



With the peak-booking season just weeks away, health consultancy Health Matters 360 says agents need to be in peak physical and mental health to be at their most productive. *Carlie Trotter* reports

Feelin' good?



Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development earlier this year revealed that stress has overtaken cancer as the main cause for employees to take long-term absence from work.

Stress leads to a loss of 70 million working days per year in the UK, or about £26 billion if you consider decline in turnover and efficiency. Janice Haddon, head of mind matters and business coach at Health Matters 360 consultancy, says the key to beating stress, and therefore limiting absence and poor performance, is



Health 360 run workshops for firms such as Simpson Travel

learning how to maintain your energy levels and positive mental attitude through simple exercises and routine.

Fit for purpose

"By moving around every few hours you'll find that you are emotionally

stronger when it comes to dealing with difficult tasks or customers because it gets your blood circulating and raises endorphin levels," explains Haddon. She adds that knowing how to maintain your blood sugar levels can impact on your mental strength, including

putting off your morning coffee until you have eaten or replacing white carbohydrates with wholemeal.

Stress impacts people in different ways; it can impede your memory or judgement, and affect you emotionally or physically. Haddon says: "It's important to understand what motivates you and remember that things you find motivational such as sales competitions may be stressful to a colleague."

Health checks

Health Matters 360 runs one and two-day workshops to teach relaxation techniques and better nutrition to staff of companies with employees numbering anything from 10 to 1,000. Coaches test employees' adrenal fatigue using a BioMeridian machine - an alternative medicine practice in which electric current is used to check how well the hormone-producing adrenal glands are functioning.

They then teach staff to stop relying on caffeine, nicotine and sugar in favour of natural energy boosting tricks. Haddon advises: "Try 7/11 breathing, where you exhale for longer than you inhale to trick your body into relaxation mode, and couple this with some full-belly breaths that help circulate oxygen and clear your mind." Agents who spend a lot of time on the phone are also advised to drink more water than the average office worker as they lose moisture through their mouth, become dehydrated and develop headaches otherwise.

"It's crucial for a customer-facing business to learn about the wellbeing of its staff as agents need to be able to recognise the same signs of tension or distress in their clients," she adds.

Gadget fans are also encouraged to make use of the stress-monitoring Philips Vital Signs app, which records your breathing and heart rate via the iPad 2's video camera.

Are you a picture of health?

Circle any of the following conditions that could regularly be used to describe you...

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| DEPRESSED | ANXIOUS | HYPERACTIVE | EASILY UPSET | EXPLOSIVE | FORGETFUL |
| INDECISIVE | CAN'T SWITCH OFF | NO MOTIVATION | SORE MUSCLES | CRAMPS | |
| TWITCHES | RESTLESS LEGS | I FEEL GUILTY WHEN I'M RELAXING | | | |
| I'M A RESTLESS SLEEPER | | I FEEL DROWSY DURING THE DAY | | | |
| I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CONCENTRATE | | I FEEL DIZZY IF I STAND UP QUICKLY | | | |

If you circled more than three conditions it may be time to ask for more support from colleagues, family or a health coach.

