

Safety Newsletter



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SPRING CLEANING



Clutter often is not recognized as a source of stress, but studies show that clutter can make a person more anxious and distracted. Clutter can really influence the way you work. Spring is a great time to get organized - whether that is at your office workstation or the department storage closet. Clutter may be one of the easiest stressors to tackle and fix. Here are some ideas to help you declutter your workspace:

1. If you haven't used it in the last six months and have no clear projection of when it can be used in the near future, get rid of it! Try only to purchase and store enough supplies that you know you will use or need.
2. Avoid blocking walkways which can cause trip hazards. Many employees store tools, binders, books, and papers on the ground or underneath their desk because they have run out of storage space. Storing unused items on the floor in the work area or under your desk for long periods of time can lead to dust and create a habitat where bugs and insects can nest which may result in allergies and infestations.
3. If cans or containers of chemicals are corroded or rusted, you're probably not using it and should get rid of it.
4. When organizing a storage closet, make an attempt to create aisle ways. Avoid tossing items on the ground and packing more items on top of other items. Equipment and supplies will eventually get buried, which usually means you likely won't attempt to look the next time around and those items buried at the bottom will never get used and will turn into junk.
5. Organize your workspace so the items you use on a daily basis are close to you and within reach. When organizing shelves, store items you use the most often between waist to eye level. Heavier items should be stored on bottom shelves. Lighter items that are only used occasionally can go on the top shelf.

BACK PAIN?

Back pain is a tricky problem. Most Americans will at some point have a problem with their backs. And for an unlucky third, treatments won't work, and the problem will become chronic. Believe it or not, there are a few cultures in the world where back pain hardly exists. One indigenous tribe in central India reported essentially



none - the discs in their backs showed little signs of degeneration as people aged. Many ancient statues from Greece, display a J-shaped spine. The statue's back is nearly flat until the bottom, where it curves so the buttocks are behind the spine.



An acupuncturist in Palo Alto, Calif., thinks she has figured out why. She has traveled around the world studying cultures with low rates of back pain — how they stand, sit and walk. About two decades ago, Esther Gokhale started to struggle with her own back after she had her first child. "I had excruciating pain. I couldn't sleep at night," she says. "I was walking around the block every two hours. I was just crippled." Gokhale had a herniated disc. Eventually she had surgery to fix it. But a year later, it happened again. "They wanted to do another back surgery." This time around, Gokhale wanted to find a permanent fix for her back. Gokhale had an idea: "Go to populations where they don't have these huge problems and see what they're doing."

Over the next decade, Gokhale went to cultures around the world that live far away from modern life. She went to the mountains in Ecuador, tiny fishing towns in Portugal and remote villages of West Africa. Gokhale took photos and videos of people who walked with water buckets on their heads, collected firewood or sat on the ground weaving, for hours. Women who spend seven to nine hours every day, bent over, gathering water chestnuts and are quite old - didn't have any back pain. She tried to figure out what all these different people had in common. "They have this regal posture that is quite different than American spines."

If you look at an American's spine from the side, or profile, it's shaped like the letter S. It curves at the top and then back again at the bottom. But Gokhale didn't see those two big curves in people who don't have back pain. "That S shape is actually not natural," she says. "It's a J-shaped spine that you want." In fact, if you look at drawings from Leonardo da Vinci — or a Gray's Anatomy book from 1901 — the spine isn't shaped like a sharp, curvy S. It's much flatter, all the way down the back. Then at the bottom, it curves to stick the buttocks out. So the spine looks more like the letter J. "The J-shaped spine is what you see in Greek statues. It's what you see in young children. It's good design," So Gokhale worked to get her spine into the J shape. And gradually her back pain went away.

Additionally, If you have a lot of fat built up in the belly, this can pull your weight forward, and curve the spine. Those who are thinner probably have less curvature — and thus a spine shaped more like J than an S.

Americans are also much less active than people in traditional cultures -- a sedentary lifestyle promotes a lack of muscle tone and a lack of postural stability because the muscles get weak. It may not be the J-shaped spine that is the ideal one — or the healthiest. It's what goes into making the J-shaped spine that matters: You have to use muscle strength to get your spine to look like a J shape. So, the trick is to build up your core muscles without even knowing it.

Gokhale's Five Tips for Better Posture and Less Back Pain

Try these exercises while you're working at your desk, sitting at the dinner table or walking around,

1. Do a shoulder roll: Americans tend to scrunch their shoulders forward, so our arms are in front of our bodies. That's not how people in indigenous cultures carry their arms, Gokhale says. To fix that, gently pull your shoulders up, push them back and then let them drop — like a shoulder roll. Now your arms should dangle by your side, with your thumbs pointing out. "This is the way all your ancestors parked their shoulders," she says. "This is the natural architecture for our species."

2. Lengthen your spine: Adding extra length to your spine is easy, Gokhale says. Being careful not to arch your back, take a deep breath in and grow tall. Then maintain that height as you exhale. Repeat: Breathe in, grow even taller and maintain that new height as you exhale. This will strengthen your abdominal muscles,"

3. Squeeze, squeeze your glute muscles when you walk: In many indigenous cultures, people squeeze their gluteus medius muscles every time they take a step. That's one reason they have buttocks muscles that support their lower backs. Gokhale says you can start by tightening the buttocks muscles when you take each step. "The gluteus medius is the one you're after here. It's the one high up on your bum,"

4. Don't put your chin up: Instead, add length to your neck by taking a lightweight object, like a bean bag or folded washcloth, and balance it on the top of your crown. Try to push your head against the object. This will lengthen the back of your neck and allow your chin to angle down — not in an exaggerated way, but in a relaxed manner.

5. Don't sit up straight! That's just arching your back and getting you into all sorts of trouble. Instead

do a shoulder roll to open up the chest and take a deep breath to stretch and lengthen the spine.

CATS AND DOGS

As tempting as it may be, feeding animals that frequent schools and office areas, is not a good idea. Many people refer to these animals as strays.



However, stray animals are lost pets that have been separated from a home or owner. Usually, the cat or dog that frequent the schools or office grounds is not a stray, but feral or wild. There are many dangers and health issues associated with feral animals, no matter how cute they may look.

- Feral animals will follow the food source and the food will attract more animals. Often employee will put out food for the feral cats, not realizing that the food attracts possum, skunks, racoons, and rats.
- A large number of animals in a small area can cause problems from flea infestation to illness and disease which can spread among the group of animals as they congregate together.
- Urine and fecal matter will also be a health hazard for students and employees alike. Insects and parasites populations increase and pose a significant health hazard to children and adults.
- In addition, a large number of animals in a small area encourages breeding. One litter of cats can be as many as five kittens. What starts as 2 cats then multiplies to 7 cats. Many communities have TNR – or Trap, Neuter, Relocate program. They can be trapped, neutered and relocated.

If you are an animal lover at heart, there are ways to help animals other than leaving food out for them.

1. Notify your supervisor of the animal issue. Contact your city or county for assistance in trapping or picking up the animal. Removing the animal is the best scenario and avoids the potential of bites or illnesses.
2. Volunteer at a shelter. Shelters are overwhelmed and often do not have enough staff on hand to handle the number of animals. These animals need your help and care to transition while they wait for their forever home.
3. Donate money to the local shelter or animal rescue organization. Instead of spending money to feed feral animals, donate to a shelter.
4. Adopt a pet from your local shelter. Adopting rescues a life, makes room in the shelter, thereby giving hope to other animals that can now be taken in by the shelter.