Client: Moonview Sanctuary **Publication:** MSNBC.MSN.com

Date: October 22, 2008 **Visitors Per Month:** 37,600,000

Time to De-Stress

Take these healthy steps to decrease anxiety and increase productivity.

By Karen E. Spaeder

Entrepreneur.com

updated 12:00 p.m. ET, Wed., Oct. 22, 2008

According to the 2007 "Stress in America Report" by the American Psychological Association, three-fourths of Americans name work as a stressor--a jump from 59 percent in 2006.

And more than half said they were less productive at work as a result of stress. All that stress adds up to an estimated $300 billion a year in costs for U.S. businesses due to absenteeism, decreased productivity, employee turnover, and medical, legal and insurance fees.

The APA notes, however, that not all companies are taking those costs lying down. Responding to these challenges are forward-thinking organizations that make employees' emotional wellness a top priority, right along with the bottom line. One such company is Away With Clutter Inc., a professional organizing firm in San Diego. Dana H. Korey, who started the $2 million company in 2001, is a self-proclaimed "chairman of order." She implemented a wellness program for her employees after noticing that they were suffering from on-the-job stress.

Many of Away With Clutter's clients are going through major life changes, says Korey, and are therefore at an "emotional low." As a result, her employees often unwittingly find themselves playing therapist to their clients--and that role can be mentally exhausting.

"We are adept at getting [clients] organized," says Korey, 45. "But there's another part of the job: dealing with clients' emotional states."

Korey created a program last year that lets her employees lend an ear to clients but still maintain their own emotional health. With the help of a kundalini yoga expert, Korey and her staff engage in weekly breathing and meditation exercises, which they can then use throughout the workday to restore calm.

In fact, yoga is the panacea of choice among many U.S. firms. "The major benefit of adding yoga to the employee's workday is the space created by the practice," says Beth Shaw, founder and CEO of Yogafit Training Systems Worldwide Inc., a yoga and fitness education company. "Physically and mentally, yoga clears space so employees can return to work refreshed and rejuvenated."

There are other ways to calm employees, from offering telecommuting one or two days a week to simply providing a space where they can unwind during the workday. Stephen Sideroff, a licensed clinical psychologist and director of Moonview Sanctuary, a treatment and optimal performance center, recommends filling that space with audios that promote relaxation.

To make work less stressful overall, provide clear expectations of what employees must do throughout the workday and offer constructive feedback that helps them improve. "This allows employees to function better," says Sideroff, who has developed a number of programs designed to help businesses and individuals develop a resilience to stress. "They'll be less fearful, and if they're less fearful, they'll think more clearly and perform better."

Whether it's yoga or simply a few minutes of quiet time, a stress-reduction program can do wonders for your employees--and thereby enhance their overall performance. "My people come to projects with a better attitude, more energy and breathing techniques that [allow them] to take a five-minute break," says Korey. "It invigorates them."

Copyright © 2007 Entrepreneur.com, Inc.