

# EMPLOYEE WELLNESS UPDATE



SFMTA

Moving Forward Together *in Health*

May 2022



Covering the areas of Fitness, Nutrition, Mental/Emotional Well-being and Financial Health since 2010, the [Employee Wellness Update](#) is committed to providing information that educates and encourages SFMTA employees to take charge of their daily lives and to set healthy lifestyle goals.

To learn more about Wellness programs and initiatives, visit the Wellness Program intranet page ([wellness.sfmta.com](http://wellness.sfmta.com)). Questions, comments or submissions? Email us at [wellness@sfmta.com](mailto:wellness@sfmta.com).

You can also request link-enabled PDF versions of the newsletter.



## Mental Health Awareness Month

May is a time to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining our [mental health](#). Some people think that only people with mental illness have to pay attention to their mental health. The

truth is: we all do. Our emotions, thoughts and attitudes affect energy, productivity and overall health. Good mental health strengthens our ability to cope with everyday challenges and is essential to creating the life we want.

This year's theme is "[Back to Basics](#)." After more than two years of pandemic living, many people are realizing that stress, isolation and uncertainty have taken a toll on their emotional well-being. If you have concerns, take time to ask yourself about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to see if this is part of a pattern that may be caused by a mental health condition. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Have things that used to feel easy started feeling difficult?
- Does the idea of doing daily tasks like making your bed now feel really, really hard?
- Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?
- Do you feel irritated, possibly to the point of lashing out at people you care about?

A great starting point for anyone who is ready to start prioritizing their mental health is to take a mental health screening at [MHAscreening.org](http://MHAscreening.org). It's a quick, free and confidential way for someone to assess their mental health and begin finding hope and healing. After that, consider talking to someone you trust about your results, and seek out a professional to find the support you need.

Remember that working on your mental health and finding tools that help you thrive takes time. Change won't happen overnight. Instead, by focusing on small changes, you can develop long-term strategies to support yourself on an ongoing basis. For additional mental health information and resources, click [here](#).

## Bay Area Bike to Wherever Days



Many employees are beginning to return to their offices and bicycles once again are being used for commuting – as well as exercise, recreation, traveling to school, running errands, and more.

In an effort to further encourage people to pedal, the entire month of May has been designated [Bay Area "Bike to](#)

[Wherever Days](#)," with May 20 being highlighted as [Bike to Work Day](#) – drop by your nearest [Energizer Station](#) on your way to work and enjoy free coffee, snacks and giveaways. Plus, select stations will provide basic bike check-up and maintenance.

Throughout the month, organizations in all Bay Area counties are offering classes, activities, education and more to help cyclists pedal safely, while building communities, finding new routes and using bicycles as a means of transportation. For details on each county's activities, visit [bayareabikenet.com](http://bayareabikenet.com).

### [SF Bicycle Coalition Webinar](#)

#### [Smart City Cycling, May 3, 5:30 p.m.](#)

This free class is the perfect opportunity for people interested in biking but intimidated by urban traffic, and anyone already riding to hone their skills. Register at [www.sfbike.org](http://www.sfbike.org).



## Be Salt Smart

[Most Americans consume too much sodium](#). That's because excess sodium is everywhere, especially in processed foods. When your body's sodium levels are too high, your blood pressure rises, in turn raising the risk of heart disease and stroke. Be salt smart by choosing foods

and beverages with less salt and sodium – or none at all.

- **Read the label:** The [Nutrition Facts label](#) will show which packaged foods have lower sodium foods.
- **Eat fruits and veggies:** Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables are almost all naturally low in sodium. Look for canned vegetables labeled "no added salt."
- **Look for cue words:** Items that are "pickled," "brined," or "cured" tend to be high in sodium. Include these foods in your meals sparingly.
- **Put together meals at home:** Making your own meals gives you more control over the salt you eat. Taste your food before adding salt from the shaker.
- **Spice it up:** Flavor your foods with fresh or dried herbs and spices instead of salt. Pick spice blends that do not list salt or sodium on the ingredient list.

For more tips on how to be salt smart, click [here](#).

# SAFETY CORNER

## Social Media Safety



Social media platforms have become an integral part of our online lives. They are great for staying in touch with family and friends, but remember: cyber-scammers and identity thieves are on those platforms too. Here are some guidelines on steering clear of them.

- **Lock down privacy settings:** Learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks. They are there to help you control who sees what you post and manage your online experience in a positive way.
- **Avoid duplicate friend requests:** If you receive a request to connect with someone you thought was already a friend or follower, double-check your friends-list before accepting the invitation. Scammers use bogus accounts cloned from real users to collect "friends," and rely on these "mutual friends" to extend their fake networks.
- **Avoid quizzes and games that require access to profile information:** These are often just information-siphoning schemes that woo you into surrendering your profile info and friends. They can use this info to build lists for spammers.
- **Handle passwords with care:** Switch up your social media passwords immediately if there's a chance you're the victim of a data breach. Use different passwords for each account site, and make sure they're strong.
- **If you have kids, also pay attention their accounts:** Criminals can prey on them, and if their privacy and security settings aren't locked down, it can put their safety and personal information at risk.

For more tips on maintaining social media safety, click [here](#).

For more information about SFMTA Safety Programs, contact: [Gerald D. Williams, CSP \(gerald.williams@sfmta.com\)](mailto:gerald.williams@sfmta.com)  
Manager, Industrial Safety & Environmental Compliance Unit



## Get FREE Help for Personal Concerns

Do you know about the range of **free** personal assistance offered by the **SFMTA CARE Program**? With services provided by **Claremont EAP**, additional CARE Program offerings include **short-term counseling visits** for personal issues (e.g., marital concerns, parenting issues, depression, stress, substance use), **work/life referrals** (e.g., childcare, eldercare, moving/relocation), **legal consultation** (e.g., divorce, child custody, sample will kits) and **financial consultation** (e.g., budgeting, financial planning, tax questions).

For **free** and **confidential** assistance, call **1.800.834.3773**. Counselors can help develop an action plan and refer you to the appropriate resources. Counselors are available at all times. For additional program details, click [here](#) or visit the Claremont EAP website ([www.claremonteap.com](http://www.claremonteap.com)).

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## Showing Respect at Work



Respect is one of the most important traits in the workplace. It allows you and your team to work together to accomplish goals by reducing stress, increasing productivity and collaboration, improving employee satisfaction and creating a fair environment. Every workspace is unique, and employers

and employees can show respect in different ways. Consider the following ways we can foster respect in the workplace:

- **Practice common courtesy:** Taking simple steps like asking your coworkers politely for help or giving them a chance to share their ideas can have a big impact.
- **Pay attention to body language:** Nonverbal communication is also important, such as making eye contact when someone talks to you and nodding to show that you are actively listening.
- **Recognize the accomplishments of others:** Try to praise others for their skills, dedication or successes to show your respect and appreciation.
- **Consider how your words and actions might affect others:** Also called emotional intelligence, this concept refers to understanding how your actions impact the emotions and reactions of others.
- **Help your peers:** Everyone makes mistakes at times. Make an effort to assist your peers if they are struggling, so you can accomplish your goals together.

For more about fostering respect in the workplace, click [here](#).



## No Emergency Fund? Aim for \$250

Like most Americans, you might not have a ton of money saved or invested. And reading [what you should have or should be saving](#) can be overwhelming. So much so, that you just might not start. But a

little bit of money stashed away can help your family avoid a large financial setback.

A [study](#) found that families with even a small amount of non-retirement savings are less likely to be evicted, miss a housing payment or skip a utility bill when income disruptions occur. The savings cushion kicks in with very low savings levels (\$250–\$749). Higher savings levels are associated with even lower hardship levels.

As with any habit, it takes time to increase your financial well-being. Focusing on a smaller goal—say, \$250 to \$750 in your [emergency fund](#), can inspire you to do more. By breaking up your big goal into smaller steps, it's like the snowball method of debt repayment: You're encouraged when you accomplish one of the "smaller" steps or goals, so you keep going.

Once you've hit that \$250, you can keep going. The next step would be to save one month's worth of expenses for housing, transportation, food and insurance. And once you start doing that, you'll build the financial muscle to tackle additional goals.

Regardless of income, building your emergency fund doesn't have to be intimidating. Just start small. For more about starting an emergency fund, click [here](#).