

Wellness@BCTF

December 2010

Snapshot from the edge Giving back

By Kathleen Smith



Four years ago, I realized that I had quite a bit of spare time on my hands and I wanted to do something to support my community. New Westminster, where I live, has a police-based victim services unit and I saw their call for volunteers in our local paper. I wasn't too sure what to expect but I applied and once I was accepted, I received many hours of training and support from the full-time staff at the Victim Assistance Unit office.

VAU volunteers commit to volunteer two nights a month and are based at the police station. For the last two years, I have also been working as an on-call caseworker. I am on call at least once a week and although it is a big commitment to be available for 24 hours, the

rewards when you are able to assist someone through a difficult situation are worth it.

Our unit supports victims impacted by all crime categories, including homicide, assault, wife assault and sexual assault, robbery, break and enter, theft, and motor vehicle accidents. Police frequently use our service to support surviving family members following a sudden death notification, to assist a woman and her children to a transition house, and to assist people evacuated from their home following a fire.

Services include the following:

- immediate on-site crisis and trauma response
- emotional support

- information about the case
- assistance negotiating the criminal justice system
- referrals and linkage to other resources and agencies
- assistance with forms including Victim Impact Statements and Crime Victim Assistance Applications
- court information, support and accompaniment
- crime-prevention information.

My life is so much richer since I started volunteering with victim services and I'm happy to draw on my training and life experiences to support people in my community. It's a win-win situation.

For further information, contact your local police to see if they have a volunteer victims' support unit.



Some of the BCTF Run for the Cure team on October 3, 2010. Team members included James Chamberlain, Jen Cole, Donna Coulombe, Ellen Ellis, Pat Hamilton, Glen Hansman, Sheila Jones, Debbie Orban, Dennis Shaw (and family), and Darlene Waggett. Congratulations to all who participated and contributed.

Did you know?

Stair climbing

According to best-selling authors Mehmet Oz, MD, and Michael Roizen, MD, the health benefits of climbing stairs for 11 minutes a day over eight weeks rivals 36 minutes a day of walking over six months. A combination of 20 minutes of walking and 10 minutes of stair climbing will increase those benefits even more.

A 150-lb person burns approximately 90 calories for every 10 minutes of stair climbing (depending on pace).

Who needs a gym membership?
—from an idea submitted
by Debbie Urban

Starting out

Wear athletic shoes, make sure the stairway is well lit, and use the hand rails. At a comfortable pace, start with climbing for five minutes, building up to climbing for 30 minutes four days a week. As always, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting out on a new exercise regime.



Power stair climbing

"...using the handrails to haul yourself up turns the activity into a full-body workout much like rowing, resulting in a "global, maximal effort." About 80 per cent of the power you exert goes to raising your body against the force of gravity; 5 per cent goes to whipping your limbs back and forth, and the remaining 15 per cent goes toward running tiny semi-circles at each landing."

—from www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health/taking-the-stairs-is-a-quick-step-toward-fitness/article1534786/

Soup day a success

Many thanks to:

Moira Mackenzie
Jane Turner
Jeannine Albert
Una Walsh

Brent Hunter
Ken Newman
Margaret White
Pat Hamilton

Nancy Knickerbocker
Kerry Richardson
Donna Coulombe

for their delicious contributions to our annual soup day. In the spirit of giving back, this event has morphed into a fundraiser for the food bank. This year staff contributions amounted to a heartwarming \$852.10!

Congratulations to everyone who took part.

New Year's resolutions

New Year's resolutions express a desire to make positive change in one's life. In ballpark numbers, approximately 40 to 50 percent of us make resolutions annually, and 15 to 20 percent are actually able to keep them. While these numbers may not seem that encouraging, studies show that the process of making a resolution does improve the likelihood that you will achieve the desired changes.

According to a survey of over 300,000 responses at www.goalsguys.com, the following are the top ten New Year Resolutions:

1. Lose weight and get in better physical shape
2. Stick to a budget
3. Debt reduction
4. Enjoy more quality time with family & friends
5. Find my soul mate
6. Quit smoking
7. Find a better job
8. Learn something new
9. Volunteer and help others
10. Get organized

As the New Year approaches, check out the following links on making and keeping your resolutions:

www.umm.edu/features/resolutions_guide (from the University of Maryland, written by two psychiatrists)

www.ehow.com/how_12077_new-years-resolutions

www.goalsguy.com/Events/n_facts

www.123newyear.com/how-to-achieve-your-new-years-resolution

—compiled by Chris Arcari



New studies show promising benefits of workplace yoga program

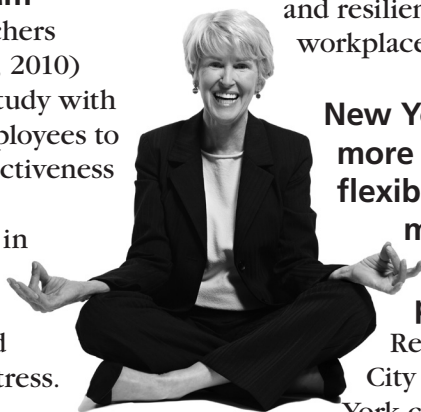
Margaret White

Yoga has grown in popularity in North American culture in recent years, perhaps because this ancient practice attends to the mind, body and spirit. Yoga programs are offered in community centers, health programs and yoga studios, on television and in the workplace. As the popularity of yoga increases so too do studies evaluating the benefits of yoga.

As BC Teachers' Federation offers a workplace yoga program, readers may be interested in what researchers have learned about the effects of yoga workplace programs on employee well-being. This article reviews two new studies that show attending a six-week workplace yoga program can help reduce stress and improve emotional and physical well-being for employees in occupations as diverse as firefighters and university staff.

United Kingdom— University employees report improved well-being and more confident in stressful situations after yoga program

British researchers (Hartfiel et al., 2010) conducted a study with university employees to assess the effectiveness of a six-week yoga program in enhancing emotional well-being and resilience to stress.



The researchers conducted a randomized controlled trial in which 48 employees were assigned to either a yoga program or a wait-list control group. The employees in the yoga group participated in a Dru Yoga program taught by a certified Dru Yoga instructor. The yoga program consisted of one 60-minute class per week at lunch-time for six weeks. Study participants completed measures of self-reported mood and emotional well-being at the start and end of the yoga program.

Compared to the employees in the control group, employees in the yoga group reported experiencing improvements in feelings of clear-mindedness, composure, elation, energy, and confidence between the start and the end of the program. Employees in the yoga group also reported other positive changes such as increased life purpose and satisfaction, and feeling more confident during stressful situations. The authors concluded that the study findings show that "even a short program of yoga is effective for enhancing emotional well-being and resilience to stress in the workplace".

New York firefighters more fit and flexible with less musculoskeletal pain after yoga program

Researchers at the City University of New York conducted a study



to explore the benefits of a 6-week yoga program in the workplace (fire-stations) on functional fitness, flexibility, and perceived stress for firefighters from a major metropolitan fire department. The yoga classes included pranayama (breathing), asana (postures), and savasana (relaxation).

The study enrolled 108 firefighters with no prior experience in yoga with 77 completing pre and post measures of fitness, flexibility and perceived stress. The study results showed employees in the yoga program experienced significant improvements in functional fitness, trunk flexibility and perceived stress. They also reported feeling more focused and having less musculoskeletal pain.

Conclusion

The results of these studies are encouraging because they show that participating in a short-term yoga program once a week can improve physical and emotional well-being and help build resistance to stress. Workplace yoga programs provide an important wellness

option for interested employees, making it easy to integrate this valuable mind-body practice into our lives.

References

Hartfiel N, Havenhand J, Khalsa SB, Clarke G, Krayner A. *The effectiveness of yoga for the improvement of well-being and resilience to stress in the workplace*. Scand J Work Environ Health. 2010 Apr 6. [Epub ahead of print]

Cowen vs. Functional fitness improvements after a worksite-based yoga initiative. J Bodyw Mov Ther. 2010 Jan;14(1):50-4.

Upcoming wellness events at the BCTF

Day of Pink and Decadent Dessert Day
February 23, 2011
Staffroom, morning coffee

Lunch-and-learn sessions

We are planning the following sessions:

End of life issues
Whitney Burgess
January 20, 2011,
12:15–1:00 pm
Sutherland

Understanding arthritis
The Arthritis Society
March 10, 2011
12:15–1:00 pm
Prior/Sutherland

Mindfulness meditation
with Linda Turner,
(Program Manager for the Integrative Energy Healing Practitioner Program at Langara College)
Early April (tentative)



Opportunities to volunteer over Christmas

This Christmas, consider making your holiday season more meaningful by helping out in your community. Seek out an organization whose goals and ideals resonate with you, and ask if there is anything you can do to help out.

A few ideas from the govoluteer web site:

www.govoluteer.ca/cgi-bin/page.cgi?_id=29&posting=10057
Vancouver General Hospital
Christmas caroling in patient care wards (groups of two to eight singers wanted)

www.govoluteer.ca/cgi-bin/page.cgi?_id=29&posting=4106
Help serve Christmas or Boxing Day dinner at the **Carnegie Centre**, downtown eastside

www.govoluteer.ca/cgi-bin/page.cgi?_id=29&posting=7590
Drivers wanted for the **Burnaby Christmas Bureau**

www.govoluteer.ca/cgi-bin/page.cgi?_id=29&posting=22203
Food preparers and servers for annual Christmas luncheon at the **South Granville Seniors Centre**

www.govoluteer.ca/cgi-bin/page.cgi?_id=29&posting=12113&id=29&posting=12113
Yaletown House Society
Christmas carollers wanted
— www.govoluteer.ca

BCTF Wellness Committee Members

Donna Coulombe	(BCTF)
Chris Arcari	(CEP)
Moh Chelali	(CEP)
Una Walsh	(HR)
Margaret White	(TFEU)
Karen Steel	(TFEU)

The contents of this newsletter are intended to encourage better health decisions, not to provide medical advice. Please consult a qualified health professional before embarking on any new diet or exercise regime.