



wellness IN THE WORKPLACE

words | SUZIE GALVEZ

In ancient China, it is said that a doctor was paid as long as his patient was well. When the patient became ill, the doctor was not paid, for he hadn't done his job.

Wellness at work programs can be considered the modern day equivalent of the ancient Chinese physician. A major goal for wellness at work programs is to show employees the path to a healthy lifestyle and encourage health and wellness on a daily basis.

Corporate wellness programs are designed to help employee moral and prevent health issues such as chronic stress, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart conditions, and other illnesses. Many of the diseases that lead to employee disabilities, workers compensation, absenteeism, and inability to perform at optimum levels are related to lifestyle choices.

Lifestyle and posture are learned behaviors that can be altered and reconditioned. You might be thinking that it is the employee, not the employer, who should be taking ownership of their health, and that is true, but sedentary lifestyles due to working at a desk for eight or more hours a day without implementing any type of stress relief or exercise certainly haven't helped. Continuance will only lead to illness, which will affect the company.

The trend is catching on, as workplace wellness programs are becoming more widespread throughout the country. The bottom line of such programs is healthy employees who tend to be happier and more productive employees.

The benefits for employers are obvious. The company is provided with strategic

*You can control lifestyle
which dramatically influences
health even more than
genetics.*

*-William Roodman, DC,
Advanced Wellness Centre*

online and local health and wellness options

- Lots of online companies offer free exercise and dieting tips. The sites www.Sparkpeople.com and www.bodyiqonline.com are good places to start.
- Advanced Wellness Centre (www.AdvancedWellnessRVA.com) offers complimentary lunch & learn workshops on several wellness topics. They also offer on-site wellness programs individually tailored for your company and employees.
- YMCA offers diet and exercise programs for children and adults.
- Also be sure to check your employer's insurance carrier to see if wellness services are offered via your plan.

advantages by investing money in a program that will hopefully bring them lowered expenses in return, often in the form of better performing workers, lower absenteeism...and lower healthcare costs. Employees are the most valuable asset any company has. By providing workers with wellness services, companies are improving wellbeing and job satisfaction, as well as raising retention rates. The welfare of the employees has a direct impact on the success of the company.

So, why should you, as an employee, take advantage of your workplace wellness program? If you're already doing the "right stuff," then wellness at work will help keep you on the healthy path you've chosen. And if you are not at your personal best, then a wellness program can help you change in multiple ways—from learning to eat healthy, improving your sleep quality, increasing your exercise, changing habits such as excessive drinking, or helping to quit smoking to lowering your risk for chronic diseases!

Using a wellness program can make positive change happen. Not only will you be more able to complete your job responsibilities, but you will also have more energy and vigor to give to your family and friends when you get home.

Another great benefit of wellness programs is a built-in sense of camaraderie with your coworkers. You'll have a chance to experience activities with them that aren't related to work, whether in a walking club or sports team, by lunch together, or by going to the gym. Social support is a very important part of weight loss and getting fit.

By interacting with co-workers, you'll have others to give you encouragement when you need it, as well as to hold you accountable to your goals. Plus, you'll be motivated by seeing other's positive results. By using a wellness program, you will be an important part of the team.

If you are fortunate enough to have a workplace wellness program, by all means take advantage of it! If a wellness at work program is not offered at your company, here are some wellness ideas you might want to suggest that are easy to do and are low to no cost for your employer to help you and your company get on the wellness track.

And since this is the beginning of 2013 ~ it is the perfect time for fresh starts, healthy new habits, and lifestyle improvements!

- Conduct an employee interest survey
- Post healthy tips on your intranet, company newsletter, and bulletin boards
- Host monthly lunch & learns with local health and wellness companies to come in and teach workshops on wellness topics
- Hold a health fair with a variety of preventive screenings
- Offer ergonomic workspace assessments
- Offer health risk assessments
- Schedule workshops on relaxation, stress management, and work life balanced topics
- Offer free chair massages once a quarter
- Encourage employees to sign up for community walks or fitness events
- Negotiate corporate discounts to health and wellness companies
- Create smoke free grounds

So there are a dozen ideas to get your employer started. Feel free to add any ideas that you think would be a healthy way to start 2013 for your company!

Remember – your health and wellness matters to you and to your employer!

Move your body every day. Everyone has the power within to change.

-Hillary Hawkins, MD,
Sheltering Arms Hospital,
Hanover