

## Workplace Wellness – Get Physically Active and Feel Great!

By Linda Scovern, ODH Wellness Committee



*“Wow – that was just what I needed! Great workout!”* I think I can go back to my desk and face the rest of the day now!” Have you ever said this or heard a co-worker express these feelings?

There are seven dimensions of wellness:

- 1) social;                      2) emotional;                      3) spiritual;
- 4) environmental;    5) occupational;                      6) intellectual; and
- 7) physical.

All are important, but in the workplace, addressing physical wellness can have great benefits. Physical wellness includes everything in your life that keeps you in top condition, such as eating healthy foods and exercising. Some well-known benefits of being physically well or active include: helping to control weight; reducing your risk of certain chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancers); strengthening muscles, bones; and promoting better sleep habits. Some other benefits that produce an immediate effect are reducing stress and improving your mood!

Several research studies have confirmed that people have more of a positive mood, receive a boost in energy and feel happier after engaging in physical activity. More good news—these feelings along with a reduction of stress—happens after a minimum of ten minutes of exercise. That is enough time to fit into most everyone’s work schedule!

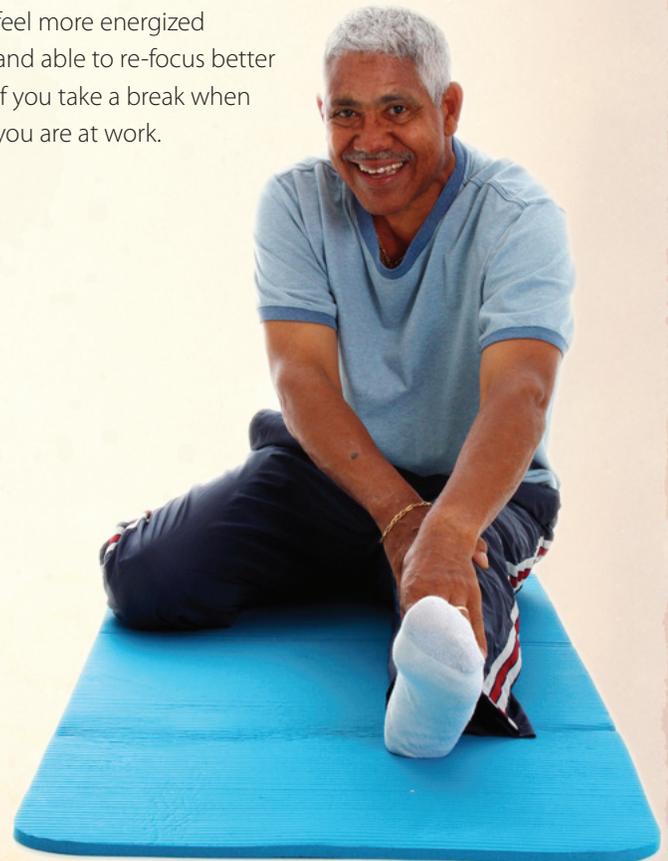
Did you know that while you are at work, you can get these physical and mental health benefits? At the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the agency provides an on-site fitness center that is operated and maintained by ODH’s Fitness Center Wellness Committee, through employee membership fees. The fitness center offers ODH members group fitness

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classes, yoga classes and informal opportunities for staff to work out together. It also provides cardiovascular and strength equipment for employees to use when they have a break during the day or outside of work hours. Many take advantage of their fifteen minute breaks to do quick workouts or use their lunch break for a longer session or group class.

There are other opportunities for physical activity as well. ODH’s Wellness Committee supports the “Dare to Stair” program, which encourages using the stairs instead of elevators, walking challenges, and biking to work. The committee also developed a map of walking routes around the area, complete with distances and landmarks, for those who prefer to exercise when the need arises!

**The bottom line:** Exercise and being physically active are great ways to increase your happiness, improve your mood, reduce stress and gain health benefits while having fun! You will also feel more energized and able to re-focus better if you take a break when you are at work.



# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

by "Live and Work Well"

A form of depression that follows a seasonal pattern, SAD appears and disappears at the same times each year. People with SAD usually have symptoms of depression as winter approaches and daylight hours become shorter. When spring returns and the days become longer again, they experience relief from the symptoms and a return to a normal mood and energy level.

## Signs and Symptoms

Like other forms of depression, the symptoms of SAD can be mild, severe, or anywhere in between. Milder symptoms minimally interfere with someone's ability to participate in everyday activities, while more severe symptoms can interfere much more.

The symptoms of SAD are the same as those of depression, but occur during a specific time of year. It's the seasonal pattern of SAD — the fact that symptoms occur only for a few months each winter (for at least 2 years in a row) but not during other seasons — that distinguishes it from other forms of depression.

## Symptoms of SAD may include:

- ▼ **Changes in mood:** sadness, irritability, and/or feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness most of the time for at least 2 weeks; tendency to be more self-critical and more sensitive than usual to criticism; crying or getting upset more often or more easily
- ▼ **Lack of enjoyment:** loss of interest in things that are normally enjoyable; feeling like tasks can't be accomplished as well as before; feelings of dissatisfaction or guilt
- ▼ **Low energy:** unusual tiredness or unexplained fatigue
- ▼ **Changes in sleep:** sleeping much more than usual (which can make it difficult for kids with SAD to get up to get up and get ready for school in the morning)
- ▼ **Changes in eating:** craving simple carbohydrates (i.e., comfort foods and sugary foods); tendency to overeat (which could result in weight gain during the winter months)
- ▼ **Difficulty concentrating:** more trouble than usual completing assignments on time; lack of usual motivation (which can affect school performance and grades)

**Less time socializing:** spending less time with friends in social or extracurricular activities

The problems caused by SAD — such as lower-than-usual grades or less energy for socializing with friends — can affect self-esteem and leave people feeling disappointed, isolated, and lonely, especially if they don't realize what's causing the changes in energy, mood, and motivation.

## Who Gets It?

About 6 in every 100 people (6%) experience SAD. Although it can affect kids and young teens, it's most common in older teens and young adults, usually starting in the early twenties. Like other forms of depression, females are about four times more likely than males to develop SAD, as are people with relatives who have had depression. Individual biology, brain chemistry, family history, environment, and life experiences also might make certain people more prone to SAD and other forms of depression.

The prevalence of SAD varies from region to region, and it's far more abundant among people who live in higher latitudes. For instance, one study found the rates of SAD were seven times higher among people in New Hampshire than in Florida, suggesting that life farther from the equator is a risk factor for SAD.

However, most people don't experience seasonal depression, even if they live in areas where days are much shorter during winter months. Those who do might be more sensitive to the variations in light, and undergo more dramatic shifts in hormone production depending on their exposure to light.



## Six Tips for Relaxing

1. Staying home? Promise yourself you'll avoid unnecessary housework while you're off.
2. Turn off your cell phone and don't check your e-mail.
3. Get lots of activity.
4. Avoid stress.
5. Try something new.
6. Take care of yourself.

# A Healthy Workplace



Having a healthy workplace requires effort on the part of everyone. It is important to keep in mind those qualities that make for a healthy workplace. Here are some important qualities to strive for:

**Respect** – Respect means sensitivity to individual needs, encouragement of others' input, tolerance for difference of opinions, recognition of each person's right to privacy and self determination, recognition of others' contributions, avoidance of discrimination and exploitation.

**Honesty** – Honesty in the work environment means open and accurate communication; one's behavior should match what he/she says.

**Commitment to Quality** – Commitment to quality is a moral and practical matter. It entails attention to relationships with all co-workers, cutting waste, innovation, and caring about one's work.

**Information** – Issues related to "how to improve" rely upon access to relevant information and feedback pertaining to job-related performance.

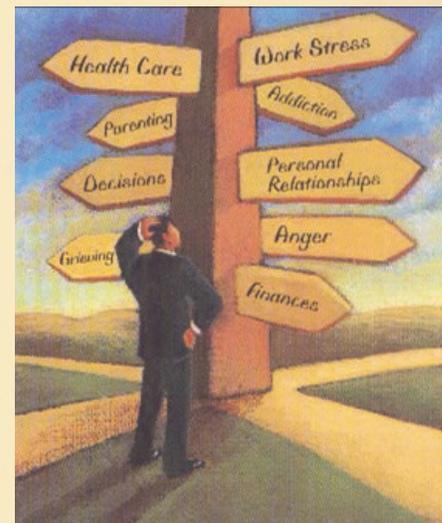
**Empowerment** – Empowerment means, where possible, freedom from red tape and fear of making mistakes. It involves getting staff to feel strongly that what they do and what they think is important for the organization as a whole. Training is an important component of empowerment.

**Team Spirit** – The basic work unit is usually not the individual, but a series of overlapping work unit relationships. People do not work in isolation. Being on a team that one feels good about can greatly enhance morale and performance.

**Cheerleading** – Cheerful attitudes are contagious. Environments where support and encouragement are freely given foster a positive feeling about one's workplace.

## Give EAP A Try Today

Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won't get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don't know if it's burnout, loss of motivation, depression, or all three? Living in financial fear? Can't sleep? Late for work too often? Concerned about a teenager's unusual behavior? Has use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line: Never wonder if your concern is suitable for the EAP. Extremely strict confidentiality laws govern the protection of EAP records. They have rare exceptions. So if you've been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give the EAP a try today.



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