

Chill Out

Corporate America and individuals in it are starting to wake up to the fact that a stressed out employee is less productive, less reliable, and, more likely to incur sick time and tax health benefits. It has been estimated that stress-related ailments cost companies about \$300 billion a year in increased absenteeism, tardiness and the loss of talented workers.

Companies that have invested time and resources for stress reduction programs and even training in meditation are beginning to see the payoff. David Ballard of the American Psychological Association (APA) states the “organizations are finding that creating a psychologically healthy workplace is not only the right thing to do – it’s also good for business.”

Here’s a sampling of the APA's awards for best practices:

Abacus Planning Group allows a one-month sabbatical every five years.

Spokane’s Downtown Honda provides professionally facilitated group meetings that focus on quality improvement, team dynamics, priority-setting, decision-making, and employee recognition.

Tower Companies, one of Washington D.C.’s largest real estate development companies, pays the cost of meditation classes and according to Dianne Delia-Sumner states that “meditation changes the quality of your life. You can deal with problems,” she says, noting that everyone comments on her coping skills and how young and relaxed she looks.

The January 16, 2006 issue of *Time* magazine was focused on practices that sharpen your mind. One piece covers Walter Zimmermann, a high dollar Wall Street energy analyst. While most of his peers burned out years ago, Zimmermann attributes his brain’s enduring sharpness to regular meditation that helps him maintain the clarity he needs for quick, insightful analysis.

The body of research is starting discover that meditation promotes positive measurable changes in brain functioning and is not to be relegated to the list of questionable “new age” practices.

Moral of story: If you are an employee - implement some of these practices your self and make your organization’s management aware of these trends. If you are an employer - investigate instating some programs that will improve your employee’s psychological well being and your business.