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Business & Health

Training body to 'coast' can help with relaxation

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [Tanya Bricking Leach](#) Courier Contributor

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Julie Lusk, foreground, is president of stress-management company Wholesome Resources in Milford. She demonstrates some poses from her book "Desktop Yoga."

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Bringing home stress from work can turn someone into a person he or she doesn't want to be. Just ask Bill Malone. He's a social worker who runs a counseling business in West Chester and makes a living helping other people undo their messes.

What kind of messes can stress at work cause at home? It can make a person overeat or keep a person from eating, Malone said. It can interfere with sleep or concentration. It can lead to substance abuse, ruin relationships and lead to divorce.

"It can turn you into a raving lunatic," he said.

When the body's stress response system is on overload, the overexposure to stress hormones is harmful to almost all the body's functions, said Tess Olson, a clinical psychologist in West Chester. It can lead to hypertension, a suppressed immune system, digestive problems, heart disease, depression and other physical complications, she said.

A common analogy is the body as an engine, Olson said. Is the body revved up and accelerating, or is it coasting on autopilot?

"We need to be aware of how our body responds to stress - physical, emotional, thoughts, behaviors," she said. "Awareness is the key. There are no changes without awareness. Then we can learn how to deal with stress and train our body to stay more in coastal mode than revved-up mode."

Malone calls it learning "the art of relaxation."

"How we respond to stress is a choice," he said. He tries to help his clients get their priorities straight, manage their time better and let go of perfectionism and negative attitudes.

"For most of us, we're going to have to work," he said. "We have to learn how to deal with job stressors."

Desktop yoga

One of the most effective ways of letting go of work stress before you get home is by taking care of it as it arises, said Julie Lusk, author of "Desktop Yoga." Lusk, president of [Wholesome Resources](#), a stress-management company in Milford, teaches people how to do stretches, breathing and relaxation techniques right at their desks to relieve tension and get on with the day.

Diet, attitude, rest and exercise are what she says are key in dealing with stress.

"There are so many effects stress can have and you might not even realize it," she said. "If you don't take care of it as it arises, once you get home, you're feeling low, and you don't have energy left for the rest of your life."

Set boundaries

In a society where we're given credit for working and making money, being at home doesn't feel as productive, said Mary Claybon, a health and wellness coach and former nurse in Symmes Township.

"When you're stressed at work and you bring that home, you're not really bringing 'you' home," Claybon said.

She said the main reason people come to her for help is because they're looking for balance and harmony in their lives that they're not finding on the job.

"It's important to set boundaries. We have to be able to turn off work time," she said.

"The first step is to get clear about what you really, really want," she said. "From there, after setting a vision, then look at what's going to get in the way of that vision and set some very specific goals."

One goal might just be to turn off the computer after 5 p.m., she said, and leave work at work. But with today's round-the-clock technology, breaking old habits may be the hardest thing to change.