



## A Wellness Potpourri!

Insights

7.29.13

I am reasonably certain that I have not before and will not again use the word *“potpourri”* in a post or probably in any other context. It’s not a macho thing. I just don’t like the word. But it sounds better than a *“cornucopia of wellness advice.”*

I would argue that the biggest challenge in achieving effective wellness programs is to come up with a way to get a tired overworked employee to get up early or stay up late to exercise, or to actually eat more healthily. To some extent, we know *“what to do,”* just not *“how”* to consistently do it. We look for a magic prescription. Or is that completely accurate? Do our employees really know many of the small and large steps which they can take to improve their quality of life?

I have pasted excerpts and links on a number of subjects which should be considered in our wellness efforts, as well as in developing supervisors and preventing injuries. It’s my hope that articles about testosterone, sperm count, and nasty restaurants may assist you in spicing up those wellness bulletins and maybe, just maybe, get someone’s attention! Hey ... fear can be a valid motivator. The topics reflect my holistic view of health as a tired middle aged lawyer, a former full contact fighter, and someone who is fascinated by the relationship of our mind and body.

1. I’ve pasted discussions on stress and especially the role of technology in increasing life’s stress. Some days, I feel that *“stress”* may be a greater threat than drugs or alcohol, in part because stress often leads to abuse of drugs and alcohol.
2. When I was a younger athlete and attorney, I blithely assumed that pushing myself would only catch up with me when I was *“really really old,”* and maybe I’d dodge the bullet. If I could go back in time and change one life style choice, it would be that mindset because, as the pasted blog discusses, we may be living longer, but our health is worse during those days, and hey, bad habits catch up with us sooner than we expect!
3. An underlying theme of all of these topics is the need for *“personal responsibility,”* and I hope that some of the discussions, such as the *“decline in male fertility”* may grab the attention of a few males who deem themselves invulnerable.
4. A basic thing we can do to improve health is to eat breakfast, and to eat the correct food. Come on ... this is the easiest wellness recommendation out there! No excuses.
5. Pandemic concerns periodically heighten our awareness of washing our hands and avoiding germs, but washing ones hands is only a small part of what we should be doing, especially in

restaurants.

6. We know we should eat well, but maybe the realization that diet affects the onslaught of Alzheimer's may motivate employees to at least eat a bit better.
7. Finally, lack of sleep is a huge factor in bad judgment, unethical decision-making, and workplace injuries. No more martyrdom for work or family. Get some sleep.

So enjoy! Well, sort of ....

### **Technology doesn't always improve our lives.**

Add this excellent WSJ Blog to the reasons to turn off your smart phone and focus on the meeting, conversation or task at hand. [One More Reason To Put Down That Smartphone – At Work.](#) Why would we think that texting only harms our driving? Equally importantly, studies are debunking the myth of multi-tasking." The more one's attention is divided among tasks, the less effective one is at any of them. Plain common sense.

*By Anita Hofschneider*

*Feeling shy in a group meeting? Your smartphone may be to blame.*

*An unpublished paper out of Harvard Business School suggests that using small gadgets makes people less assertive. Those who use larger gadgets come across as more assertive.*

*When people use smaller devices, their posture contracts, increasing stress and decreasing testosterone levels, say researchers Maarten Bos and Amy Cuddy of Harvard Business School. The inverse is true when people use large desktop computers, which force users to assume a more open posture. And the effect continues even after the device is put away or the user logs off.*

[Continue reading at the WSJ.](#)

Or read TLNT's ["Our Email Addiction: Can We Keep It From Following Us Home From Work?"](#)

Or read this [Info graphic from EHS Today](#) which shows the effects of workplace stress, including the staggering assertion that stress-related conditions result in 75 to 90% of physician visits!

Perhaps most helpfully, read Laura Stack's spot-on piece from TLNT, *"10 Reasons Why You Need To Quit Trying To Be Perfect."*

### **We're living longer but our poor life styles are making us sicker as we age.**

Talk about "good news – bad news!" Consider the implications of this sobering study discussed by the AARP, ["Americans Living Longer But With More Chronic Disabilities."](#)

*A new study finds that average life expectancy for Americans rose from 75.2 years in 1990 to 78.2 years in 2010. However, the study also found people were in good health, or without short- or long-*

*term disabilities, for only 68.1 years on average.*

....

*Most of the gain in U.S. life expectancy was attributed to a better management of certain diseases, especially colon and breast cancer, as well efforts to stop preventable diseases like HIV.*

*Despite the reduction in death rates from some major diseases, mortality rates from Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias rose significantly. Illnesses associated with obesity, such as diabetes and kidney disease, also increased despite an uptick in exercise rates nationwide. Researchers also noted that the rate of premature death due to falls increased since 1990.*

*Though overall life expectancy for Americans has slowly risen, researchers pointed out that the increase has been slower than for many other developed countries. Despite spending the most per capita on health care across all countries, the U.S ranks just 27th among the 34 developed countries included in the study. (my emphasis added)*

### **Continue reading at the AARP site.**

We cannot continue to dodge the importance of “*personal responsibility*” in health and lifestyle decisions. While the thrust of many of the anti-discrimination and benefits-related laws is to treat people who make bad lifestyle decisions as “victims,” we must continue to hammer away at every opportunity on exercising personal responsibility. But how do we gain workers’ attention before they have the “*Damascus Road*” experience of a heart attack or cancer?!

Maybe Shirley Wang’s article about the effects of poor lifestyle choices will gain the attention of the young men in your workforce; many of whom presumably want to be viewed as robust and virile.

*July 15, 2013, 7:25 p.m. ET*

### **The Decline in Male Fertility**

*Scientists Puzzle Over Declining Sperm Counts; a 'Crisis' or Not Enough Data*

*By SHIRLEY S. WANG*

*.... Accumulating evidence suggests that early life influences make a difference. Some researchers say that there is a vulnerable period, perhaps between eight and 14 weeks of gestation, in which influences are irreversible. One of the most robust links with decreased sperm count is maternal smoking during pregnancy.*

*In a study known as Raine of nearly 2,000 males enrolled as babies and now in their early 20s, the size of the testicles was related to total sperm count, and sperm count was more likely to be lower in boys who were born small for gestational age, who were overweight or underweight in childhood or whose mothers smoked during pregnancy.*

*The male's own current marijuana use was also linked to lower sperm count, according to data presented at the conference by Roger Hart, a professor of reproductive medicine at the University of Western Australia.*

*Some factors that impact sperm may be reversible. Others have found that how much belly fat men*

Some factors that impact sperm may be reversible. Others have found that how much belly fat men have, even those not overweight, is linked with testosterone levels in young men. "By adopting a healthy, balanced diet and lifestyle in pregnancy, you can give your developing baby the very best start in life which will minimize the risk of future diseases," Edinburgh's Dr. Sharpe says. "If it's a boy, then this will also make sure that his sperm count, and thus his fertility, is not compromised in any way." Continue Reading at the WSJ.

### **Continue Reading.**

#### **- Breakfast is good, don't skip it! I Mean it!**

Here are two short posts which provide yet more reason to eat breakfast. "Skipping Breakfast Makes High Calorie Foods More Appealing." As if we middle aged males needed yet more reason to avoid "high calorie foods ... sigh.

Skipping breakfast turns you into a calorie-and-fat-seeking blimp  
10/17/2012

*Skipping breakfast might seem like a sly way to slash calories off your daily intake, but it really transforms you into a fat-seeking machine. That's according to Imperial College scientists who investigated the brains of 21 people: first after they'd eaten a healthy morning meal, and again when they'd gone without. The scientists flashed photos of foods in front of study subjects during an MRI scan. The scans revealed that fatty, calorific foods appeared more appealing than healthy choices to the hungry brain. Not only that, but when served lunch after forgoing breakfast, participants sucked down around 250 more calories than they did when they'd had their Wheaties*

Continue Reading at MSN.

Or how about "Eat your breakfast if you want to avoid having a heart attack"

*Harvard researchers studying a group of older men have concluded that those who regularly skipped breakfast had a 27 percent higher risk of a heart attack than those who ate in the mornings. It's believed skipping breakfast makes you hungrier later in the day, so you're more likely to eat larger meals. Your body then has to work harder to process all those calories in a shorter amount of time, spiking sugar levels in the blood and perhaps causing clogged arteries.*

Continue Reading at MSN.

On a less dramatic level, educators have long emphasized breakfast, even at the school's expense, because of the dramatic effect on concentration and learning. Why would "grown-up's" be exempt from natural laws?

**Don't wait until the influenza season to start washing your hands and carrying that Purell!**

This AARP blog will make you queasy every time you go into a restaurant, but the advice is darned practical and another example of the practical health advice for people of all ages, to be found at the AARP site. ["Germiest Places – Eight Ways To Protect Yourself In Restaurants."](#)

### **Restaurant Menus**

Have you ever seen anyone wash a menu? Probably not. A study in the Journal of Medical Virology reported that cold and flu viruses can survive for 18 hours on hard surfaces. If it's a popular restaurant, hundreds of people could be handling the menus — and passing their germs on to you. Never let a menu touch your plate or silverware, and be sure to wash your hands after you place your order.

Next: Why you should sour on lemons. »

Continue Reading at [the AARP site](#) and at [Prevention.com](#), another really great site for practical advice.

### **Eat your way to good mental health.**

Nothing scares me as much as the thought of losing my mind. I watched one of my mentors, a *man's man* in all the correct ways, descend into Alzheimer's, and few things have scared me more. You may have noted in one of the earlier articles, one of the main reasons for the increase in our chronic health problems is Alzheimer's – and we may be able to markedly lowering the risks by doing some of the same things we should do to reduce cholesterol, attack our weight, and improve cardiac health.

Read Stephanie Eckelkamp's ["You Can Prevent Alzheimer's Disease – 7 Habits To Adopt Today."](#)

*"You may be able to reduce your risk of Alzheimer's disease by a whopping 70 to 80%," says Neal Barnard, MD, president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, the non-profit organizations that sponsored the first annual International Conference on Nutrition and the Brain this past weekend in Washington DC.*

*Sixteen researchers presented compelling evidence about why the following seven habits could help ward off many neurological disorders, not just Alzheimer's, that steal our mind.*

### **[Read more at Prevention.com.](#)**

Remember the proverb of how to eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Addressing any of these dietary suggestions could have a marked effect on one's health.

### **Get some @#\$& sleep!**

We all know that a lack of sleep harms us, but we continually make up excuses to justify our "sacrifice." Read my TLNT blog to learn about ways your workers may not know lack of sleep harms them. "Bad Judgment By An Employee – They May Just Not Be Getting Enough Sleep."

Until next time!

Sleep well!

Howard

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