

Adopting Healthy Behaviors

Models in Place to Assist With Wellness Effort

By **Michael F. Campbell**

(Editor's Note: Fourth of a five-part series)

Thus far in our *BizVoice*® series, we have identified the origins of increased health care costs, emphasized the need to change how we see “the problem” and looked into some of the facets of wellness. Along the way we have cited examples of employers who have gone to work on this challenge and outlined their results. They have obviously determined that behavior change is possible and have moved ahead on that premise.



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but there is much help available for those employers who are serious about the business of modifying behavior.

Model approach

The widely known and accepted Transtheoretical Model, also known as the Stages of Change Model (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983) attempts to explain when and how individuals change their behavior and which factors influence these changes. The stages of change are actually the first of four components to the model and attempt to describe where individuals are in the “readiness to change” process. The five stages

in this component are precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

In just about any wellness program, an employer will conduct a health risk assessment early on and assess their employee population’s “readiness to change.” Self-monitoring, goal-setting, teaching/coaching and reinforcement/incentive strategies are a few of the many additional techniques used to impact behavior.

Success story

ARUP Laboratories in Utah prides itself on having established and sustained a work environment that supports family, health and education and promotes integrity, open communication, mutual respect, compassion, creativity and innovation. In utilizing such tools as surveys, mini exercise classes and formal courses on topics such as strength training, cancer prevention and weight management, it has made use of some of the basic accepted strategies of behavior change.

For ARUP, strategies in health and safety, work-life balance and employee recognition have paid off in developing a “culture of respect.” Some of the results have been high morale, improved health and well-being, low absenteeism, a turnover rate of just 14% and increased productivity. The company is an American Psychology Association 2006 National Psychologically Healthy Workplace award winner.

As mentioned previously, there is much help available to assist Indiana employers in tackling the challenging topic of wellness and the resulting behavior modification. The Wellness Council of Indiana provides a proven step-by-step method through a well workplace certification process.

In the next issue, we will cover the first and most important of all steps in that certification process — buy-in from leadership.

How does that happen?

Q&A Research, Inc. conducted a national survey commissioned by Great-West Healthcare in January of this year. One of the primary objectives was to understand the consumer attitude toward health care. When asked, “How responsible you think each person or organization should be for controlling the rising costs of health care,” only one in four thought individuals were extremely responsible for controlling costs. The real concern is that 45% thought they were only somewhat responsible and 30% believed they were not at all responsible! This is a powerful example of an attitude that dictates lifestyles resulting in unhealthy behaviors.

Risky factors

Data from the Centers for Disease Control documents that more than 50% of what determines our health is lifestyle. The National Business Group on Health determines that number to be above 70% on a national scale. In Indiana, new data illustrates that Hoosiers fare poorly with a number two ranking in number of smokers, 10th in obesity and 12th in percentage of the population with diabetes. The vast majority of these, as well as many other risk factors, can be identified as “lifestyle driven.” It is, in this case, an unhealthy lifestyle that results in behavioral patterns that ultimately lead to our poor quality of life ratings and the resulting costs.

Our behavior (actions or reactions under specified circumstances) is determined by our lifestyle. Lifestyle is a way of life that reflects the values and attitudes of an individual or group. Our attitude (state of mind) develops out of our ethics and values (or the lack thereof), which in turn evolve from our beliefs. Integrity is defined by Webster as “a firm adherence to a code or standard of values” and our degree of integrity will be characterized by our intensity of commitment to this code or standard (core of values or beliefs). If we are going to achieve the end product of correct behavior on the part of employees, we must recognize and embrace this “trickle down” process.

There are a wide variety of strategies used today promoting the adoption of and adherence to healthy behavioral changes. Space does not permit covering a complete study of these approaches

INFORMATION LINK

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