

YOUR WORKPLACE

Inspired People. Outstanding Results.

The New Wellness

is driven by informed employees, whose expectations for psychologically healthier workplaces are the norm, not the exception. Savvy employers are responding.

Resilience: The key to overcoming challenge

Wellness is about culture, not programs

5 tips to banish stress

The New Frontier of Wellness

In our recent past, corporate wellness programs were well-intentioned but poorly executed, with low participation rates and indifferent results. Today, however, wellness has made a comeback and is now driven by motivated and informed employees, whose expectations for psychologically healthier workplaces are the norm, not the exception. In the war to attract and retain talent, savvy employers are listening carefully, and responding with innovative programs.

For wellness programs to succeed and create a lasting positive impact, they must be part of a company's culture claims Kim Macey, COO of Benefits by Design (BBD), as she shares her corporate culture in "Walking the Talk of Wellness – It's Cultural".

Dr. Jack Muskat shares his view on the holistic approach required for wellness with a bit of humour. Apple has correctly surmised that health care, wellness and lifestyle are the new frontiers for this decade. Enjoy his article, "The New Wellness".

Sharing stories of what works and what doesn't is a profound and meaningful way to learn from others. In the article, "Best Practices for Work-Life Balance" you will read the stories of five companies and why they believe that more flexibility is a solution to disengaged, burned-out employees.

We would like to welcome a new writer to *Your Workplace*. Jennifer Paterson contributes the article, "Group Risk Benefits for Physical, Emotional and Financial Well-being" she argues that most employers provide a range of health-care and financial benefits to staff, but group risk benefits, such as life insurance and disability, are the most central in the optimization of employee well-being because they provide peace of mind to employees and their dependents in the most difficult of circumstances.

The topic of resilience will be a thread that is woven through all issues of *Your Workplace* in 2015. Today, managers should be interested in understanding how they can foster resilience in their employees and organizations so that they can succeed in the face of difficulties such as cost-cutting, downsizings and ever-intensifying competitive pressures. In his article, "Building Resilience in Organizations", Dr. Jamie Gruman tackles the important question of how to build resilience into the fabric of your organization.

And there is much, much more. Enjoy this issue of *Your Workplace* magazine and, as always, please contact us at editorial@yourworkplace.ca with your thoughts, opinions, cheers or jeers. 

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EXERCISE *to* PROTECT YOUR Mental Health

Why your employees should prioritize it

» BY CRAIG DOWDEN, PhD

The Ottawa Citizen ran a headline ‘Depression in the Public Service — a Public Health Crisis.’ The World Health Organization has predicted that depression will be the number two cause of disability-adjusted life years (DALY) on the planet by the year 2020. Other research has found that the cost of stress to U.S. businesses is approximately \$300 billion in lost productivity per year. All signs point to depression and stress as a major problem in today’s workforce.



Not surprisingly, countless initiatives have been launched to counteract this trend. However, there is one powerful and readily available strategy that is within our reach to manage stress. To take the pressure off the mind, one can engage the body.

Exercise not only benefits our bodies by keeping us physically healthy, it also strongly contributes to our mental well-being. Better yet, it can even provide a buffering effect against depression.

A 1999 study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine specifically highlights the restorative impacts of exercise. Depressed patients were assigned to one of three groups: the first group received antidepressant medication, another group was instructed to exercise three times a week for 45 minutes, and the final group combined the medication and exercise regimens.

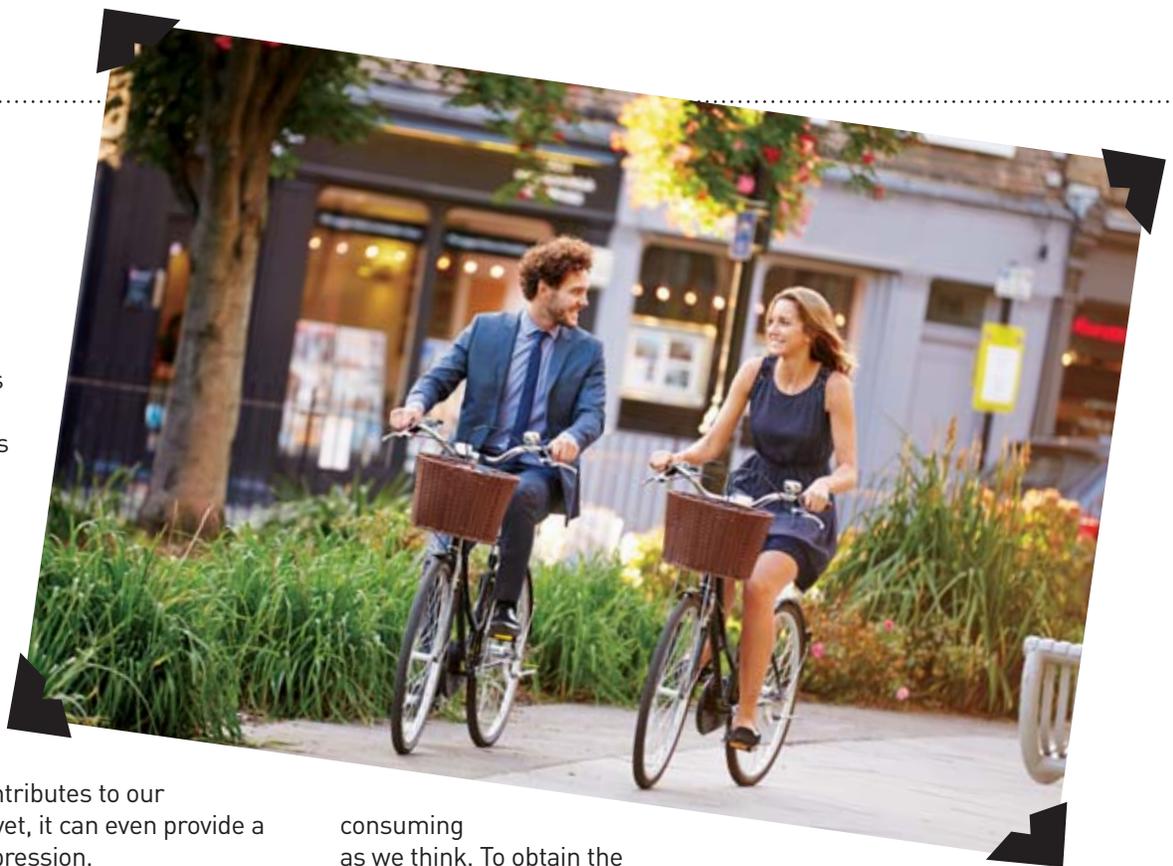
Four months after the intervention, the research team followed up with the participants to assess their psychological well-being. Each group experienced similar gains in their overall level of happiness, regardless of the condition to which they were assigned.

Clearly, the fact that exercise was equally powerful as antidepressants in treating mental health issues was an impressive finding in itself. However, when the groups were tested six months later to determine their relapse rate, even the researchers were surprised.

Of the participants who took the medication, 38% had fallen back into depression. The combination group did not perform much better, as 31% had suffered a relapse. Surprisingly, the exercise group had the lowest relapse rates of only 9%. Not only did exercise elevate participants' moods in the short-term, but it provided a lasting buffer against future episodes of depression.

APPLICATION

In our hectic lives, we may feel that time is a luxury few of us can afford. However, this study shows that enjoying the benefits of exercise may not be as time



consuming as we think. To obtain the highly restorative gains associated with exercise, participants only needed to exercise three times a week for 45 minutes.

We can also work toward creating conditions for success. Essentially, can we design our environment to support our desire to exercise more?

A simple, yet effective strategy highlighted by Shawn Achor in his best-seller, *The Happiness Advantage*, is to go to bed with your gym clothes on so that when you wake up in the morning you can head straight to the gym. As an added bonus, exercising in the morning, before breakfast, has been found to be more beneficial for our bodies, leading to better weight loss and improved insulin management.

Another step involves auditing your calendar to determine when would be the best time to exercise and holding yourself accountable for following through. Integrating physical activity and exercising self-care into your calendars will serve you in the short- and long-term.

CONCLUSION

Being mindful of our mental health should be of paramount concern, yet oftentimes the pace of our personal and professional lives can interfere with that important goal. The above study suggests that setting aside time to exercise can support our mental and physical well-being. Even a relatively small investment can lead to a large payoff. Here's to seeing you in the morning for a run before breakfast! **W**

Craig Dowden Ph.D., focuses on bridging the gap between what science knows and what business does. His firm specializes in the custom design and delivery of evidence-based leadership development programs and services. His main areas of practice include executive and career coaching, workshop facilitation/keynote speaking, employee engagement, and psychometric/personality assessment including 360-feedback.