

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness

News and Views

Work days have their challenges from deadlines to meetings to conference calls. However, staying happy, healthy and fit shouldn't be one of them. On average, Canadian workers spend about 60% of their waking hours on the job. What happens in the workplace can have a huge impact on an employee's overall health and wellbeing. A healthy workplace is a place where we have strong and supportive working relationships, and where we are encouraged to look after our own health both at work and at home. Companies with happy employees outperform the competition by 20%, and happy salespeople close 37% more sales. Being healthy and feeling well at work is about more than just not being sick. To be truly healthy you need to take personal responsibility for your own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.



Your workplace probably feels like your second home. It's a place where relationships are created, where learning occurs, and where we contribute to one another's lives. So why not make that contribution a positive one. Even if at any given time your choices of action are limited, your choices regarding your attitude are not. Always choose a positive attitude. A smile never cost anybody anything and a workday seems to go better when you are surrounded by colleagues that smile. Having a positive attitude about everything you do just naturally brings "fun" to everyday interactions and/or tasks. And, a positive attitude is infectious. People like positive people. They're automatically drawn to a pleasant and upbeat demeanor. Your

business and personal relationships will definitely improve when you employ a positive attitude.



Lunch hour can prove to be hazardous. Whether it's the lunch time meeting at the great Italian place across the street, or the quick burger at the closest fast food joint. Save yourself some cash and some calories by packing your own healthy lunch. With the time you save why not organize a lunchtime walking group with your coworkers. I am sure you are not the only one trying to make healthy choices, you might as well surround yourself with people who are ready to lace up their walking shoes and hold each other accountable. In-office weight loss challenges have always proven to be successful. This is a great team building activity for employees. I know of a few ladies here at York, who put together their own office weight loss challenge, with great success! We can all encourage each other to stay healthy. The truth is no-one achieves much if they work entirely alone. By allowing others to help, you not only increase your chances of success, you also reinforce your relationships along the way.

For those of us who spend long days at our workstations, sitting nearly motionless under fluorescent lights, staring at a screen, exercise can seem like a pipe dream. But could your "work now, exercise later" lifestyle put you at a higher risk for health problems? Studies show that people's overall wellbeing improves significantly if they incorporate

exercise into their workday. The obvious question is, how do you squeeze substantial physical activity into a job that squeezes most of the energy out of you? You may have heard the standard advice for workers looking to fit some fitness into their days. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park your car at the farthest corner of the lot. Use the phone, email less and walk to talk with your coworkers instead. If you are among the most sedentary of the sedentary, these measures will begin to boost your energy and get the blood flowing, but they're really just a start. While office jobs have their challenges, there are ways to incorporate exercise into a workplace environment without ever hitting a gym. Sit on a stability ball instead of an office chair. Even just for an hour a day. Both your core strength and posture will improve. If you drop your pen, bend over and do a few toe touches while picking it up. I know, I know. If you thought stretching at your desk was awkward. Work some stretches in at regular intervals throughout the day, even if they're just for a minute. Torso twists, leg extensions, standing up and sitting down several times without using your hands, shrugging your shoulders to release tension in your neck and shoulders, circle your wrists and hands, squeeze your glutes and hold for 30 seconds. Release, and repeat 10 times. Buy a hand gripper and use it at your desk to work out your forearms and hands. If you're at a standing desk, do calf raises for one full minute. Use your well-deserved breaks for de-stressing with some form of fitness. When you get tired of those dull board room walls. Step outside them and go for a walking meeting with your coworkers. Not only will you all get a little exercise, but the change of scenery is often beneficial to creative thinking, brainstorming and overall performance.

Instead of viewing work life balance as something we do for ourselves, a personal indulgence that takes us away from our work, it's time we started considering workplace wellbeing as part of the work itself.

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