

December Wellness: Testing our Stress

By Anne Praino

It's the holiday season! A cherished time for many — chock full of family, friends, good times, good food...and **stress**. According to a poll conducted by verywellmind.com, more than 80% of us find the holiday season to be 'somewhat' or 'very' stressful—that's a high number. Where does it come from? The problem with this time of the year is that everything goes into overload. There are too many events, too much food, too much good cheer, too much work and simply put — too much "holiday." We lose that healthy balance of moderation that we fight to maintain all throughout the year. (Scott, 2019)



A problem that we often fail to address that comes with the holiday season is actually a by-product of the changing of seasons from fall to winter. As the days get shorter and the plunging temperatures cause many of us to retreat indoors, many people are prone to some degree of depression known as seasonal affective disorder or (SAD). It's a subtle but very real condition that can cast a pall over the whole season and be a source of stress and unhappiness during a time that people are expected to feel just the opposite. (Scott, 2019)

Past studies have found that 68% of workers were less productive during the month of December. Nearly half of workers admitted to doing 10-20% less work at this time of year. Juggling the pressures of home and work are challenging at best. Therefore, it is important that we all find a way to help ease the stress as it will ultimately have negative impact on our productivity. (Graham, 2015)

And that's just December...In general, year-round, U.S. workers put in more hours on the job than any other industrialized nation, where the trend has actually been just the opposite. According to an International Labor Organization study done in 2000, Americans put an extra 40-hour work week in compared to ten years prior. Before that, Japan had the record, but Americans now work almost a month more than the Japanese and three months more than Germans! (www.stress.org, n.d.)

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Once we combine those statistics with the “most wonderful time of the year,” December becomes a time bomb. Not only are we dealing with increasing numbers of deadlines, but we have overactive personal lives as well. **Tycor has researched some of the highly recommended methods to keep stress in check.** **Exercise.** Exercise is a natural go-to for stress relief because it pumps up your endorphins releasing your “feel good” transmitters. **Eating Well.** Certain foods will increase and decrease your blood sugar too rapidly making you feel tired (think burgers, French fries, chocolate) and in doing so can negatively affect your mood. **Drink Water.** Not only does water help you to stay alert, but dehydration leads to higher stress levels (higher cortisol levels) making it harder to deal with day-to-day issues. Of course, there are many more ways to address stress, but Tycor was in search of a method that we could easily incorporate into our work day and encourage others to join us in rediscovering that balance between work and home at this most challenging time. (Heitzman, n.d.)

That being said, we have decided on a simple “anyone can do it” tactic to fight the holiday havoc on our mind, body and soul, a daily activity that won’t be complicated or cumbersome and won’t create MORE stress. **The stress ball.** It was in the 80s when these little magical, squishy balls appeared commercially and became quite useful around the workplace. Some trace their origin back to the Han Dynasty in China when warriors used squeezing walnuts as a way to stay mentally focused and nimble during moments of high anxiety. Stress balls are designed to distract from tense workplace situations and offer a physical release. They have even been proven to aid in the prevention of common ailments including arthritis, rheumatism, and poor blood circulation. (Mertes, 2018)

Ok, so here it is. **For the month of December, Tycor challenges you to take a stress ball in hand, twice a day, every day.** Concentrate on the ball and don’t worry about anything else. Clear your mind. Use the stress ball to transmit the stress in your body and mind into the palm of your hand. Once you are done, you should feel as though your mind is just a little bit more clear and the weight on your shoulders — just a little bit lighter. And the stress you were feeling — just a little bit less.

It’s almost too easy. Happy Holidays from ours to yours!

Sources

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