



# JOB READY SERVICES

## YOUR STAMP OF APPROVAL FOR WORKPLACE FITNESS

October 2013 Issue



### *Our Services:*

- Functional Capacity Evaluations
- Work Conditioning
- Job Analyses
- Fit for Duty Testing
- Employment Testing

## STRESSING THE TRUTH

The holiday season is right around the corner. Soon it will be time to buy presents for Christmas, get out your cook book to plan your family meals, take vacation from your job and travel to spend the holidays with your family, friends, etc. Is your heart rate elevated? Is your stomach rolling? Are you sweating? If any of these are occurring, it could be a physiological response to stress. When the American Psychological Association conducted its annual survey on stress in 2011, nearly a quarter of the respondents reported their levels of stress as “extreme.” Thirty-nine percent said their stress had gone up in the past year, and forty-four percent said it had increased in the past five years. Modern life exposes us to mild-to-moderate, but chronic, stress constantly – multitasking, juggling too many things, moving too quickly, and being bombarded with stimulation. In other words, we’re not designed to flee from predators for 10 hours a day with no breaks but essentially that is what we find ourselves doing.

As stressors build in our lives, our body goes through some physiological changes. The brain increases heart rate, constricts some blood vessels and dilates others, slows down the intestines, inhibits digestive secretions, and prompts glands to flood the system with cortisol. When this response happens too often it can create something called “hippocampal brain damage,” and this causes a disturbed sleep-wake cycle. You get moody, you have memory loss, and brain fog sets in. Blood vessels constrict during the stress response and make it harder for the heart to pump blood, setting the stage for cardiac arrest. The adrenal glands cannot regulate the release of adrenaline during chronic stress and can cause a condition called “adrenal fatigue.” This can manifest as exhaustion, physical weakness, immune suppression, hormone imbalances, skin problems, and depression. While some people do lose weight while under stress, research suggests that high levels of cortisol can also encourage weight gain. This makes chronic stress a real enemy with overall fitness. When the body demands large amounts of cortisol, progesterone in women can be diminished, leading to low libido and possible infertility.

So, now we know what our body is doing in response to stress, but what can we do to help reduce the effects of stress on our body?

- 1) **Rest.** The best way to quiet the body-mind’s stress response and to support the recovery process is to relax and rest as deeply as you can – to rest as if you were on your best vacation ever. This fires up the parasympathetic “rest-and-digest” system which powers the body’s reparative and digestive activities. Take frequent breaks (ideally every 90-120 minutes) and work on getting seven to eight hours of sleep at night whenever possible. Short “cat naps” can be helpful too (30 to 45 minutes is recommended).
- 2) **Nutrition.** A well-fed body is a resilient body and is far better equipped to handle stress. Keeping sugar and flour to a minimum while eating plenty of healthy fats and good protein will help blood sugar level on an even keel. Digestion of fish oil and a B-vitamin complex have shown measureable effects in treating depression, another common byproduct of chronic stress.
- 3) **Exercise.** Physical movement is needed to stay stress-resilient, whether it’s walking, biking, doing yoga or shooting hoops. Vigorous exercise helps decrease adrenaline levels while gentler exertion is good for lowering cortisol. Physical activity elevates endorphins and serotonin which in turn are positive mood stimulators and also breaks down the cortisol in the bloodstream.
- 4) **Positivity.** Research studies indicate a positive connection with others, even strangers, improves health and longevity. In a chronically stressed world, acts of love, compassion and connection can help mute or shut off the brain’s alarm system when we don’t need it.

Bring on the holiday season! -Written by Caleb Ballard, MOT, OTR/L, CEAS I

## WORK CONDITIONING – AGAIN?

We have been getting quite a few referrals of injured workers who have supposedly participated in work conditioning elsewhere but are still not back to work. Oftentimes we find that their “work conditioning” was not a true work conditioning program but was more like physical therapy – just more frequent or perhaps longer visits. At Job Ready, we provide a daily progressive program (starting at 2 hours/day and progressing to 4 hrs/day, if needed). We do periodic

evaluations to ensure their continued progress and sincerity of effort. If there is no progress or lack of effort, they are discharged from the program with objective documentation to indicate the reason for discharge. Because we test for over 70 area employers, we have hundreds of job specific tasks and job specific tools and materials for participants to use. (We also have Spanish-speaking staff.) Of course involving workers in work conditioning as early as possible will increase the likelihood of a successful return to work.

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### Best times to refer:

- 1) if there is no “light duty” available;
- 2) following an invalid FCE;
- 3) following a failed attempt at RTW;
- 4) medical treatment and/or PT/OT plateau
- 5) any time someone is out of work but is medically stable.

## NOVEMBER WEBINAR: LEGAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

When: Thursday, November 14 11:00am – 12:00pm

Cost: Free!

For more information, visit our website:

<http://www.jobreadyservices.net/index.php/contact/lunch-and-learn-registration/>

We have Spanish-speaking staff for daily work conditioning visits.

Save money on interpreters!