



Office of  
Employee Relations  
Work-Life Services

1-800-822-0244  
www.oer.ny.gov/eap

# FrontLine Employee

Wellness, Productivity, and You!

## Mental Health Tip for Customer Service Reps



**Learn how to develop** emotional resilience if you are new to customer service. It's vital if you will be dealing with difficult customers. Emotional resilience is your ability to adapt and bounce back from stressful interactions. How can you develop emotional resilience? Practice recognizing your emotions, triggers, and stress responses to customers. Do this for a few weeks. Keep a small diary of these discoveries. Doing so will help you develop keen self-awareness that allows you to spot early signs of emotional distress and empower your ability to intervene and manage this state of mind. You will also be able to appropriately detach from emotionally charged situations and enjoy your job more. In turn, this will boost empathy skills—your ability to understand, connect with, calm, and serve your customers with winning service.

## Best Way to Utilize a To-Do List



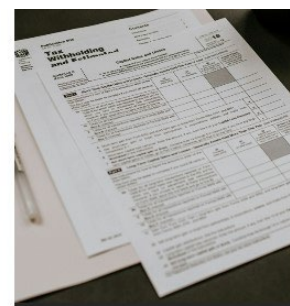
**To improve the effectiveness of** to-do lists, consider these valuable tips. 1) Write down all tasks in “mind dump fashion” and prioritize later. 2) Break up any big tasks into small doable steps. 3) Do not make your to-do list too long because if one glance at the list causes you to feel overwhelmed, you may become demotivated, put it aside, and not complete it. Identify urgent versus important tasks—not hardest first and easiest later. 4) Add deadlines to each item because your to-do list is an action plan, not just a memory jogger.

## Use Anticipatory Joy to Manage Work Stress



**Looking forward to** something enjoyable that's coming up soon can create a positive emotional state to help you manage stress better. Biology is key in this stress management technique known as “anticipatory joy” or “positive anticipation.” The anticipation of an enjoyable experience releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter that produces a sense of pleasure and reward. This uplifts your mood and counteracts stress hormones. Try it. Focus on a soon-to-be-experienced activity—plan one now—that will bring joy and excitement. See if this strategy shifts your attention away from stressors and creates positive thinking. The payoffs are reduced anxiety, improved mood, increased motivation, and a sense of purpose.

## Avoid the Stress of Last-Minute Income Tax Preparation



**Avoid the distress** of rushing and last-minute tax preparation this year by dedicating time now if you are still procrastinating. Break up the task into bite-sized pieces by creating a schedule or timeline for each task—gathering documents, organizing receipts, adding things up, filling out forms. Stick to a schedule using your smartphone by setting reminders and gentle nudges so you stay on track. Consider potential obstacles or distractions and develop strategies now to avoid them. Remind yourself of the benefits of completing your taxes early—it helps. And make one of these benefits a big reward for yourself for avoiding the rush this year!

## Stress Tips from the Field: Job Stress Versus Job Strain



**Job strain refers to** heightened levels of stress in the workplace that surpass typical levels, potentially leading to severe health consequences if not adequately addressed. You will find job strain occurs when high demands of a job are coupled with low control over the duties. Strain increases with the inability to know how long engaging with demands will last and a feeling of powerlessness to control decisions that might reduce strain. Positions with job strain can be found in fast-paced healthcare settings like emergency rooms, teaching jobs in under-resourced schools, dangerous military occupations, and even some highly demanding home health aide jobs. Get help and support, and learn how to manage job strain if you identify some of the following: 1) consistently feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work; 2) frequently working long hours or taking work home to meet deadlines; 3) frequently dealing with emotionally challenging clients, patients, or customers; 4) needing to suppress emotions to remain calm in stressful situations; 5) feeling emotionally drained or exhausted after work; 6) having little or no control over work duties, including the methods and pace; 7) finding decisions about the job are being made by someone else or being micromanaged with no autonomy; 8) receiving no support from others when facing work challenges; 9) frequent isolation on the job; 10) receiving little or no training for the position; and 11) performing repetitive or physically demanding tasks.

## Revisiting Icebreakers for Increased Productivity

**Icebreakers aren't** just for off-site conferences where everyone is a stranger. More accurately, icebreakers help set a positive tone for any sort of meeting, and they can encourage team bonding and help your group experience a more relaxed and inclusive atmosphere that boosts productivity. Rather than diving into your next



same-old routine or unchanging meeting, try an icebreaker. Then, try a new one periodically. And yes, they work for remote meetings, too! Try this one guaranteed to shake things up and have everyone laughing before getting down to business: Each team member shares three statements about themselves—two truths and one lie. The rest of the team tries to guess which statement is the lie. This activity encourages sharing personal information in a fun and engaging way.

## Spring Break Safety Tips for Parents

**If you are nerve-wracked** over an adult child visiting distant spring break destinations and the safety, responsibility, and substance issues you've heard so much



about, have a discussion now about these concerns. Make some agreements—the most important are reaching out to you while away for any reason and setting expectations for regular check-ins. Read and discuss any safety/advisory literature offered by your child's college or university. Talk about substance abuse, responsible drinking, and your expectations. (Research shows it does make a difference in reducing risk and abuse.) Remind them about safety in social gatherings, not accepting drinks from strangers, making smart choices, trusting their instincts, and avoiding risky situations. Make sure your young adult has copies of their identification and important documents, such as their passport or driver's license. Also, encourage them to keep these documents safe while traveling.

Checklist for discussion: <https://www.collegeparentsmatter.org/spring-break>

## Mindfulness on the Go

**Mindfulness is** the practice of paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and what's going on around you, and doing so while being fully present without distractions or



critiquing your thoughts. This reduces tension and can revitalize you during the workday. Nothing special is required to practice mindfulness. A popular example is deep breathing: Focus only on your breath, inhale slowly, hold your breath for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Repeating the process produces calmness. Another is "mindful walking," where you take a short walk outside and focus only on the sensations of walking, your feet on the ground, and the movement of your body. Don't wait to get home to manage stress. Do it on the go with mindfulness.

## **WellNYS Everyday Monthly Webinar**

### **The March WellNYS Everyday Monthly Challenge** *Shopping and Making Your Meals*

**Join us for the following webinars:**

#### **Weekly Meal Plan Made Easy**

**Wednesday, March 6, 2024**

**12:00 noon – 12:40 p.m.**

Discover how to plan a week of healthy meals on a tight schedule and budget by selecting great recipes, creating shopping lists that include fresh and seasonal produce, taking advantage of sales and coupons, maintaining your pantry, and enjoying nutritious meals throughout the week. To register for this webinar, go to:

<https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/ra8d12c18c309c2773c3fc82895836cfa>



#### **Smart Fearless Shopper**

**Wednesday, March 20, 2024**

**12:00 noon – 12:40 p.m.**

Take a virtual grocery store tour to learn how to make heart-healthy and budget-friendly food choices. Guided by a dietitian, you will compare fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables, understand pricing, and learn how to interpret in-store signage and much more. To register for this webinar, go to:

<https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/reec163abb1a34320ea44cb9b765557b8>



# WellNYS Everyday

## 2024 Monthly Challenges



Office of  
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**January:** Create and engage in a wellness challenge with a friend or coworker.

**February:** Connect and socialize.

**March:** Shop and make your meals instead of dining and take-out.

**April:** Organize your finances.

**May:** Participate in the Count Your Physical Activity Minutes Challenge.

**June:** Grow a plant or a garden.

**July:** Join the WellNYS Everyday Olympic Experience.

**August:** De-stress your life to improve your personal wellness.

**September:** Journal your thoughts every day.

**October:** Enjoy a New York State apple.

**November:** Take a pause when you need it.

**December:** Be kind with a random act of gratitude.

Be Well Everyday by subscribing to the WellNYS Daily To-Do email. The WellNYS Daily To-Do provides positive suggestions on how to engage in the Monthly Challenge.

To receive the email daily, go to <https://oer.ny.gov/wellnys-daily-to-do>.

A New York State Work-Life Services program for NYS employees and family members. [oer.ny.gov/wellnys-everyday](https://oer.ny.gov/wellnys-everyday)



**WellNYS Everyday** is a wellness initiative dedicated to educating, engaging, and empowering New York State employees to choose to eat foods that are healthy for them and to be physically active.

This program encourages employees to:

- Sign-up to receive the **WellNYS Daily To-Do** by email every day.
- Find out where to be physically active in New York State.
- Celebrate your wellness success with “I Did It!”.
- Engage in healthy behaviors while in your workplace.
- Find a NYS Walking workplaces map.
- Learn about Physical Activities in your region.
- Listen to a new wellness webinar every month.
- Become a WellNYS Ambassador for your agency/facility/SUNY.
- 2024 programs include: Count Your Physical Activity Minutes Challenge and the Olympic Experience.



**Office of  
Employee Relations**  
Work-Life Services

# March 2024

Shop and make your meals instead of dining and take out.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

For more information go to: [oer.ny.gov/wellnys-everyday](https://oer.ny.gov/wellnys-everyday)

WellNYS Everyday is sponsored by NYS Work-Life Services.



# March

## WellNYS Everyday

Shop and make your meals instead of dining and take out.  
Once you've completed the To-Do, check the box!



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1. The WellNYS Monthly Challenge for March is to shop and make your meals instead of dining out and getting take out. There will be two wellness webinars in March. Weekly Meal Plan Made Easy will be on March 6 at 12:00PM. To register go to <https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/ra8d12c18c309c2773c3fc82895836cfa> and Smart, Fearless Shopper will be on March 20 at 12:00PM. To register go to <https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/reec163abb1a34320ea44cb9b765557b8>.
2. Here are three benefits if you make your meals. 1. You will save money (it could be a lot). 2. When you make your meals, you know what ingredients are going into your food. 3. You may eat healthier. Start today by committing to making your meals for one week.
3. Before you go grocery shopping, plan all your meals. Check your pantry, fridge, and freezer to see what you already have, then make a list of items you need to purchase. Check your list twice, then head to your favorite grocery store.
4. In February, how much did you spend on groceries and at restaurants and on take out? Make it a goal to spend less at restaurants and on take out.
5. Do you frequently buy coffee on your way to work? Today and for the rest of the week, make your coffee and put it in a to-go container.
6. Join the wellness webinar Weekly Meal Planning Made Easy at 12:00 noon. To register, go to <https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/ra8d12c18c309c2773c3fc82895836cfa>.
7. Today is National Cereal Day. What is your favorite cereal? Did you purchase it at the grocery store last week, or is it on your list for this week?
8. Is it pizza night at your home? Pizza is easy to make at home. Use dough or ready-made pizza crust, add pizza sauce, cheese, and your favorite toppings on this week's grocery list.
9. Test your nutrition IQ – this brief and fun quiz will get you thinking about ways to eat healthy. Take the quiz at <https://kahoot.it/challenge/001986457>.
10. Today is National Pack Your Lunch Day. What are your three favorite lunches to take to work? Buy the ingredients at the grocery store today. Make your lunch the night before so it's all ready to go.
11. Buying lunch can cost \$10 to \$15 including a beverage. Instead of buying it, make and bring your lunch. You'll be happy when the money is still in your wallet or in your bank account.
12. If you are a parent, you may spend weeknights traveling to different activities for your children. It may be a habit to stop for fast food to save time. Think ahead and plan a meal to make and take with you.
13. Pumping gas and need a snack? Instead of going into the store, keep snacks in a bag in your car so it's always there when you need it. Nuts, granola bars, whole grain crackers, and protein shakes may be healthy choices.
14. Today is March 14, and it's Pi Day! Pi in mathematics is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter which is 3.14159. Celebrate by making your favorite fruit pie, such as blueberry, apple, or cherry.
15. Going out to dinner for a family of four can be expensive. Four burgers, two servings of french fries, two servings of onion rings, and four sodas could cost upward of \$75 for the bill and \$15 for tip totaling \$90. If you purchased the ingredients for the same dinner, the cost would be approximately: hamburger meat - \$15, rolls - \$4, potatoes - \$3, onions - \$2, soda - \$4. The same dinner would cost at about \$28.
16. Are you in mood for chili? Use your favorite recipe, but instead of ground beef, use ground turkey. Place the cooked chili in small containers, and then refrigerate. Now, you are all set for lunch or a quick dinner.
17. Is it corned beef and cabbage for lunch or dinner today? To make it from scratch, search for a crockpot recipe online. It's an easy meal to make in advance and less expensive than going to a restaurant.
18. How much money did you spend eating at restaurants or on take out this weekend? If you made all your meals, you may have saved a significant amount of money.
19. It's National Poultry Day. Chicken is interchangeable for many meals. Place four chicken breasts in a crockpot with chicken broth and seasoning. Turn on low for eight hours then shred it. Shredded chicken is great in tacos, fajitas, or chicken salad sandwiches.
20. Join us for the wellness webinar Smart Fearless Shopper at 12:00PM. To register, go to <https://meetny.webex.com/weblink/register/reec163abb1a34320ea44cb9b765557b8>.
21. It's National Countdown Day. 3 -> 2-> 1. Countdown the minutes until you eat breakfast, snacks, lunch, or dinner or countdown to your vacation, retirement, or birthday.
22. Here is a quick and healthy breakfast to freeze. Scramble a dozen eggs. Place a variety of vegetables in muffin tins, add the eggs and cheese. Bake for 20 minutes at 350°F. Place egg muffins in freezer bags for a quick healthy breakfast. Warm up in the microwave for one minute.
23. Where is your local Farmer's Market? Do you shop there for your fruits and vegetables? Find your nearest Farmer's Market, go to <https://agriculture.ny.gov/farmersmarkets>.
24. Turkey is not just for Thanksgiving. It's a delicious meal to make on weekends then you will have leftovers for workdays. You can make turkey soup, turkey chili, turkey and vegetables, or turkey pot pie.
25. Ask a friend what their favorite meal is to make. Ask them for the recipe. Make their recipe and invite them to dinner.
26. It's Taco Tuesday. Create a balanced, affordable, healthy meal with a corn tortilla, black beans, Pico de Gallo, avocado, low-fat sour cream, whole grain rice, and mangoes.
27. Spend time researching healthy recipes online or in a recipe book. Choose one or two meals that look good, then put the ingredients on your grocery list.
28. If you spend \$12 for a salad for lunch three days per week for one month, you'll spend \$144. If you make the salad, it may cost \$12 for all three days and for one month \$48.
29. It's Friday. Instead of going out to dinner with friends where you pay for food and drinks, suggest an alternative way to get together. Check out a park, go to free events, take a walk, volunteer, or take a hike.
30. Think back to your favorite meal when you were a child. Turn back time and make it for dinner tonight. Share a childhood story with your dining companion.
31. Today is the last day of March. Did you make more meals instead of eating out? If so, you may have saved a lot of money, and eaten healthier meals. Will you continue to do this and try it again in April?

### NUMBER OF DAYS COMPLETED