



Executive Health Managing stress for success

In the present economic climate, more so than ever before, men at work may be at risk for a number of health risks both physical and psychological.

Workaholism, burnout, depression and anxiety as well as physical inactivity, unhealthy eating habits, smoking or alcohol excess can have major health consequences.

This is the ideal time to take advantage of the beneficial effects of spa therapies. In recent years the percentage of male spa-goers worldwide has increased to over 40 per cent. In the past, men only booked the occasional sports massage together with sauna or steam. Today men have availed themselves of specialised skincare, manicures and pedicures, hair and scalp treatments, aromatherapy and other body treatments.

However the most important health benefit is the opportunity to rest and relax, and here the spa visit can be combined with a meditation class or progressive relaxation.

It was Lao Tzu who said: "Practise not doing and everything will fall into place." Many people have forgotten how to put their brain into neutral for a while. Without rest, people develop chronic fatigue, insomnia, tension headaches, irritable bowels, backache, relationship problems as well as a host of other stress related disorders.

Research has shown that spa therapies lower the stress hormone cortisol, increase the "feel good" hormone endorphin, lower blood pressure, and improve circulation.

Physical health is the cornerstone for the ability to perform and achieve optimally. Exercise most days of the week, a healthy diet, if added to the benefits of rest and relaxation, will enhance the ability to lead a balanced and successful life.

It is also important for men to have regular screening tests. After the age of 45, men should have an annual prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test. Executive screening tests for men of all ages look at cardiovascular risk factors and other parameters of physiological functions.

Women are not the only people who go through menopause. After the age of 55, and occasionally earlier, men go through the andropause. This is often difficult to diagnose because the person may become depressed and fatigued, thus not realising that the cause is the gradually falling levels of testosterone (male hormone). Here again, a complete profile of male hormones can be evaluated, and appropriate remedies given.

With respect to executive health, English critic and social theorist John Ruskin (1819-1900), summed it up by writing: "In order that people may be happy in their work, three things are needed - they must be fit for it, they must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it."

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