a WORKING STRUGGLE
Anxiety & depression in the office

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Decadent birthday cakes and salty office snacks, hours sitting and staring at a blue screen and the repetitive stress of tapping at your keyboard. As an administrator, the office often feels like a minefield threatening to derail your health.
It doesn’t have to be: Hours spent in the office can be chock full of chances to build healthy habits. Find ways to incorporate these habits into your work day.

8:00
Ditch your car and walk, bike, or take public transit to work. In a 2015 study, active commutes lasting over 10 minutes were associated with a 4.4 pound weight loss, and a 15.4 pound loss was associated with travelling for longer than 30 minutes. Another study published in a 2014 issue of Preventative Medicine found that non-drivers experienced improved well-being—including an uptick in concentration and reduction in strain.

9:00
Perk up with a cup of joe. Research brims with overwhelming evidence at the health benefits of coffee: a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke are all associated with the moderate intake of coffee. A September 2015 review of studies also concluded that drinking coffee was associated with a decreased risk of depression. But remember to be moderate with using additives like sugar or whole milk in your coffee confections.

9:20
According to the Vision Council, you can offset digital eye strain by using the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, take 20 seconds to look at an object 20 feet away.

10:00
Recent research has exposed that sitting for extended periods of time increases the risk of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and death. So, heed the advice of this April 2015 study: Trade at least two minutes of your sitting time for a casual stroll around the office every hour—an action that might be associated with a substantially lower risk of dying. The bonus: Two minutes of light intensity walking each hour can burn up to 400 calories each week.

To keep you on your feet, Veronica Marsden, president of Tri Fit, an Oakville, Ontario-based national fitness and wellness consulting organization, recommends administrators also create inconveniences like hand delivering messages instead of sending emails or using the washroom or coffee stations furthest from your desk.

Marsden also suggests changing positions and stretching every 30 to 60 minutes with upper body movements like shoulder shrugs, shoulder rolls, or hand rotations to relieve tension and prevent the repetitive stress injuries that often plague administrators.

Snack Drawer Essentials
Stock up on fresh fruit like apple slices, dried fruit like mango or pineapple (sans added sugars), baby carrots, or olives. Pair these fibrous munchies with snack-friendly fats and proteins found in cheese sticks, yogurt, or single serving nut butter packets.
Cultivating Healthy Office Culture

Think the rest of your office could use a nudge in a healthy direction? Use the following tips from Marsden, president of Trifit, an Oakville, Ontario-based national fitness and wellness consulting organization, to kick-start a health culture shift in your workplace:

- Swap the candy dish at your desk for healthy treats such as carrot sticks, mini tomatoes, fruit, or a seed and nut sampler.
- Make each Monday a ‘Smoothie Monday’: Each week, a different department in the office mixes smoothies for the office.
- In lieu of the Friday deluge of doughnuts and sweet treats, start “Fresh Fruit Friday.”
- Greet new staff by introducing yourself while handing them a healthy treat like trail mix or fruit.
- Usher in new office traditions—for example, at Valentine’s Day, nix the candy hearts and chocolate for a ‘Wall of Gratitude’, where employees can write notes to express their thanks to each other.

12:00

Don’t stay glued to your desk scanning Facebook or reading emails during lunch, says Seattle-based registered dietician Kerri-Ann Jennings. Relocate to the break room—or go outdoors—to signal to yourself that it’s mealtime, allowing you to eat mindfully.

“When you’re eating mindfully you can stay in touch with: How hungry am I? Am I enjoying this food? And that also helps you to feel when you’ve eaten enough for your hunger level,” explains Jennings.

Jennings also advises planning ahead for lunches.

“It’s a lot easier to make healthy choices when we plan to make healthy choices,” says Jennings.

3:00

That craving for sugar or caffeine in the afternoon slump may not be what you think it is, suggests Jennings.

“It might be an actual hunger, but it might not be—it might just be that you’re getting bored; you’re getting antsy for the rest of your day,” says Jennings.

Try going for a walk or socializing—anything to break your routine, says Jennings, to see if this is an adequate pick-me-up. If you do need a snack, Jennings recommends something entertaining, like crunchy apple slices with nuts or carrots with yogurt dip.

5:00

Head to a yoga class with colleagues, an exercise that may include benefits like reducing stress, heart rate and blood pressure, and easing anxiety, depression and insomnia.

About the author:
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