

# FrontLine

Wellness, Productivity & You!

# Employee



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Employee Assistance Program 651-662-0900 or 1-800-432-5155

## Suicide Prevention

**S**uicides among active-duty members of the military have increased, according to the U.S. Army. Long hours and stress pile on risk, but personal relationships, legal issues, financial problems, and problems on the job often combine with this risk to make a deadly combination. Whether you are civilian or active-duty military, seek help when stress and personal troubles produce feelings of hopelessness. There are many early warning signs never to ignore. For example, thinking about suicide even if you have no intention or plan is called suicidal ideation. It means you need support and guidance right away before life problems or feelings of hopelessness increase. There are other warning signs. Learn about them from helpful resources like your employee assistance service or hotlines like 1-800-273-TALK, which will connect you to local resources.



## Your Heart Needs to Sleep It Off

**Y**ou know that poor sleep makes you cranky and adversely affects your energy level and concentration, but it may also increase your risk of heart disease. A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that more sleep leads to reduced coronary artery calcification (a predictor of future heart disease), with every extra hour of sleep lowering the odds of calcification by about 33 percent. If you are chronically suffering with sleep troubles, talk to your doctor.



Source: 2008 *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 300, pages 2859-2866

## Let Scholarships Find You

**T**housands of scholarships offered by private corporations and foundations are not in the directory at your local library. Little advance notice may precede them and application deadlines may last only weeks. How do you find these opportunities early enough so you or your child can compete? Let them find you, of course. Go to [www.businesswire.com](http://www.businesswire.com). Sign up for free press releases and choose "news by subject." Then select "contest news." You'll get e-mails frequently. Scan each one. You'll be alerted to grand opportunities worth a fortune.

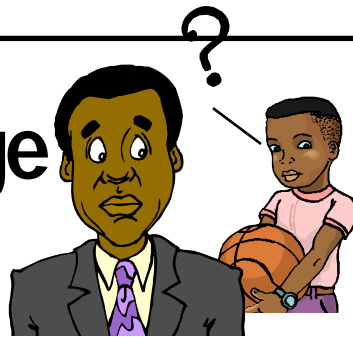


## Teaching Resourcefulness to Your Child

**L**ife's stumbling blocks provide valuable learning opportunities for your children, so don't be too quick to assert your authority or "go on the march" in order to fix problems for them, unless it's a safety issue such as bullying or assault. Instead, teach your child to use appropriate resources like guidance counselors and helpful literature like tips on conflict resolution to solve problems. Stay involved by giving feedback and advice, but also leave space for your child to figure out what works and what doesn't. You aren't throwing your child to the wolves when you back off – you're helping build independence and problem-solving skills that will pay off big down the road.

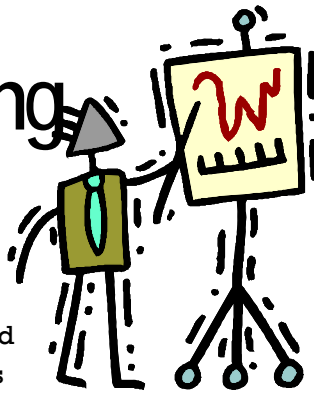


## Answering Tough Teenage Questions



**I**s 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](http://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.

## Staying Up During the Downturn



**F**inancial 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.

## Slay the Energy Vampires



**A**re 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 coffee-maker 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.

## Go Natural in Your Spring Cleaning



**D**on’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.