

# How do you cope with stress?



**Employees on site are encouraged to take a moment and enjoy the landscape or take a relaxing stroll once in a while to help keep things in perspective when the pressure mounts up.**

**Beverly J. Spiller**  
Education Outreach Assistant  
Media Services Corporation

*"When answering the phones for a lot of people and I'm having a day when everybody in the world is calling, and I can't get my work done, I'll pick up the phone, shake it real good, take a deep breath, and calmly say, 'This is Beverly. May I help you?'"*



**Robin Hart**  
Speakers Bureau Coordinator  
InDyne, Inc.

*"Bubble wrap! Since there isn't any carpet in my office, I can tape down the corners of the bubble wrap to the floor and do a little dance on it! Sometimes I like to roll my chair around on it, but more often than not, I just jump up and down on it until it stops popping. Everybody can always tell when I'm having a very stressful day because it sounds like I've got a very loud popcorn popper in my office!"*



**Debbie Sharp**  
Lead Video Producer  
Media Services Corporation

*"I've gotten involved in kickboxing and yoga in part for stress relief and partly for the health benefits. I highly recommend both of these activities for people who are in high stress situations at work. I used to have a lot of problems with migraine headaches and shoulder pains from tensing up at work. You won't believe the difference that kickboxing and yoga make. I really feel great now... and I'm toning my body at the same time. You can't beat the multiple benefits."*



**Delene Sedillo**  
Contracting Officer  
NASA/JSC

*"If I know in advance that I'm going to be working or living in a stressful environment for several days or weeks, I immediately schedule a massage to occur after or in the middle of the 'stressful' period. This gives me something to look forward to. I think having a positive attitude, glass half full rather than half empty, contributes to successfully dealing with stressful situations whether at home or work."*



## Point and click to make a change

**D**o you think increased staffing would help relieve your workload? Done. What about having a lunch delivery service for those days you can't make it out for a quick bite? Done. And how about a calm, lush, landscaped walking trail for you to escape to when things get a little crazed? Sound good? Done.

And you can have more. For just a few minutes of your time and feedback, you can help initiate improvements to your workplace.

As part of the Stress Management Initiative, a brief, in-depth stress survey will be conducted online later this month. The results from the questionnaire, which will take less than 10 minutes to complete and is anonymous and confidential, will be used to make JSC a less stressful, safer, more unified place to work.

"This is a chance for everyone, center-wide, to participate," said Beth Hall, industrial psychologist responsible for leading the SMI for Life Sciences and Human Resources. "The changes made so far are because people were willing to voice their concerns and participate in the first study completed last year. We need that participation again."

In 1999, a small sample of JSC employees, less than 100 in fact, participated in a high-level survey about workplace stress and morale. The results were combined with data from the Human Resources Office, Space and Life Sciences, the Employee Assistance Program Office, and morale data from the International Space Station Program to paint a picture of the JSC workplace environment – and, essentially, to drive change.

Although small in scale, the results from that survey were used to negotiate increased staffing at the center.

"There is an increased sense among center managers that stress is directly impacting productivity and morale," said Hall. "Health and fitness are stepping up beside safety as key center principles. The level of commitment we are receiving is quite commendable."

Now is your chance to paint a more detailed picture and impact the future of your work environment.

"The feedback we receive from the survey is very valuable," explained Jackie Reese, MA, LPC, director of JSC's Employee Assistance Program. "We are really paying attention to the responses and implementing change because of what employees tell us."

**As a result of the feedback from the last survey, the SMI team has implemented several actions and programs:**

- ✓ Successful pitch to NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin for increased staff;
- ✓ "Bill Chill" awareness and education materials – "Top 10 List," *Roundup* article, posters, table tents, employee badges;
- ✓ Programmatic enhancements to employee service areas:
  - Extended Gilruth athletic and recreation programs,
  - Exchange Store sundries, and cafeteria services (extended hours, products, delivery);
- ✓ Focus groups of small JSC population discussing JSC stressors, suggestions, and exit interviews;
- ✓ EAP trends analysis looking at job stress-related cases – shows increase in job-stress issues throughout the site;
- ✓ EAP "roadshows" to center organizations focusing on stress and stress management;
- ✓ Stress assessment tools through the EAP;
- ✓ "Physiological/Psychological Impacts and Coping Skills" 4-hour stress course offered quarterly; and
  - ✓ Tips via Total Health Web site regarding stress awareness and prevention, health-related fitness activities; i.e., mall walking trail map.

**Future actions on the SMI's "To Do" list include:**

- ✓ Tracking stress-related clinic visits;
- ✓ Possibly extending child and elder care for JSC employees;
- ✓ Analyzing JSC processes for improved prioritization and definition of multiple requirements;
- ✓ Benchmarking against other high-achieving organizations and seeking improvements; and
- ✓ Possibly offering computer-based stress training via the Total Health Web site.

But again, strong, center-wide participation is needed to be the most effective at initiating these changes. Employees will be notified via E-mail when the survey is available. Results will be covered in a future *Roundup* issue. ■