‘WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY’ – THE SUCCESS MANTRA FOR EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

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One of the growing ‘make-or-break’ factors for contemporary organizations in a hyperactive competitive environment is improving the quality and wellness of their employees at all levels right from top management to other subordinate levels. Due to tremendous stress of our daily life, individual employees suffer from some kind of mental tension and stress. The hustle and bustle and challenges of everyday life like living in a metropolitan city, waiting in a bus queue or boarding it, arguing with a fellow colleague or a friend, disagreement with spouse or grown-up children at home etc. have led to the escalating levels of mental tension and stress everywhere. For reducing such worries and stresses, our body must be equipped to deal with it properly.
Stress affects people at all stages of life right from childhood to ageing. It disrupts the normal working of the body in two ways: (1) by being beyond our power of adaptability, or (2) by causing ailments which weakens a particular structure of our body*. Certain factors immensely affect our mental health and human beings become prone to deadly diseases under the influence of such stressors. Prior researchers have identified a list of stressors - factors or events that affect the stress levels of people to a certain degree.

Some of the major life stressing events occurring in one’s personal life can include death of spouse or close family member/relative, marital separation or divorce, illness, change in health or behaviour of a family member among others. At workplace, stress can result from events like retirement, major personal readjustment (e.g. merger, reorganization, bankruptcy etc.), changing to a different line of work, troubles with immediate manager to name a few†.
Impact of these events on the mental health of individuals has been found at some point of time or the other at home and at workplace. For certain individuals, a given situation produces more stress and they become susceptible to more diseases or ailments. They are known as susceptible individuals as these people are highly susceptible to aggravation, frustration, lack confidence in taking up new challenges, show inconsistency in their response to similar situations, are highly suspicious of intentions of others, prone to guilt feelings etc. Another factor is the type of profession an individual is involved in. Some of the professions or occupations that generate high to moderate degree of mental tension include that of executive (business, managerial), sales and marketing, pharmaceutical representatives, banking and accounting professionals and lastly teaching professionals.

It is high time that organizations take the initiative of promoting employee wellness at workplace by introducing different kinds of wellness programs. Recently, ‘spirituality’ is emerging as the budding ‘success mantra’ for promoting emotional wellness of employees at workplace. Companies must introduce various spiritual practice at workplaces to assist employees to improve their mental health conditions and perform well with true potential thereby increasing organizational productivity.

The skills, talents, attitudes, norms and values of business are key factors to the success of an organization. Government, business organizations as well as academic institutions must take proper measures to harness the true potential of employees and improve their mental wellness. To build an inspiring workforce predisposed to a relentless pursuit of innovation and change, organizations must foster more nimble cultures where employees can continuously learn and develop new skills. Improving and investing more and more efficiently in people will enable companies to tap massive talent and prepare their business for future competition. We are living in the age of digitalization, so we need to upgrade our workforce by up-skilling and re-skilling them to be able to cope with the requirements of disruptive technologies and reap its benefits. Alongside skilling, corporate organizations need to offer new employees such experiences which are designed to attract and retain the best talent.
The future generation Human Resources (HR) personnel have crucial roles to play, replacing traditional ‘best practices and cost-cutting’ approaches with bold new strategies, structures and tools. HR must reshape itself and the organization’s workforce to drive value and competitive advantage as never before. Time management is of much importance today and HR managers need to be initiating and sustaining right interactions with corporate leaders to become comfortable in this uncomfortable disruptive environment. HR should cultivate a holistic mindset in people that drive their purpose at workplace. We are in a world where if companies do not develop, empower and recognize their employees equitably, trust in the organization will be eroded. Hence, we must cultivate our people to be a cluster with strong technical skills as well as possessing a spiritual frame of mind. It is desirable to introduce spirituality at workplace to improve emotional well-being of employees and give them mental support to face all unpredictable challenges.

**Recommendations for improving mental wellness of employees through spiritual practices**

**Engaging in physical exercise**

Physical exercise is necessary to keep our body healthy, physically and mentally. Exercise is best done early in the morning in open fresh air or in the evening before dinner. In our daily routine lives, due to tremendous pressure we reach our place of work by availing some means of conveyance and then spend the whole day sitting in front of our computer monitor at our workstation. Due to this, the body undergoes various ailments like stiffness of muscles, muscle cramps, excruciating back pain, spondylitis, etc. So, involvement in some form of physical exercise is necessary. Walking is a good way to begin with. The start should be made with lighter exercises done for a shorter period of time.
Gradually, we must resort to more strenuous exercises for a longer duration. Some people find brisk walking a very good form of exercise. It is particularly good for people in older-age groups for whom doctors don’t recommend strenuous workout. Swimming and cycling are other physical exercises enjoyed by people of all age groups irrespective of gender. Gardening is another way to keep fit for those who love plants and enjoy such hobbies. While it keeps the body physically fit, it also relaxes the mind.

Physical exercises have proven to improve people’s stamina. For example, athletes can run longer distances without proportionately increasing their heart rate. On the other hand, those who have flabby muscles, get breathless and tired even after a little bit of physical exertion. For employees whose main job is mental work like teaching professionals and software engineers, physical exercise is very important. It is quite essential to strike a balance between physical and mental work to avoid mental tension.
Organizations must take initiatives of creating a separate yoga and wellness room for employees at workplace to practice yoga for increasing body flexibility and relaxing the mind. Yoga lessens mental tension and improves emotional wellness. Yoga can be practiced to remain mentally fit and sound. The system of Yoga as enunciated by Patanjali consists of eight components: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The first four components relate to the body, they prepare the body for the next four components which relate to the mind.

Practicing different kinds of meditation for achieving calmness of mind

Meditation is regarded as a helpful procedure for relaxing the mind and body. After retreating oneself from the outside world, squatting in a relaxed position, one can fix their mind inwardly towards an object or idea. Meditation is a natural state of mind. It is purely a mental activity. It is a process of seeking truth, of understanding ourselves better and of turning all our emotions into calmness. The different kinds of meditation that can be practised are mindfulness, loving-kindness, transcendental meditation etc.
Conducting spiritual workshops and wellness programs

Organizations must organize special workshops and wellness programs on yoga and meditation at least once in a month for improving the mental health of employees.

Encouraging bereavement programs

Bereavement programs must be undertaken to support the grieving employees in order to give them emotional support to cope with the difficult situation. These programs also help their family members understand the situation and assist them in dealing with it through healthy coping strategies.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

EAPs ensure that employees have 24x7 access to trained counsellors and external experts who may offer psychological, and even specialist legal and financial advice, guiding them through the ups and downs of life and assisting them to cope with stress. The main objective is to make these services available with utmost confidentiality.
Conclusion

Spirituality assists a person to understand meaningfulness and purpose of their job at workplace, experience emotional and mental support from colleagues, promote inner connectedness by nurturing long-lasting positive relationships with the surroundings and lastly to align individual values with organizational values. A moral value-driven organization comprising of a true spirited workplace give birth to strong individuals who are more trustworthy, have the capacity to make logical decisions, and are more dynamic than others. When an organization is bursting with such inspiring practices, it will definitely promote employee wellness at workplace. Without such dedication and valour, it would be impossible to achieve the dream of creating a spiritual workplace consisting of happy individuals.

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