

## Brain Bites – Jingle Bells, not Jangled Nerves! December 2010

Category – Holiday stress strategies

‘Tis the season to be...stressed-out, fa-la-la-la-lah, la la la lahhhhhh...!’

In preparation for the holiday season, are you winding down to enjoy the merriment of family, friends, and work socials or are you dealing with the overload of juggling balls and jangled nerves? If you said yes to the latter, then you likely have **Holiday Season Stress**. In today’s society stress is prevalent, however during the holiday season it can become heightened. In order to create a more positive experience during the holidays it’s best to understand stress and have tools to deal with it effectively.

**What exactly is stress?** The Harvard Business Review says, “generally speaking, ‘stress’ refers to two simultaneous events: an external stimulus called a stressor, and the emotional and physical responses to that stimulus (fear, anxiety, surging heart rate and blood pressure, fast breathing, muscle tension, etc.,). Good stressors (a ski run, horseback riding, and poetry contest) inspire you to achieve. Stress usually refers to our internal reaction to negative, threatening, or worrisome situations—a looming performance report, a dismissive colleague, rush-hour traffic, and so on. Accumulated over time, negative stress can depress you, burn you out, make you sick, or even kill you. This is because, as our research shows, negative stress is both an emotional and a physiological habit.”

**Neurological pathways are created through experiences whether they are positive or negative.** When we are in negative stress state, neurological pathways are formed under pressure and reinforce the very physical-mental-emotional state we are trying to avoid. Once formed, they become habitual and poorly affect how we engage in all areas of life, like connecting with our spouse, engaging our children, communicating with colleagues or meeting sales deadlines.

Harvard Business Review shows that many companies understand the negative impact of cumulative stress and do their best to help employees counteract it. Some companies offer yoga classes and massage, while others provide stress management seminars and there are those that require workers to take a vacation every year. The primary issue is that the company culture, compounded by the stress in people’s personal lives, works against such efforts. Employees who are stressed out are not willing to take precious time away from work, even for an hour, to use the available resources. Those who use the employee wellness programs are the ones willing to confront their stress head-on vs those who have the greatest need often don’t show up.

Time is a factor on the self-care scale, especially during busy times of the year, like the holiday season. Most people do not feel they have the time or energy to do the extra’s that would greatly improve their health, wellness and overall performance. Cognitive Fitness is fast, easy to use, and highly effective. Within minutes we can shift from stress to a balanced, focused and energized state. The same benefits can be derived from a few daily minutes of integrative movements that an hour of fitness can yield. Cognitive Fitness can also be done easily throughout the day as an employee transitions from one activity to another. For example; going from a sales meeting (motivational), to a budget meeting (analytical) to a Holiday luncheon (social).

Since 1991 the Harvard Business Review has studied the mind-body-emotion relationship and has found that learning to manage stress, “**inner quality management**” is easier than most people think and stress reversal can do a lot of good for an organization.

Cognitive Fitness is a simple and effective tool that everyone can use from children to seniors, and it has special applications in organizations used to empower employees, reduce stress and boost overall health and performance. These are tangible returns on investment that will positively impact your organizations bottom line. **Investing your organizations human capital using cognitive fitness strategies for stress reduction has a multi-faceted impact on how your employees engage in the workplace, at home and in all areas of life, in a positive way.** [Human Capital Testimonials](#)

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are both Licensed Brain Gym® Trainers and *Cognitive Fitness Experts*. Their company, Brain Works Global Inc., train clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

They provide keynotes, in house training, and sponsored events to a wide range of organizations, schools and the community. For more information go to <http://www.brainworksglobal.com> or call 905.830.6902.