



Navigations

Volume 1, Issue 9

May 2002

Oh, to be Young

Are you new to NOAA? ... Are you enjoying your job duties but want to meet others in the workplace? ... Do you feel like you're the only recent graduate working for the federal government?

Well, then do we have the group for you! The NOAA Employee Worklife Center is currently soliciting interest for a networking group for new, young employees. This group will focus on meeting the unique needs of recently graduated, young employees who have joined the NOAA team. If you are interested in becoming part of this group or have any suggestions for our new employees, please contact Bernadette Anderson at bernadette.m.anderson@noaa.gov or 301-713-1966 x. 129.

In our next issues, we will begin a series of articles focusing on employees new to the agency and the challenges "newcomers". Keep an eye on Navigations to see what interesting, new news we have.

Readers Write In! Insight Meditation

Everyone experiences stress. The level of stress we are experiencing depends on the outside stressors and what actions we take to minimize the effects that they have. Ruby Cubano, one of the Worklife Center users, recently wrote in and shared how Insight Meditation has been a wonderful resource for her in dealing with life stresses. The following shares a little more about this stress reduction technique.

Insight Meditation (known as Vipassana in the Buddhist tradition) is a simple technique that has been practiced in Asia for over 2,500 years. This technique aims for the total eradication of mental impurities and results in feelings of liberation. While its purpose is healing, it's not merely curing diseases, but the essential healing of all human suffering. Beginning with focusing attention on breathing, the practice concentrates and calms the mind. It allows one to see through the mind's conditioning and thereby to live more fully in the moment.

Vipassana is a way of self-transformation through self-observation. It focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body, which can be experienced directly by disciplined attention to the (continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue:

- Support Group for Young Employees
- Facts for Pet Owners
- Meditation - Reader Pick
- International Adoption
- Older American Quiz
- Your Summer Vacation

Smart Facts for Pet Owners

Owning a pet can be a wonderful experience, however, it is not easy work. There is a lot that goes into caring for a pet. Here are some facts you might not know that will be helpful in keeping your dog or cat happy, healthy, and safe.

- You can ensure your lost pets' safe return by placing an ID tag, license tag, microchip or tattoo on him/her.
- Providing appropriate toys for chewing reduces stress and helps control barking.
- Pets can be taught to play with toys (rather than your new shoes) by placing treats in the toys.
- Dogs need a milder shampoo formula than humans.
- Regular grooming can help prevent skin disease.
- Daily dental care can lengthen your pet's life.
- Cleaning agents containing ammonia smell like urine and may attract the dog back to eliminate in the same inappropriate area.
- Having your female pet spayed before her first heat cycle significantly reduces her risk of breast cancer.
- Fleas cause discomfort by biting, and can cause allergies and transmit tapeworms.
- For every flea on your pet, there may be 100 more in your house.
- Obesity in your dog can cause arthritis, diabetes, and even heart failure (this goes for humans too!).
- Dogs should maintain their regular diet while traveling.
- Treats should comprise no more than 10% of a dog's diet.

For additional information on caring for your pet, please contact your local veterinarian or a qualified pet expert.

Source: PetSmart

Need worklife information fast?

E-mail or call in your questions to your Worklife Advisor:
(866) NOAAWLC Worklife.Center@noaa.gov

Older Americans Quiz

May is National Older American's Month. See how prepared you are for caring for the elderly or preparing for your own healthy future by taking this quiz!

1. Cataracts affect 95% of people over the age of 65.
 - a) TRUE
 - b) FALSE
2. Symptoms of hearing loss include:
 - a) always turning up the TV or radio
 - b) often asking for information to be repeated
 - c) misunderstanding what others say
 - d) having difficulties with conversations
 - e) all of the above
3. Decreasing the amount of glare in a home can help an individual with vision problems see better.
 - a) TRUE
 - b) FALSE
4. Delirium can result from all of the following, except:
 - a) dehydration
 - b) surgery trauma
 - c) Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease
 - d) infections
 - e) medication
5. There are two types of kidney failure: acute and chronic.
 - a) TRUE
 - b) FALSE

International Adoption

During the last 11 years, the number of U.S. citizens adopting children from foreign countries has more than doubled. In 2001, over 19,200 children from Asia, Europe, South America, North America and Africa were able to find homes within the United States (<http://www.adoptioninstitute.org>).

International adoption agencies are increasingly opening their doors to waiting American families and the majority of participating countries have become more flexible in accepting individuals and families they would not have accepted in the past. This includes the acceptance of non-traditional families, single parents and older prospective parents. This flexibility in conjunction with the numbers of available children has provided a bridge between children and prospective U.S. parents. This is exciting news for individuals thinking about adopting.

If you are one of these individuals, you should know that the process for an international adoption is very different from a domestic adoption. Navigating through international adoption regulations can seem daunting, but most parents find a way to plow through it because they are invested in adopting a child. (continued on page 3)

Insight Meditation (continued)

physical sensations. Vipassana Meditators believe it is this observation-based, self-exploratory journey to the common root of mind and body that dissolves mental impurity, resulting in a balanced mind full of love and compassion. In Vipassana meditation, the scientific laws that operate one's thoughts, feelings, judgements and sensations become clear. Through this direct experience, individuals begin to understand what makes them grow or regress and the nature of their suffering. Life becomes characterized by increased awareness, non-delusion, self-control and peace.

Vipassana Meditation may not work for everyone. There are many options for dealing with stress and it is up to the individual to decide what works best for them. If you are experiencing stress and looking for suggestions or resources on ways to cope, please contact your Worklife Advisor or the Employee Assistance Program. If you would like to find out more about Insight or Vipassana Meditation, visit <http://www.dhamma.org/> or <http://www.spiritrock.org/>.

International Adoption (cont.)

The following is a list of things to consider:

- Required documents may include, but are not limited to, proof of U.S. citizenship, marriage certificate, divorce papers, evidence of financial support, medical exam, birth certificate for the adopted child, passports, visas, and immunizations.
- Foreign attorney fees and court costs are likely.
- Two separate agency fees may be charged if your local agency does not collaborate with the country from which you wish to adopt.
Transportation, food and lodging costs for you to travel to the child's country may cover the span of only a few days to up to 8 weeks until approval is received. You may also need to purchase travel insurance.
- Foster care for the child during the adoption process may be necessary, and some of the cost can be the responsibility of the prospective parent(s).
- Your child will be eligible for U.S. citizenship either upon entry into the U.S. or upon completing the adoption after arrival.
- The child will need to go through the naturalization process in order to receive full rights as a U.S. citizen.
- The U.S. government requires proof that adoptive families have income/assets that place them 125% or more above the poverty level for a family size that includes the adopted child.

These are just a few considerations involved with international adoption. For those with an interest in exploring this type of adoption, the following resources may be of assistance:

The International Adoption Assistance

has a Web site offers a comprehensive listing of state and national adoption regulations as well as adoption information from participating countries all over the world.

<http://travel.state.gov/adopt.html>

Rainbow Kids is an adoption publication that offers articles and other resources to assist in the international adoption process.

<http://www.rainbowkids.com>

INS offers adoption FAQ's and forms online.

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov>

IRS has information on the Adoption Tax Credit. <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p968.pdf>

Answers to Quiz: Older Americans

1. **A - TRUE** A cataract is one of the eye conditions that can occur so gradually that the person who has it may not be aware of it. Because cataracts cause sensitivity to glare and bright light, it is dangerous for a person with cataracts to drive.
2. **E - All of the above** All of these are symptoms of hearing loss. More than one third of people over the age of 60 experience significant hearing loss. There are several tools available to help with loss of hearing including hearing aids, headphones, and vibrating or light flashing devices.
3. **A - TRUE** Decreased glare can help an individual to see better. To decrease glare in a home, shiny surfaces should be covered and waxy floors should be avoided. Lights aimed at the ceiling or walls create indirect light, which creates a glare, therefore lights should be aimed away from these areas. Blinds and curtains can also cut down glare from the outside.
4. **C - Early Onset Alzheimer's** Delirium is common in older people who have been hospitalized. It can result from illness, medication, a change in location, dehydration or infections. Surgery trauma also is a leading cause. Although delirium resembles depression and dementia, it is a temporary condition that comes on suddenly and/or severely.
5. **A - TRUE** Acute kidney failure, which can often be reversed, means that the kidneys have temporarily stopped working because of a serious infection, severe diarrhea or vomiting, drug poisoning, surgery, or blockage. Chronic kidney disease will lead to scarring of the kidney and end-stage renal disease. In these instances, a person may have to rely on treatment such as dialysis to replace lost kidney function.

Planning Your Summer Vacation

Whether you will be traveling with your family, your friends, or yourself this summer, here are some tips and Web sites to help you plan the vacation of a lifetime.

- When planning a trip, be sure to research your destination beforehand. Find out about such things as the weather or other conditions that may affect your trip, languages, medical precautions, security requirements, and local costs.
- Before departing for your vacation, try to obtain a rough layout of the place you are visiting and the hotel where you will be staying. This provides you with some sense of where you should be going and makes you less vulnerable to tourist crime.
- If you can, purchase your traveling expenses using a credit card. This gives you the security of official documentation, and additional insurance. As a bonus, some credit cards offer frequent flier mile programs.
- Use travelers checks and credit cards in place of cash whenever possible.
- In some instances, such as foreign travel, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company that you will be making purchases from foreign destinations so the company does not put any stops on your spending.
- Make a list of important account and company phone numbers in case your wallet or purse is stolen and keep it in a safe place at your destination (many hotels offer lock boxes).
- If traveling by car, get the car checked and have the oil changed prior to your trip. Don't wait until the last minute, it may take time to get everything done.
- Make sure all of your luggage is labeled with your name, phone number, and address.
- Be sure to pack for flights or train trips with the latest security updates in mind. It saves time to place electronic items in a clear plastic bag to ensure them passing easily through security cameras.
- "Locals" can be a great source of information on things such as restaurants, sites, and shops. But beware! Some hotel attendants get paid to recommend certain places so be sure to ask around to verify any suggestions.
- Finally, The Internet can be a great tool for researching traveling options. When using the Internet, make sure to choose reputable sites to ensure the best deals on flights, hotels, and vacation packages.

Some popular sites include:

<http://www.freetraveltips.com> This site offers tips similar to those listed above.

<http://www.travelocity.com> Travelocity offers a free membership and can be useful for finding flights, cars, vacations, and cruises. You can also use this site to watch fares, book reservations, and set traveling preferences (such as window or aisle seat).

<http://www.expedia.com> Expedia also offers a free membership and can be used to search flights, cars, vacation packages, and cruises. This service offers 24 hour support, "price matching", and reservation booking on-line.

<http://www.priceline.com> Priceline offers a free membership, but charges a \$5.00 service fee. This is the best option for the flexible traveler. Use Priceline to name your own price for airline tickets or hotels. Within an hour your price is accepted or rejected, but be aware that you can choose only the dates you want to travel, not the airlines, flight times, seats, or hotel chain. Also, tickets purchased through Priceline are not eligible for Frequent Flyer plans or upgrades, and cannot be cancelled or changed.

<http://www.quickbook.com> This site is useful for finding hotel rooms in 18 cities with savings up to 60%. Booking from Quick Book is reliable, but the best rooms sell out rather quickly so the key is to book early! There are no penalties for changes or cancellations within a certain time frame.

<http://www.bedandbreakfast.com> This site offers an in-depth listing of Bed and Breakfasts in the U.S., Caribbean and Europe. The site includes descriptions, photos, and contact information.

<http://www.amtrak.com> Amtrak offers a free membership and provides information on weekly on-line savings, train schedules, and accommodations. The Web site offers on-line purchasing and a travel profile.

<http://www.cruisecritic.com> The Cruise Critic contains reviews of cruise ships and itineraries by both travelers and professionals. The site also provides cruise tips and a special area for first-time cruisers.