



for



BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN YOU...Rejuvenate and resonate!

- *Removing barriers to quality, productivity, and human performance*
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What we do at work substantially impacts how we feel...not only physically but mentally and spiritually as well! Considering that most of us spend the majority of our time at work, how we work and how we function becomes critically important to our daily well-being!

Taking a look at ERGONOMICS in your work environment can significantly influence how we feel, how we perform and what we produce. The California Court Reporters Association (CCRA) did exactly that when a program on ERGONOMICS was included in its annual conference at the Miramonte Spa & Resort in Indian Wells, CA. Talk about rejuvenation! I was delighted to be part of that program to share the many tips and strategies available. For those of you unable to attend the conference, here's an opportunity to learn a few of the things that the Conference attendees had an opportunity to experience!

Let's first take a look at what is ERGONOMICS! According to Wikipedia,

"Ergonomics is concerned with the 'fit' between people and their work. It takes account of the worker's capabilities and limitations in seeking to ensure that tasks, equipment, information and the environment suit each worker.

To assess the fit between a person and their work, ergonomists consider the job being done and the demands on the worker; the equipment used (its size, shape, and how appropriate it is for the task), and the information used (how it is presented, accessed, and changed)."

In short, Ergonomics focuses on achieving a natural or neutral posture when working to avoid the effects of musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) and repetitive motion injuries (RMI) that can otherwise lead to carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, bursitis and many more. As our society becomes increasingly mechanized and our jobs become more intense, people are suffering from MSDs and RMIs from all walks of life. As we grow older, we also experience the natural effects of aging, ones that affect the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints and disc space. From debilitating carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis, to the chronic neck pain and tense upper back that most everyone who works at a computer takes for granted, we are all showing the

effects. In short, we need to learn how to counteract the impact of muscle tension build-up, nerve and blood vessel compression, and compromised disc space in our spinal column.

While much can be done to improve the work environment, the most ergonomic environment in the world will not make as much difference as changing the way we think about how we work. As living beings, we have the miraculous ability to constantly repair and recreate ourselves. Much of it happens without our even thinking about it. As human beings, we can override our instincts, override pain and discomfort, override hunger and thirst and fear - all in the interest of staying focused on accomplishing our work or not disrupting the work in progress. This is a tremendous benefit but to what expense? When we consider RMIs, we seldom recognize that performing the same motion over and over again can cause strain that leads to injury. The immediate impact may be minimal, but over time, the constant straining from repetition and impact of compression causes damage.

So it's time to take a look at our work habits. Are we perhaps the culprit? Or, is it a combination of the work environment and our work habits? Most likely the answer lies in a combination of the two. Our "natural" and "instinctive" behavior may seem logical and has become habitual, however, combined with the working conditions, i.e. prolonged periods of sitting and repetitive keystrokes during court hearings or depositions, prolonged use of viewing small print and computer screens, and inappropriate chairs, all take their toll.

As we seek to implement a change through Ergonomics, it is important to consider three aspects for intervention: 1) Work Station and work environment, 2) Employee behavior and habits, 3) Work process – techniques and tools. And, within these three elements, the following factors play themselves out in terms of creating risk for injury:

- Awkward Postures
- Forceful exertions
- Repetition
- Duration
- Contact Stress
- Faulty Technique(s)
- Work Habits
- Bad Work Stations
- Cold Temperatures

So think about it...what factors play a role in your level of discomfort? Good ergonomics focuses on improving productivity and quality, reducing risks, and eliminating wasted effort. Research shows that improving ergonomics actually results in fewer errors - accuracy can actually improve by 38% and performance is enhanced by anywhere from 4-19%! *SOURCE: Dr. Jeffrey Anshel, National Ergonomics Conference & Exposition, Nov '05*

Here are two key tips to start creating your own ergonomic environment.

***The 20 / 20 / 20 Rule for Self-Management: How to avoid the effects of prolonged sitting and muscle tension build-up. Here's what to do:***

- Every 20 minutes
- For at least 20 seconds
- With your eyes, look at least 20 feet away
- Stand up, allow muscles and joints to return to neutral – take a deep breath!
- Once per hour, perform a stretch or two

***Palming: An activity to do to relax your eyes periodically throughout the day. Here's how it's done:***

- Cover your closed eyes with your hands, so that the palms are over (but not touching) your eyelids. Your fingers should overlap above your nose on your forehead;
- Take several deep breathes and take in the complete darkness (or visualize a relaxing setting);
- After 20 seconds or so, uncover your eyes and allow them to refocus. You're ready to continue your day!

*Increasing awareness is **KEY** to injury prevention. Change your habits...change your LIFE!*

Why do we need to know something about Ergonomics? Through ergonomic awareness, we can better manage ourselves and our work environment; we can apply essential ergonomic principles to everyday living; and we are equipped to apply sensible solutions to our work processes to work smarter...not harder! Here are a few things to get started:

- 1) A supportive ergonomically designed chair with a seat pan that fits YOU AND provides appropriate back support to avoid leg compression and low back discomfort.
- 2) Appropriate height and distance to keyboard tray to avoid shoulder and elbow extension to avoid strain to the neck, upper back and shoulders.

- 3) More frequent micro-breaks to avoid the effects of prolonged sitting and repetitive keying. See the 20/20/20 Rule.
- 4) As part of your work contract, specify the “tools of the trade” to achieve timely, accurate and efficient production of work.

Put to use these tips and strategies designed to put you back in charge of your life at work and at home! Rejuvenate and resonate with energy! Try it and you'll quickly see the difference!

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