

### Handling Office Stress Is Hard Work

(NAPSA)—It's important that dealing with work-related stress doesn't become a full-time job. That's one conclusion of a recent study that found stress is becoming a prominent fixture in the American workplace, with only half of workers able to deal effectively with it.

The study revealed that workers now take up to two weeks of sick time a year to deal with stress-related illness and that many use over-the-counter analgesics in an effort to remedy their stress-related sickness.

The study, conducted by the Hadassah women's organization, in partnership with Aetna and the United States Tennis Association, polled approximately 1,000 people at companies across the Northeast. It was created by stress expert and author Dr. Deborah Bright, who served as co-investigator with Dr. Mark Popachin, a prominent gastroenterologist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital's Weill Cornell Medical Center.

One in three respondents said they are "highly stressed" at work, with nearly four in 10 reporting that they have more stress at work today than two years ago. Only 50 percent rated themselves as "very effective" in handling this stress. As a result, 32 percent admitted missing anywhere from one to 14 days of work in 2004 due to stress-related illness and just about one-quarter (24 percent) disclosed taking anywhere from one to five aspirin or acetaminophen tablets daily because of stress-related complaints.

According to the study, there are numerous factors contributing to on-the-job stress. Fifty-five percent of respondents cited their foremost stressor as being given more tasks and responsibilities than time to do them. Forty-three percent cited being on the receiving end of criticism as the second greatest source of stress, while having to give criticism rated as the eighth highest stress-producing situation (36 percent).

"Americans are experiencing higher levels of stress than ever before," said June Walker, Hadassah's National President and a health care professional. "The challenge of balancing work, family, and finances in an increasingly more competitive, demanding world is definitely taking its toll."

"Stress has become a health concern for people both in the workplace and home setting," said Dr. Popachin. "It cannot be eliminated from our lives. Our study assesses which coping strategies are being utilized by those who successfully manage their stress. From these findings, we hope to identify practical methods for all of us to minimize the negative effects of stress in our lives."

Building "to do" lists seemed to be the most effective way respondents managed workplace stress, while smoking was the least effective. Unfortunately, most people said their work-related stress doesn't leave them when they leave work. Fifty-five percent said they frequently think about work

while at home, and 20 percent said they have difficulty sleeping at night due to stress-related problems from work.

Also, people may want to be careful about just how quickly they climb the corporate ladder. If you are a manager between the ages of 25 and 44, chances are you are among those who are least effective at handling everyday work-related stress.

#### Stress Busters In The Workplace...

results from a Hadassah survey

- Seventy-four percent of people said they build "to do" lists.
- Sixty-nine percent break larger tasks into smaller parts.
- Sixty-two percent talk to a co-worker.
- Sixty-four percent clean and organize their work areas.
- Fifty-eight percent establish clear goals.

#### Stress Busting After Work

- Seventy-four percent talk to family members, one's mate and friends.
- Sixty-four percent said reading is the most effective way to deal with stress.
- Fifty-seven percent said playing a sport or exercising effectively busts stress.
- Fifty-six percent said they listen to music.
- Smoking was found to be the least effective stress-busting method—on or off the job.