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Media Release – Workplace Stress Management - What We Learnt During COVID19

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Workplace Stress Management - What We Learnt During COVID19

It is a fair statement to say that 2020 so far has been a year of challenges. Massive changes to the structure of our everyday lives, along with global and local uncertainty have raised the anxiety across the country.

One of the areas that this stress became immediately apparent for many was professionally, as sudden changes in work arose with most workers moving into a physical situation of no separation between work and life. Those with already stressful work environments were subjected to a whole new range of circumstances as businesses set about operating in a new way.

The issue of workplace stress is not new. In fact it's an area of concern that organisations here and across the world have been investigating over the last few years. It doesn't help when a workplace becomes home based and there is little room for movement and physical activity, which is one of our bodies ways of dealing with the hormone response caused by stress.

However, the COVID19 lockdown was not all bad news. At the same time as the world became smaller, many people found that without other options for spending leisure time, or from a need to get out of a confined space, that physical activity became more regular.

One of the consistent messages around managing stress is the contribution physical activity can make. So, the lockdown period created an opportunity for many New Zealanders who were usually sedentary to get moving and experience the benefits - many for the first time. These benefits often included a break from sedentary tasks, better sleep, and a more positive mood.

As NZ has moved out of lockdown and slowly back into some normality, many are reflecting on the positive aspects of the time away from usual life. With physical activity being counted amongst the positives for many, there are those who are now feeling that there is a risk that old stressful work habits could replace any new found stress busting exercise gains.

For most of us, reducing stress now that we are back at work by changing jobs to a more active one is not a reality. Instead, we need to look at how we manage returning to the old ways of working, and also look at getting meaningful support from employers and workplaces as well.

Adopting an effective programme and culture of exercise and activity can therefore result in a win/win situation for both employees and the business they work for, and it's not just about the way an office is set up.

One of the issues in workplace stress management is that while many employers can see the benefits, they have lacked the resources or the incentive to take the step to get their team healthy. Even pre COVID 19, over 60% of businesses considered improving employee wellbeing to have some level of priority over the next 12 months.

However, with the rapidly changing landscape of work and life in a post COVID world, looking after the physical, and mental wellbeing of staff will become less of a luxury and more of a necessity. If you had the chance to get moving over lockdown and want to keep up the benefits, it can be as simple as heading out for a walk on your lunch break, a bike ride with the kids, or you could try something with more support like joining a gym, or yoga classes, or having the support of a personal trainer to keep you motivated. The choices are limitless.

References:

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “warrant of fitness check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.



