Healthy heroics on the job

Another workday begins. After stumbling out of bed and getting ready you head to your job. On the way, you hit the drive thru for some caffeine and pick up a box of donuts for your morning meeting. By 10 a.m. you're full of energy. By 11 a.m., you can barely keep your eyes open. With so much work to do, you and your colleagues end up skipping lunch or grabbing greasy takeout. And exercise? Who's got the time?

While it may seem like making healthy choices-especially at work-is downright inconvenient, it is possible. With a few quick and easy changes, you can fight to win back your own physical and emotional well-being and become a health hero in your workplace. Start by:

Grazing greener. Help keep waistlines trim, energy levels consistent and arteries clear by swapping those donuts, cakes and cookies for a fruit tray or yogurt at your next meeting. Better still, put healthy snacking on the agenda by organizing a "Well Wednesday" or "Fresh Friday," where employees take turns bringing in nutritious nibbles (like hummus and whole wheat pita bread or veggies and dip) for everyone to share.

Stepping up the pace (by exercising that is). Connect with your co-workers by organizing a pre or post-work walking group. 'Training' for a charity walk not only gives the group a goal to work towards but also a sense of greater purpose. Walking, notes the American Heart Association, is a great way to boost your health, mood and productivity. Or why not elevate the staff's inner Karma by bringing in lunchtime Yoga or Pilates? If space (or flexibility) is an issue, consider pulling together a company slow pitch, basketball or volleyball team-anything that encourages you and your co-workers to get active and together.

Passing it on. Whether it's a great article on exercise and depression, a fabulous low fat recipe you tried on the weekend, or health and wellness information offered through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), don't keep it to yourself. Pass on interesting information, or, if you have a company intranet, post links on the site. Keep it upbeat and general though and be sensitive to other people's comfort levels; avoid singling out individuals or distributing information on controversial issues.

Breathing life into wasted space. Take some initiative and transform that dead cubby hole of vacant area-the one piled high with old equipment, unused supplies or broken umbrellas-into a "recharging space" or "decompression lounge" people can visit on breaks to de-stress. It doesn't have to take major effort and money: clear out the clutter and replace it with some comfortable seating or play some relaxing classical or jazz music and add water cooler to help everyone stay hydrated. It could also be a great place to post your latest wellness newsletters, tip sheets and information about your organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Championing a healthy work environment doesn't require you to make sweeping o time-consuming changes. It's about using your powers of enthusiasm, creativity and action to help strengthen the physical and emotional wellness and your co-workers and your organization.