The Benefit Package Called Corporate Yoga

by Lara Azzarito Ward

Workplace stress is the number one reason for employee absence, and in today's uncertain economy, job security worries are on the rise. Many corporations began understanding yoga's positive effects in the workplace in the early 1990s, when Dr. Dean Ornish, cardiologist for the Preventive Medicine Research Institute, proved he could reverse heart disease with a program that included yoga. The combination of yogic meditation and postures were decreasing heart rates and blood pressure, which translated to fewer bypass surgeries and fatal heart attacks.

The concept of keeping staff heart-healthy caught the attention of progressive Fortune 500 corporations. Add the concept of decreasing medical insurance coverage for preventive care programs such as yoga, and companies began

Lara Azzarito Ward leads class in Triangle Pose

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bringing this ancient art of well-being into boardrooms across the country. Duracell is one such company offering onsite yoga as a benefit to their employees. "The whole experience is really impressive," says Duracell employee Konstanza Troanska. "Back in May, I was in constant pain. Coming [to yoga] not only helped my shoulder enormously, but this is an hour of true escape, a time to recharge my batteries."

Lotus Gardens Yoga is an organization that has provided onsite yoga services to many local businesses for more than twelve years. David Mount, a Cedant Mobility employee, has realized the significant benefits of onsite yoga. "Lotus Gardens Yoga has made a significant improvement in my life, and the convenient availability of it as an onsite, immediately-after-work program has been critical to allowing me to incorporate it into my regular routine," said Mount. "I had been having a nagging sciatica problem, which has been significantly reduced over the past year."

Studies done with Tibetan Monks at the University of Wisconsin also proved that long-term meditation elevates moods. Improving employees' mental state also improves workplace satisfaction, creativity, focus and productivity. Since the early 1990's, yoga has continued to prove that it also aids in relieving repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel and postural problems that cause chronic back and neck pain. Yoga also increases muscular strength and skeletal alignment, resulting in fewer missed days due to these problems.

Onsite yoga is a convenient way for employees to easily add this practice into their wellness routine. Classes are held before or after business hours, or at lunchtime. Providing such valuable tools for learning stress management skills is a benefit to workers and, contrary to what some believe, onsite yoga is not expensive for employers. A certified yoga instructor and a quiet, warm conference room is all that's needed for happier, healthier employees.

Lara Azzarito Ward is a registered Experience-500 hour yoga instructor and is the founder and director of Lotus Gardens, LLC. Lotus Gardens is the first Yoga Alliance-approved teacher training school in Connecticut and has certified more than 150 instructors, who now teach throughout the world. Please visit www.lotusgardensyoga.com or call 860.354.6241 for more information. See ad this page.

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