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Stand up for an active office life

Tomorrow we are all being urged to get on our feet and move more to improve wellbeing and productivity at work, writes **Niki Chesworth**

ARE you standing comfortably? Yes, you read that right. Sitting for hours at your desk has been likened to smoking. It can lead to cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems. So tomorrow, office workers are being urged to move more as part of On Your Feet Britain day. It is being run by the Get Britain Standing campaign in association with community interest company Active Working.

With the average UK office worker sitting for 10 hours each day, with nearly seven of these at work, it is no surprise that more than two-thirds of office-bound workers say being at their desk all day may be having "a detrimental effect on either their physical or emotional health, or both".

Yet nearly three in four British employees only leave their desk in order to make a cup of tea or for a comfort break, with half saying they are too busy to move and four in 10 even eating their lunch at desk.

The benefits of moving during the day have led to a whole new type of office furniture – not just sit/stand desks that move up and down to enable you to work at different heights, but also chairs that keep the blood circulation flowing, enabling more oxygen to get to your brain, helping to increase wellbeing and productivity.

For example, Scandinavian brand HAG has developed chairs with a centrally paced tilting point, which ensures you always sit in balance, but they also tilt backwards and forwards with equal ease, using your legs.

Nearly three-quarters of those using the SoFi chair, with its balance movement system, do the same amount of movement as "light human activity" – in other words not sedentary.

Wellbeing is not just something that happens in the office, and the Mind Body Spirit London Wellbeing



Straight talking: Scandinavian brand HAG designs chairs that allow staff to maintain correct posture

Festival (mindbodyspirit.co.uk), which opens at Olympia tomorrow and runs until May 2, is full of inspirational ways to boost your mental and physical health. Covering everything from nutrition and meditation to yoga and movement, the festival also showcases some of the career opportunities in this sector.

Sue Knight, chief executive of the Confederation of Healing Organisations (the-cho.org.uk), says that those practising everything from reiki to reflexology can create their own careers.

"There has never been a greater interest in wellbeing," she says. "And, in London in particular, more people are becoming empowered to take

Specialist: reiki master Suzanne Cambrey



more control of their own health and seek complementary therapies. At the same time, we have seen a marked increase in practitioners wanting to work in all spheres of wellbeing."

Her advice for anyone wanting to turn an interest into a job is to pick a complementary therapy that appeals to you. Perhaps embark on a course – universities such as University of Westminster and London South

Bank University, run undergraduate and post-graduate courses – or join a professional association governing best practice around your chosen therapy.

For example, Suzanne Cambrey trained as a nurse specialising in oncology, but is now also qualified as a nutritionist, counsellor and homeopath and works as a Reiki master, using her many

years of experience in treating clients with diverse health issues.

Cambrey, who works at Journey to the Heart and Soul, says that as a career "it is hugely rewarding". She adds: "You are able to support individuals as they take a proactive stance on living in a state of wellbeing."

However, even if you do make the effort to invest in your own health and wellbeing, it might not be enough.

A recent study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that even if you are killing it at the gym for an hour a day, you are considered to be a sedentary person if you spend the rest of your day stuck at your desk.

With physical inactivity a bigger risk factor in mortality than obesity, physical therapist Kelly Starrett, who has recently published a book, *Deskbound: Standing Up to a Sitting World*, says that at the very least you should make a point of getting up, stretching

and walking around the office at least once an hour.

His other tips to stop your desk being the death of you include standing when you can at a bar or coffee shop or even during your commute, and ensuring your tablet, smartphone or laptop is at eye level – 18 to 30 inches from your eyes is considered ideal.

Starrett also suggests to not slouch but straighten your spine by pulling in your core rather than throwing your shoulders back, and squeeze your butt, as this helps you to sit in the proper position.

It's best not to get too comfortable, either – avoid chairs that encourage reclining as this can lead to hip issues. Finally, he suggests to spread out by sitting on the front third of the chair with your knees spread apart and planting your feet on the floor, and keeping your arms in line by making sure your shoulders are in line with your elbows.

Fear of rejection puts us off asking for a pay rise

THINK you deserve a pay rise? Well, if you don't ask, you don't get. Two-thirds of Londoners have not asked for a rise in the past three years, according to recruiters Randstad, with a third saying that they wouldn't ask for fear of rejection.

This was closely followed by worrying about their bosses' reactions and the prospect of having to explain why they deserve to be paid more, while nearly half are concerned that asking for a rise would jeopardise their current role.

Although Londoners are more confident than workers elsewhere, only a third have asked for an increase over the past three years.

Men are more than twice as likely as women to seek a pay increase and, the younger you are, the more likely you are to ask for more.

Mark Bull, UK CEO of Randstad, says that employees are not taking advantage of the increasingly open employment market.

His tips are to time your request well – during the usual pay review

cycle – and to research the levels of pay for your sector and role.

"Building a well-researched case is vital to appearing professional and convincing to your manager," he explains.

"Finally, draw on examples to illustrate where you have gone above and beyond your job description and build a case for why you deserve a bigger pay packet."

"Be prepared to back that up with hard facts – from sales figures to revenue you've helped secure."

Meanwhile, the average employee spends the equivalent of more than six working days a year moaning about their boss. That means they are effectively being paid an average of £678 a year to complain.

But they don't always get away with it, according to the survey for recruitment company RSG, with almost one in five getting caught having a groan – and an unlucky one in 20 being overheard by the very person whom they were complaining about.

Top tech jobs

COMPUTER game developer, app developer and website developer are the top three job choices of 11 to 18-year-olds, according to Nominet, which runs the .uk infrastructure.

However, to mark International Girls in ICT Day today, its survey shows girls still dream of being a fashion designer or teacher.

Women only make up a third of the workforce of the top nine tech firms, and the problem stems at school, with many women believing IT roles are boring and too hard.

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