

Wellness @ Work: Incorporating Health Promotion into the Workplace

March 4, 2014 | Lauren Mathany and Tara Wilson: Organizing Physical Activities in the Workplace

What challenges have you come up against?

- Misalignment of organizational goals with health promotion and wellness goals
- Physical activity not a priority for administrators
- Need to get buy-in from those higher-up
- Must be simple to implement
- Some cases where the organization's goal is aligned with health in theory, but there are no 'champions' to push forward programming
- Financial resources are thin
- ROI research is needed

What have you done in your workplace that has worked well for supporting the physical wellness of employees?

- Starting off with informal activities. Your wellness program doesn't have to begin with something really formal and costly.
- Offering onsite classes – like yoga and Pilates.
- Offering a discount to a gym/health benefit.
- Flexible work hours – encourages employees to take a little extra time to get in their exercise.
- Charging for classes creates a perceived value. Free classes are not always as successful.
- Accessible stairs. Stair programs and challenges help to increase usage.
- Offering reimbursement for fitness-related expenses
- Check with your insurance provider, as they may offer something
- Promoting a 'culture' of wellness (e.g., Posting signs encouraging stair use vs. elevators), and acceptability of fitting in physical activity by management at all levels

How can we build on these successes to enhance the future of workplace wellness?

- Measure wellness through engagement. Most organizations already measure engagement. Tap into the results to determine where some areas of need are.
- "Guarding Minds at Work" survey or other employee health surveys are helpful to get started.
- Needs assessment to determine what employees want in the workplace.
- Get the employee buy-in. Employees need to believe and support in the program too!
- Have a "well day." This could be from building points in wellness programs; employees get to take a wellness day off after a certain number of points are accumulated.
- Team building. Doesn't have to be intense activity, but something to get team members together in a fun, uplifting environment.
- Health and wellness policies. Support from the top down is ideal.