement volunteer programs in their organizations. ■



Common Sense Soccer Season

Get ready for another great soccer season, but take along a few tips from emergency room doctors who see 100,000 emergency room patients per year with soccer injuries, many of which could have been prevented.

Doctors say that players can avoid the ‘injured’ list if they wear protective equipment at games and practices. Correct fields that are not level, contain holes, or have slippery areas. Consider reducing injuries by matching players by weight, not by age.



And, the most important rule: Don't play through pain. Pain is a sign of overuse or injury. ■

Teen Abuse of Coricidin®

LSD and PCP are illegal, but Vicks 44 and Coricidin-HPB—which can cause hallucinations, dizziness, loss of motor control, and possibly death when abused—are not. The active ingredient in these two medications is dextromethorphan or DXM, a common cough suppressant frequently abused by drug-using teenagers. The medications attract young drug users because they are not illegal and can be abused to get high. Preventing abuse can be difficult, but a key prevention strategy is making sure you know where your teenager is. If he or she is visiting a friend's home, knowing that a parent is there. ■ *Source: American Journal of Health-System Pharmacists; Oct. 2001*

Log on to the New Food Pyramid

In 2005, the federal government renewed its recommended nutritional guidelines—most commonly called the “food pyramid.” It was big news at the time. Now the government has created a new, interactive Web site to go along



with the guidelines that provides helpful information about diet, exercise, and weight management, and has various kinds of assessment tools. You can keep track of your progress while you improve your health. Store the results for up to one year! There is a section for children too, so they can learn about proper nutrition and balanced, healthy eating. Visit the new Web site at www.mypyramid.gov. ■

Big Shoes to Fill

Being hired to replace a high achiever who left for greener pastures is always a challenge. Some coworkers inevitably struggle with letting go and accepting the new coworker. You can't take away their feelings of loss, but if you recognize that super-performers are often liked as much for their ability to establish meaningful relationships as they are for their skills, you'll be more easily accepted by your coworkers, while helping them cope at the same time.



Don't react with anger or impatience to those who too frequently reference your predecessor. Instead, recognize that these references by your coworkers are steps toward letting go. Be upfront in asking about your predecessor's special abilities and talents, and the qualities that made him or her successful. There is much power in this approach because coworkers will quickly recognize that you want to achieve the same level of success as—but not replace—your predecessor. It will give them hope that they will have someone of whom they can once again feel proud.

Your coworkers want you to know how good they had it with your predecessor, and you need to let them share this with you. With this approach, you will discover that there is much to learn that will add meaning to your job, and it won't mean giving up plans for creating a legacy of your own. In fact, it might bring success sooner. ■

Difficult People—Closer Than You Think?

Books about dealing with difficult people number in the hundreds, but they are usually about others—not us. Before someone writes a book about you, consider reducing your own “D” factor:



- 1) Become aware of your emotional responses to events and the undesirable impacts of these responses on others. You can do this by pausing for a moment of reflection between an incident (stimulus) and your response to it. This will allow you time to consider a different, more effective response. Hang in there; you will get it after a few tries.
- 2) Remember that difficult behavior and civility are both learned. These habits go with us to the workplace, and they can be unlearned or reinforced.
- 3) Don't forget the following golden rule of coworker relationships, “If you want others to listen to you, listen to them.” ■

Should I Tell?

Q. My attendance at work has been really awful lately because of my struggle with chronic depression. I am worried about being fired. Should I tell my employer about my depression?

A. You should speak to your doctor and the employee assistance program (call AWP at 800-343-3822) about your circumstances so they can advise you about how to proceed. Sign a release so that these two professionals can talk with each other. Stigmas associated with mental illness are changing, and today most employers earn high marks for compassion. How much and to whom you disclose information about your mental illness is something you should discuss with a trusted, supportive professional. ■

Is Your Search for Worklife Balance Over?

Are you happy but frustrated in your efforts to achieve worklife balance? If so, perhaps you should put away your scales. Worklife balance is ultimately about happiness and is not about scoring high marks for a tightrope walk between work and family. The good news is that you may have already achieved what you truly want. Presumably, what makes people happy are love and productive work. With our busy lives, driven by technological octane, it is inevitable that these two worlds eventually collide. Understanding what makes you happy is a life skill. Do not allow this criterion to be the way you prove to yourself that you are happy. In a fast-paced world, the quest for worklife balance for most people is a process, not a destination. ■



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Your EAP is designed to help you deal with life stresses and a variety of personal challenges. For confidential services offered at no cost to all employees and their families, please call:



Toll Free (800) 343-3822
TDD (800) 448-1823
Teen Line (800) 334-8336 (TEEN)
E-mail: eap@alliancewp.com
Web: www.alliancewp.com

Alliance Work Partners is a professional service of Workers Assistance Program, Inc.



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