



Summer 2014

Your EAP news

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

855-223-9277

Website: anthemEAP.com Login: Commonwealth of Virginia

Vacation travel safety

Enjoy your vacation by playing it safe. Even though you are taking some time off from work, remember not to take time off from safety. Here are some points to consider before you go and while you are away.

Securing your home:

- Make sure your home is secure before leaving for vacation.
- Keep shades and blinds in their normal position.
- Arrange for someone to pick up your mail and newspapers.
- Lock all doors and windows.
- Activate home alarm.
- Turn off all gas pilots and water faucets.
- Set timer to turn lights on and off or have someone check your house periodically.
- Arrange to have grass mowed or snow shoveled while you are away.

Packing your bags:

- Take only the essential credit cards. Plan to use credit cards or travelers checks as opposed to cash.
- Pack as lightly as possible. Cumbersome bags will slow you down.
- Use inconspicuous suitcases and bags. Designer bags can draw unwanted attention.
- Keep valuables and medication in carry-on baggage.

In this issue:

- Vacation travel safety
- Is your teenager bored? How about volunteering?
- Making the most of small talk
- Helping parents get ready for back-to-school

While you are out and about:

- Don't display jewelry, cameras or other expensive items.
- Check maps before you go so you can tour confidently.
- Stay in well-lit, well-traveled areas.
- Always lock your car when parked.
- Travel together, and keep an eye on children.

US Department of Health and Human Services website: *Vacation travel safety* (accessed January 2014): foh.dhhs.gov.

Is your teenager bored? How about volunteering?

Many teenagers and young adults have a considerable amount of spare time, particularly in the summer and during school breaks. You can encourage your child to take advantage of these times by exploring a new interest, planning for the future, pursuing a hobby or skill or by volunteering for a worthwhile endeavor. Kids don't usually think about it, but volunteering can give your child the opportunity to develop interests, challenge capabilities and identify new strengths and talents. Talk to your teenager about the reasons people volunteer.

Learn about an organization or activity of interest

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

Gain a new perspective

Homeless shelters are found in most cities and welcome volunteers to assist with preparing meals, organizing food drives or working behind the scenes in the business office. Spending a few hours at a senior citizen's center will raise awareness of the challenges and issues of seniors.

Find a new, stimulating activity

Teenagers can reshelve books at the local library. They can care for abandoned dogs and cats at a local animal shelter. Many state parks offer volunteer programs where teenagers can be involved in educational programs, trail building or groundskeeping. Smaller charities and organizations could use help creating or maintaining websites. Your child also could help by raising money to pay for the website, as funds are limited for these organizations.

Learn to serve 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 disadvantaged people. The Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) programs are always in need of volunteers who can motivate children and tutor them in reading.

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

- Local city government offices.
- The local Chamber of Commerce.
- The local community center or community service office.
- Local community colleges and universities.
- Local hospitals.
- The United Way.
- The Salvation Army.
- Your place of worship.
- The local newspaper.
- The local police or fire department.
- The local veterinarian.
- Local radio or television stations.
- The local parks and recreations office.
- The Reserve Officer Training Course (ROTC).
- The local YMCA/YWCA.
- The Boys and Girls Club.
- The local mentoring program or Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America.
- The state or county employment development department.
- The local high school career center.
- Amusement parks, local festivals or fairs.
- Political campaigns (during an election year).
- A toll-free phone number phone bank.

One of the hardest parts of volunteering can be finding a situation that best fits the personality of your teenager, but it's worth the effort. Volunteering teaches children a lot about themselves and about others.

Workplace Options: *is your teenager bored? How about volunteering?* (accessed December 2013).



Making the most of small talk

It's very easy to play down the importance of small talk. To the people who are good at starting casual conversations and connecting with others, it's second nature. But to the rest of us, social situations and one-on-one encounters can leave us feeling unprepared. Let's face it: The ability to meet and greet and make people comfortable does make a big difference. Why? Because we live in a land of first impressions and we don't always get a second chance. So even if "expert chitchat" isn't on the top of your resume, here are some ways of handling a challenge that could open doors.

Names come first

It might sound obvious, but it's rule No. 1: The simplest way to approach someone is to introduce yourself by name. Forget about coming up with a witty opener. Stick with "Hi, I'm _____," or if you're in a formal mood, "Hello, my name is _____." Whatever the occasion or greeting is, start by putting your name out there. This is true even if you've met the person before or are pretty sure he or she knows who you are. Don't assume. Reintroduce yourself. It never hurts.

Your second step is to get the other person's name. Again, this may strike you as a no-brainer, but it's the little things that slip our minds when we're uncomfortable — which is why people can forget to offer their name in response. So if a prompt is necessary, go ahead with, "And you are?"

After learning the person's name, repeat it out loud. This trick is pretty much guaranteed to help you remember names. If you can, fit the name into the conversation later to reinforce it.

Looks do count

We're not talking physical looks here. We're talking eye contact and awareness. It's important that you look the other person in the eye while talking. This doesn't mean staring. It means directly facing them, engaging their focus and staying connected – not allowing your eyes to wander off mid-sentence or roam around the room when listening.

Also, a firm handshake should generally accompany an introduction for both men and women. In most cases, the physical act can start to break down psychological barriers. Then, during the conversation, make yourself available by giving the other person your full attention. Stay aware of your own body language, and pick up clues from his or hers.

It's not about you

OK. This is really the No. 1 small-talk rule: Don't talk so much as listen. As much as you're able, let the other person do the talking by asking questions. When given encouragement, most people are quite willing to share information about themselves and express their opinions. So rather than bringing up topics that allow you to impress someone with your expertise, turn it around.

Find out about their interests, likes, dislikes and experiences. Ask questions that are open-ended and lead to other questions. When you discover common ground and start to tell the story about the time when you got in trouble as a kid, catch yourself. Keep your contribution short and sweet and bring it back to them.

Of course, this works a lot better if you're genuinely interested. More often than not, people are genuinely interested, especially when they feel appreciated. Listening, really listening, not just biding time and scanning the room for someone better to talk to, takes practice, but it's a skill worth developing.

Keep things light

When approaching a group of strangers or meeting someone for the first time, many people dread the prospect of small talk or dismiss it as meaningless and boring. "Why waste my time?" is a question on some minds (along with "What am I going to talk about?"). But small talk does have a purpose. It helps us learn who people are and how they live their lives.

Talk about the weather, entertainment, books, current events, sports or hobbies. Compliment the other person, as long as it's sincere and right for the situation. Why not offer to buy someone a cup of coffee? It's common courtesy. Stay positive, be yourself and remember to smile.

Are there forbidden topics when it comes to small talk? Probably. As a general guide, avoid talking about religion, politics, marriage, divorce or sex when you're just getting to know someone, whether personally or professionally. There are always exceptions. To judge each situation, pay attention to whether the other person seems comfortable with your discussion. You don't want anyone to be embarrassed about what they've shared with you. And if you find the conversation becoming emotionally charged during a strictly social interaction, change the subject.

Is that it?

Even if things are going well, and you wish you could go on talking forever, let the other person decide how long the conversation lasts. Look for signals from his or her body language. Listen to his or her choice of words and when it's time, make a graceful exit. Remember that by definition, small talk is just that: a short chat.

Why put so much time and energy into mastering the fine art of small talk? Because "Why bother?" chatter often marks the beginning of a relationship. You never know who might become an important part of your life or what conversations will later seem important. Becoming adept at that bothersome little thing called small talk can truly pay off.



Helping parents get ready for back-to-school

Summer is a time when routines and schedules go out the window, days are usually carefree and bedtimes are pushed back. But those relaxing days can make going back to school difficult for both parents and students. With some planning, however, the switch from summer to fall doesn't have to hurt quite as much. Here are some tips for going back to school.

- **Set sleep habits.** Ease the change back to early mornings by setting a bedtime. Getting enough sleep is important for school performance. If your child stays up late in the summer, start setting back the bedtime a little more each night until it's back where you want it. Setting it back slowly will make early school hours easier to handle.
- **Establish a study space.** Create a specific place in the house for students to do homework, whether it's at the kitchen table or in their room. Make sure there's plenty of light and that it's free from distractions. Set a regular time for them to work, before dinner or right after school, so it becomes part of their daily routine.
- **Stay healthy.** Kids tend to be more active in the summer. You can keep those habits going during the school year by adding physical activity to family time. Instead of watching TV or playing video games after dinner, try a sunset walk. Maybe even sign up and train for a charity walk. It's also important to pack a healthy lunch filled with protein, fruits, vegetables and water.
- **Schedule help.** Before the year begins, figure out who will drop off and pick up your child each day, and keep a calendar to remind yourself of after-school activities and special events. If your child needs help with homework or school projects, set aside library time or sign up for after-school tutoring. And be sure to keep an open dialogue with your child's teacher so there won't be any surprises.
- **Spend less.** Buying new clothes and school supplies can be stressful on your budget. You can save money by recycling certain supplies. Hunt for deals online, where you can find discounted prices on everything from uniforms to lined paper.

USA.gov website: [Helping parents get ready for back-to-school](https://www.usa.gov/helping-parents-get-ready-for-back-to-school) (accessed August 2013); [blog.usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov/blog).



Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the trade name of: In Colorado: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc. In Connecticut: Anthem Health Plans, Inc. In Georgia: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia, Inc. In Indiana: Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. In Kentucky: Anthem Health Plans of Kentucky, Inc. In Maine: Anthem Health Plans of Maine, Inc. In Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area): RightCHOICE® Managed Care, Inc. (RIT), Healthy Alliance® Life Insurance Company (HALIC), and HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates administer non-HMO benefits underwritten by HALIC and HMO benefits underwritten by HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates only provide administrative services for self-funded plans and do not underwrite benefits. In Nevada: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc., dba HMO Nevada. In New Hampshire: Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire, Inc. In Ohio: Community Insurance Company. In Virginia: Anthem Health Plans of Virginia, Inc. trades as Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Virginia, and its service area is all of Virginia except for the City of Fairfax, the Town of Vienna, and the area east of State Route 123. In Wisconsin: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wisconsin (BCBSWI), which underwrites or administers the PPO and indemnity policies; CompCare Health Services Insurance Corporation (CompCare), which underwrites or administers the HMO policies; and CompCare and BCBSWI collectively, which underwrite or administer the POS policies. Independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. ® ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield names and symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.