

ON-SITE MASSAGE - Stress

By Amanda Brooks, DARM,DIR,OSM,SMTO

DEFINITION OF ON-SITE MASSAGE

On-Site Massage is performed through the clothes on a specially designed chair. It lasts for 15-20 minutes and is aimed at the corporate environment. Its aims are to first of all relax the client, de-stressing and relieving general muscular tension, and then to rejuvenate and re-vitalise, ready to go back to work.

On-Site Massage is an innovative way for a company to improve the productivity of their employees. Many companies have also found a decline in absenteeism.

The Touch Research Institute in Florida has a published study on the benefits of On-Site Massage. The results are as follows:-

1. Decreased EEG Alpha and Beta Waves and increased delta activity, consistent with enhanced alertness.
2. Mathematical problems were completed in significantly less time with significantly fewer errors after massage.
3. Anxiety and job stress levels were lower at the end of the one-month period.

Ref: Fields, T, Ironson, G, Scafidi, F, Nawrocki, T, Goncalves, A, Burman, I, Pickens, J, Fox, N, Schanberg, S and Kuhn, C (1996) International Journal of Neuroscience, 86

Introduction

'Mr Black' is a 35-year-old man, suffering from stress.

His company provides On-Site Massage as a benefit to all employees. The company has never implemented it as part of their stress management program but has decided to test it for this case.

Mr Black has been with the company for seven years and his productivity within the company within the last four months has dwindled. This has been shown in both his standards of work and the time it takes to complete tasks. The last four projects were not completed until after the official deadline.

Mr Black has also been irritable and snappy towards other employees, creating hostility within the workplace.

The Company Doctor has prescribed anti-depressants, which only appear to have slowed him down further, and made him withdraw.

Mr Black has been a valuable asset to the company over the years, helping to secure numerous multi-million pound contracts for the company. The managing directors, thus, have chosen to try and rectify the situation, if possible, rather than opting for dismissal of Mr Black.

They have given a one-month deadline to see substantial changes; otherwise extreme measures will have to be made.

Consultation

Mr Black begins with being reluctant to give too many details about his general health and lifestyle. He sees being sent for treatment as a threat, rather than a lifeline.

Mr Black is in denial that his problems are threatening his job and security.

Through completing the Indemnity Form provided it is revealed that he is having frequent headaches and sleeping problems. It also recognises that he is not only on anti-depressants but also sleeping pills, both in relatively high dosages.

No other recent illnesses, operations, fractures or general medical details are noted.

Discussion is turned to other factors that may affect his general well-being, this uncovers that he has been having problems with his wife recently, due to working long hours and not giving an appropriate amount of time to both her and their children. This is clearly a factor contributing to the hostility he is presenting, especially as he feels he is working hard so that he can gain a good salary to give his family a good standard of living that he did not have as a child.

Dietary factors are also included, where he describes drinking between ten and fifteen cups of coffee per day! Again this high level of caffeine will be contributing to his irritability. He also tends to eat fast/convenience foods that he eats while he works, without taking any proper breaks during the day. His main meal is taken late at night, sometimes well after 10pm. This not only will contribute to his sleeping problem but the lack of nutrition, through a poor diet, will not help his general health.



As the consultation progresses he begins to relax and recognise that he has problems that need to be addressed.

Additional information provided by the Occupational Health Department are the results on his stress levels and blood pressure that are both substantially higher than they should be. The tests will be repeated at the end of the treatment program to help measure progress.

Treatment plan

The company has put a timescale on rectifying the situation of only one month. This is not a great deal of time considering that the initial problems began over one year ago, with severe productivity and irritability over the last four months.

Discussion is made with Mr Black into the course of action; this is done to make sure he feels involved in 'taking charge' of his life, rather than someone doing it for him, that is never as effective as people can become dependant on the treatment.

The treatment plan chosen is to have two On-Site Massages per week, one on Monday, and the other on Thursday, for the duration of the month. Mr Black is also going to try and drink more water, and if he needs to drink coffee he is going to try a decaffeinated blend. He is also going to try and eat a more nutritious diet, possibly bringing in fresh soup or salads from home for lunch. Proper breaks for mealtimes and structure, same time each day, to them are also to be implemented.

On-site massage treatment

The first 20-minute On-Site Massage uncovers that Mr Black is holding a lot of tension in his neck and shoulders. He also found it very difficult to relax during the massage, talking constantly. During the stretches, where breathing exercises are incorporated, he was reluctant to 'let go' and take proper deep breaths.

Mr Black did feel slightly easier and less tense after the initial session, especially in his shoulder area.

Advice on posture was given as he has a tendency to slouch, particularly while working on his PC. The company was also providing assistance in looking at the ergonomics of his workstation.

On the day of the second session Mr Black arrived looking less pale and withdrawn. He commented on his sleeping pattern improving slightly and awaking more refreshed, rather than waking up feeling like he had been 'run over by a bus' as previously described.

During the massage he talked less and began to relax. His response to the treatment improved, allowing the stretches to be done more effectively, concentrating on breathing more. At the end of the session he felt 'refreshed'.

Time management was discussed at the end of the session briefly, as planning his time more efficiently will not only improve his job productivity but also may help reduce his working hours which will help his home life.

The following four treatments, over two weeks, changes were noticeably seen. Mr Black appeared more cheerful and less like he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

He stopped his medication by the end of the second week, as agreed by his GP. His sleeping pattern is almost completely back to normal, and he does not feel as 'down'.

He has taken control of his workload, and the planning of his day has allowed him to finish the day between 6 and 7pm, instead of 9 or 10pm as done previously. He also feels himself that his standard of work has begun to improve.

Through reducing his caffeine and relaxing more through the On-Site Massage, he not only feels, but is also noticeably, less irritable. He also mentions plans to go out for a drink at the end of the week with colleagues, something he has not done for over nine months. This shows his communication skills returning, and the ability to socialise.

The seventh, penultimate, session shows Mr Black is no longer the pale, highly-strung, withdrawn person initially met. He is friendly, outgoing and relaxed. His determination to strive in his work has returned. He has taken control of his life.

Mr Black acknowledges the changes he feels and how he had not noticed how difficult a situation he had got himself into. He also recognised how close he got to not only losing his job, and his security, but feels he was on the brink of a breakdown.

Discussion is made into maintaining these changes - how to relax on a regular basis - relaxing hot baths, regular massage or even reading a book, not work-related. Also ensuring proper time off, it has been mentioned he has not taken a day off in over six months.

Assessments are made by the Company's Occupational Health Department prior to the final session. The tests show that his blood pressure and stress levels are back to normal, if not slightly low.

The Managing Directors and Occupational Health Department are overwhelmed by the dramatic change that has occurred with Mr Black, especially to his work.

The final session is done as an extra, rather than being essential. It is decided that Mr Black will continue to have an On-Site Massage once per month, as offered by the company to the employees already. This will be to assist in maintenance to the changes Mr Black has made.

Conclusion

Mr Black made dramatic progress over the month of treatment. Stress levels were reduced, as was blood pressure, by helping Mr Black relax. He regained control and took charge of his life. The On-Site Massage helped him to feel more alert and re-energised which enabled him to be more effective in his workplace.

The company was pleased to have a valuable member of their team back. His immediate superior was astonished at the improvement of the standard of his work. He was receiving completed work early rather than late. Mr Black was also back to being involved with other colleagues, liaising with them rather than trying to do everything on his own. His aggressive, confrontational manner was also a thing of the past.

The Managing Directors and Occupational Health Department also decided to implement On-Site Massage as part of their Stress Management program, rather than just being an added bonus for staff to enjoy, as it had been seen previously.

About the Author

Amanda Brooks, DARM,DIR,OSM,SMTO

This study was done by Amanda Brooks who practises from the Brooks-Carter Clinic in Aberdeen as an Advanced Remedial, Sports and On-Site Massage Therapist and Reflexologist.

Amanda is the Practise Manager as well as Course Co-ordinator for the Scottish Massage Schools. She runs courses in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness in various therapies. She also tutors for the courses in Basic Swedish Massage, Remedial/Sports Massage, Reflexology and On-Site Massage, which she is also Head of Studies.

She is a member of the SMTO (Scottish Massage Therapists Organisation) and is their Events Co-ordinator.

Amanda began COSS (Corporate On-Site Services) at the beginning of 2000. Her aim was to supply On-Site Massage to companies on a national basis. Primarily On-Site Massage is implemented into the corporate environment but other therapies, like Reflexology and Sports Massage, have been used, particularly for Health Promotions done within the company.

Amanda has presented talks and workshops, nationally, on 'Back Care and Posture at Work', 'Stress Management' and 'RSI'.

This service is available nationally in the UK.

Scottish Massage Therapists' Organisation (SMTO)
70 Lochside Road
Denmore Park
Bridge of Don
Aberdeen
AB23 8QW
Tel: 01224 822 956
Email: info@scotmass.co.uk

For Further information visit the website www.scotmass.co.uk