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October 2020 Work Environment and Performance Information for All Employees

Message from the Work Environment and Performance Office Team

Now that the school year has begun in earnest, the reality of juggling telework and virtual school is setting in for many families. Parents always wear a lot of hats, but most aren't used to being employee, parent, teacher, chef, nurse, tech support, and referee all day, every day, and without many of the usual outlets for stress relief.

It's daunting not knowing how long this will go on, but it is important to remember you are not facing this challenge alone. Think about who is on your "team" and how you can work together to make the best of this unusual situation. Your team might include:

- **Your children:** Set aside some time to ask your kids how they think virtual school is going. What's going well and what do they need help with? Then answer the same questions about your work. Come up with some solutions to challenges together, such as setting specific times for homework help or uninterrupted work time. You'll all be practicing empathy and hopefully easing a bit of the struggle.
- **Your partner:** If there is another adult in the house to share responsibilities with, make a plan for balancing your schedules. Lay out non-negotiable meetings or work times and do your best to honor those time frames for each other. Creating some uninterrupted time to be productive can clear your mental to-do list and allow you to be more present during non-work hours.
- **Your supervisor:** No supervisor wants their employee to suffer in silence. Some people may be afraid to admit that they're struggling, but helping employees navigate difficult situations and find success is an important part of being a manager. Trust that your supervisor cares about your work-life balance and is open to helping you find solutions.
- **Your colleagues:** Many of your co-workers may be in similar situations to yours. Sharing your experience can lift some weight from your shoulders and signal to your colleagues that you are a safe person to open up to. Just knowing others relate to what you're going through can help.

- Your agency: The Forest Service offers various webinars and trainings you might find helpful. WEPO is offering a Mindful Parenting and Caregiving webinar twice in October. Please join us! (See below for more details.)
- Yourself! We can be our own worst critics. Rather than being hard on yourself, try being as compassionate with your self-talk as you would be with a struggling friend. These times require adjusted expectations and more than a little grace. Be kind to everyone you see, including the person in the mirror.

Remember, if your struggles become too heavy, there are professionals on your team, too. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is always available to you. Visit the EAP [sharepoint](#) site for more information.

Mindful Parenting and Caregiving Webinar

Join us for a webinar with tips and science-based methods to support parents, caregivers, co-workers, supervisors and managers of employees with caregiving responsibilities as we support one another as a team effort. We are not alone in the pandemic and virtual schooling as we juggle emails, texts, meetings, school, cooking breakfast, lunch, dinner and all the snacks in-between.

Date: Thursday, October 8, 2020

Time: 9:00 a.m. Alaska / 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 11:00 a.m. Mountain / 12:00 p.m. Central / 1:00 p.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Type of Session: Webinar/Adobe Connect Meeting

How to Join: <https://usfs.adobeconnect.com/cr-1000/>

Call-in Number: 1-888-251-2949 or 215-861-0694 Access Code: 2049974##

If the automated recording indicates the conference line is full, please use overflow information:

Dial in: 888-251-2949 or 215-861-0694 Access Code: 6034336#

Please plan to join the audio through the conference line. The conference call line will open 5 minutes prior to the webinar start time.

Hosted By: Michelle Reugebrink, Work Environment & Performance Office

Date: Thursday, October 22, 2020

Time: 9:00 a.m. Alaska / 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 11:00 a.m. Mountain / 12:00 p.m. Central / 1:00 p.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Type of Session: Webinar/Adobe Connect Meeting

How to Join: <https://usfs.adobeconnect.com/cr-1000/>

Call-in Number: 1-888-251-2949 or 215-861-0694 Access Code: 5196052##

If the automated recording indicates the conference line is full, please use overflow information:

Dial in: 888-251-2949 or 215-861-0694 Access Code: 7653162#

Please plan to join the audio through the conference line. The conference call line will open 5 minutes prior to the webinar start time.

Hosted By: Michelle Reugebrink, Work Environment & Performance Office

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) 2020

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) survey should take approximately 20-30 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and your responses are confidential. If an employee was onboarded after October 2019, they will not be included in this year's survey. Additionally, if an employee served on a non-permanent appointment type (e.g., student intern, temporary, noncareer), in October 2019 or prior to, they will not receive a survey. If you have questions, you can email the USDA FEVS help desk at EVAG@opm.gov to inquire about their survey status. Your viewpoints are important because they help us gauge our progress and determine areas to improve our Work Environment.

Mentoring Program

Mentoring Program Accepting Protégé and Mentor Applications

The Forest Service Mentoring Program is accepting applications from employees interested in being a mentor or a protégé. A protégé is an employee who is paired with a higher-grade mentor for the purpose of furthering the protégé's professional development. Protégé applications are being accepted from October 1 through December 31, 2020.

The Forest Service Mentoring Program provides employees with opportunities to broaden their experience, accomplish development goals, and cultivate new skills. Mentoring is an excellent way to transfer institutional knowledge and convey the agency's values, commitments, and expectations.

- Protégés are paired with a mentor one to two grade levels above their own
- Up to 15% official time is approved for use
- Protégé and mentor pairings are between six months to one year long
- After the mentoring period, protégés are expected to give back one year as a mentor

If you are interested in being a protégé, obtain your supervisor's approval and then apply on the [National Mentoring Program Portal](#).

Mentors are needed and interested employees are encouraged to apply to become a mentor. Mentoring is a rewarding experience that enables you to grow your leadership skills while contributing your knowledge, guidance, and support to the protégés professional development. If you are interested, obtain your supervisor's approval and apply on the [National Mentoring Program Portal](#).

For more information, visit the [Work Environment and Performance Office \(WEPO\) Training and Employee Development \(T&ED\) site](#). For questions, contact Doralee Cumpian, Program Manager, at our [T&ED Mentoring Program shared mailbox](#).

Upcoming Webinars and Virtual Learning Opportunities

Conflict Management and Prevention

Conflict Resolution Day Event

Each year the Conflict Management and Prevention Center staff holds an event in honor of International Conflict Resolution Day. “This international day of recognition promotes awareness of mediation, arbitration, conciliation and other creative, peaceful means of resolving conflict. It also obtains national synergy by having celebrations happen across the country and around the world on the same day. October has become a time to promote and celebrate peaceful conflict resolution practices worldwide.” During this event, we will announce and honor the award recipients of our Conflict Resolution Day contest. Please join us to hear their acceptance speeches, and to learn what inspired these artists to share their poems, essays, songs, and art about conflict resolution with us. (Source: <https://acrnet.org/page/ConflictResDay>)

Date: Thursday, October 15, 2020

Duration: 1.5 hours

Time: 9:00 a.m. Alaska / 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 11:00 a.m. Mountain / 12:00 p.m. Central / 1:00 p.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Type of Session: Webinar

How to Join: <https://usfs.adobeconnect.com/cr-1000/>

Presented By: All Conflict Management and Prevention Center (CMPC) Managers

Training and Employee Development

New Employee Onboarding Webinar

This series is designed for newly onboarded employees who need a “quick start” to the Forest Service. The webinars are available as a two-day webinar series featuring presentations covering many topics such as leave, work schedules, health and life insurance, Paycheck8, AgLearn, retirement, and the Thrift Savings Plan. Specialists are available to answer your questions during the presentations. For the complete 2020 schedule and presentation recordings, please visit our [Training & Employee Development webpage](#).

Dates: October 6 - 7, 2020

Duration: 6 hours each day

Time: 7:00 a.m. Alaska / 8:00 a.m. Pacific / 9:00 a.m. Mountain / 10:00 a.m. Central / 11:00 a.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Type of Session: Webinar/Adobe Connect Meeting

How to Join: [Adobe Connect](#) (Audio is available through your computer speakers)

Resilience and Personal Effectiveness

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Winter Series: Helping Change our Response to Stressors, Cope with Anxiety, and Build Resilience through Medical and Science-Based Techniques

MBSR is a program that helps people cope with a range of stressors through mindfulness practice. These practices are a way in which we pay attention to the experiences around and

within us. This practice has been found to bolster resiliency in the face of, and in recovering from, stress—by being in the present moment. As humans, we can often be caught reliving the past and planning the future, but often miss being in the present, which can be detrimental to our health. Practicing mindfulness helps us focus on the “here and now” which can have major impacts on our work effectiveness and satisfaction in all that we do.

Below is a sample of the feedback from employees who recently attended an 8-week MBSR course:

“I don’t yet have the words to express how valuable this course was for me, my family, my co-workers and my staff and anyone else who benefits from a more grounded version of myself. I will tell you this experience has been literally life changing. I can think of no training I have ever taken with this agency which has been as valuable.”

“This was the most valuable training I have taken.”

“The MBSR program in the Forest Service WILL change the Forest Service culture, reduce harassment and bullying, and allow employees to engage more fully in the jobs that they love. I can think of nothing else that will be as effective as MBSR.”

MBSR Winter Series

Dates: Wednesday, February 3 - March 24, 2021 (2 - 2.5 hrs. each Wednesday for 8 weeks)

Duration: 2 – 2.5 hours

Time: 7:00 a.m. Alaska / 8:00 a.m. Pacific / 9:00 a.m. Mountain / 10:00 a.m. Central / 11:00 a.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

We will accept registration until Monday, February 1, 2021. Please email Michelle Reugebrink michelle.reugebrink@usda.gov to be placed on a mailing list and to receive access to materials and communication during the course.

REQUIRED: Add this training manually to your individual development plan (IDP) as a goal.

Type of Session: Conference Call (More information will be provided at sign-up)

Hosted By: Michelle Reugebrink, Work Environment & Performance Office

Weekly Guided Breaks

Mindfulness Meditation is a simple, effective method that can help us be more productive and face setback with resiliency. The right side of our brain, which is responsible for creating new ideas, will increase in activity when for those who meditate regularly. As a result, improved creativity, engagement, and productivity are often a result. To see the weekly guided breaks schedule, please [click here](#).

Type of Session: Conference Call

Hosted By: Michelle Reugebrink, Work Environment & Performance Office

Call-in Number: 1-888-844-9904; Passcode 5637452#

Date: Friday, October 2, 2020

Duration: 15 minutes

Time: 7:00 a.m. Alaska / 8:00 a.m. Pacific / 9:00 a.m. Mountain / 10:00 a.m. Central / 11:00 a.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Duration: 15 minutes

Time: 8:30 a.m. Alaska / 9:30 a.m. Pacific / 10:30 a.m. Mountain / 11:30 a.m. Central / 12:30 a.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Date: Friday, October 30, 2020

Duration: 15 minutes

Time: 7:15 a.m. Alaska / 8:15 a.m. Pacific / 9:15 a.m. Mountain / 10:15 a.m. Central / 11:15 a.m. Eastern & Atlantic Standard

Interested in learning more about meditation and mindfulness-based stress reduction?

Check out this [National Institute of Health website](#) to learn more about the scientific evidence which suggests that “mindfulness meditation—a mind-body practice which cultivates abilities to maintain focused and clear attention, and develop increased awareness of the present—may help reduce symptoms of stress, including anxiety and depression.”

Additional Tools and Resources

Shareable Resources on Suicide Prevention from National Institute for Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-suicide-prevention.shtml>

More Information on the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

<https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-osoh/Pages/EAP.aspx>

National Institute for Health (NIH) Mental Health Resources

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml>

