

A Publication of the Wellness Council of America

WELCOA's News & Views

Are Your Wellness Programs Prepared For The **Super Stress Super Storm?**

Brian Luke Seaward On
Stress In America Today

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About Dr. Brian Luke Seaward



Brian Luke Seaward is regarded as one of the foremost experts in the field of stress management and a pioneer in the field of mind-body-spirit healing. Dr. Seaward has served as a sports psychologist for many Olympic swimmers, ice skaters and the U.S. national Biathlon team. His corporate clients include Hewlett Packard, Procter & Gamble, Conoco Oil, Motorola, Quaker Oats, John Deere, BP-Amoco, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Maxtor-Seagate and Organic Valley Dairy. He serves on the faculty of the University of Northern Colorado-Greeley and is the Executive Director of the Paramount Wellness Institute in Boulder, Colorado.

WELCOA's News Views

An Expert Interview with
Brian Luke Seaward, PhD

About David Hunnicutt



Since his arrival at WELCOA in 1995, David Hunnicutt has interviewed hundreds of the most influential business and health leaders in America. Known for his ability to make complex issues easier to understand, David has a proven track record of asking the right questions and getting straight answers. As a result of his efforts, David's expert interviews have been widely-published and read by workplace wellness practitioners across the country.

David Hunnicutt can be reached at dhunnicutt@welcoa.org.



The economic meltdown, information overload, corporate downsizing, on-demand everything—the list of personal and professional stressors is nearly endless. Indeed, all of these factors culminate to what is now being called “super stress.”

In this exclusive interview, WELCOA President David Hunnicutt discusses the current issues of stress with renowned stress management expert, Brian Luke Seaward. Dr. Seaward reveals essential coping tools—from setting healthy boundaries to comic relief to relaxation skills—so that practitioners can help employees navigate through this super storm of super stress.



HUNNICUTT: What are the major trends concerning stress?

SEAWARD: I see several trends and issues on the horizon of the corporate worksite. Some of these issues have already arrived with a vengeance—with a potential for a perfect storm of stress. In fact, experts in the field call this the era of “super stress.”

The first major trend I see deals with technology. We are in the first wave of the information age, with more waves to come. Serious questions are being raised concerning the quality of work that can be produced with the daily onslaught of “e-distractions,” which include emails, YouTube clips, Tweets and Facebook updates. This information bombardment is leading to burnout. The expression I hear so often in corporate America is, “I need to come up for air.” In the past, burnout was usually the result of a lack of time combined with an abundance of work. However, this is now shifting to “cerebral burnout” due to information overload, and I think it’s going to get much worse in the coming months and years. As Bette Davis said, “Fasten your seatbelt, it’s going to be a bumpy ride.”

In tandem with this explosion of technology is the issue of healthy boundaries, or lack thereof. A healthy boundary is another term for assertiveness (an effective stress management coping technique). When employees set healthy boundaries, they adopt appropriate behaviors that balance work with down time. However, we live in an age where our level of technology has exceeded the capacity of our human physiology. The human body was never meant to be on demand 24/7, but it appears that many Americans today simply never stop. They are emailing on their Blackberries, they’re constantly checking voicemail—they never truly leave work. And the result of this is mental burnout. These individuals are more irritable, frustrated, rude, angry, cynical—I could go on and on. They also have a harder time concentrating and being creative.

I should also add that all of this technology has thrown a monkey wrench in the social etiquette of communications skills. Texting or Tweeting a resignation letter is simply inappropriate. I mean, it sounds ridiculous, but it happens. And it’s more common than not to see people checking their Blackberries and iPhones during business meetings.

Insomnia is another big trend emerging in the American workforce. We already see huge problems with this today, but experts suggest that it will get worse as the next few waves of technology hit the shores of humanity.

The human body needs seven to eight hours of quality sleep. However, in the

About WELCOA

The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) was established as a national not-for-profit organization in the mid 1980’s through the efforts of a number of forward-thinking business and health leaders. Drawing on the vision originally set forth by William Kizer, Sr., Chairman Emeritus of Central States Indemnity, and WELCOA founding Directors that included Dr. Louis Sullivan, former Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Warren Buffet, Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, WELCOA has helped influence the face of workplace wellness in the U.S.

Today, WELCOA has become one of the most respected resources for workplace wellness in America. With a membership in excess of 3,200 organizations, WELCOA is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all working Americans. Located in America’s heartland, WELCOA makes its national headquarters in one of America’s healthiest business communities Omaha, Nebraska.



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The Facts...

WELCOA's trademarked Seven Benchmark System for building results-oriented workplace wellness programs has been used by 1,000's of companies throughout the U.S. To learn more about this process simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/wellworkplace/index.php?category=16>



24/7, on-demand society we live in, the first way people re-orchestrate their day is often by trimming their sleep. Of course, insomnia usually always accompanies other poor habits and results, such as poor eating, lack of concentration, and increased irritability. The bottom line is that poor sleep affects everything from work productivity to personal safety to the quality of our personal relationships.

H: How concerned are you with what you are seeing related to stress in the workplace?

S: I am very concerned about stress at the worksite. Unfortunately, I only see the connection between worksite stress and poor health intensifying. People spend the greatest part of their day at work; they identify themselves with their work. For many, work is the primary purpose in life. For better or worse, the Puritan ethic is very strong in America. However, given our current economic situation, there are several changes occurring in the workplace, which is creating a whole new layer of stress. If preventive measures aren't taken, we're going to see significant consequences on employees' health status.

As a facilitator of professional development corporate seminars, I constantly hear participants bemoan the mantra they are told to live by at work: "Do more with less." Of course, as budget cuts, lay-offs and stock market jitters continue, this mantra has now changed to: "Do everything with nothing." This type of environment ultimately lays the foundation for chronic work stress. We cannot have a maxed-out, sleep-deprived, stressed-out, e-distracted work force and expect good things to happen.

H: What happens to the body specifically from a physiological perspective when we experience distress?

S: There are two physiological categories of stress: acute stress and chronic stress. Acute stress is short, but very intense in duration. With acute stress, it's common to experience an increase in your resting heart rate and blood pressure. The body's metabolic activities also increase, even if you're just sitting in front of a computer.

If stress persists longer than 20 minutes, your physiology shifts toward chronic stress. When chronic stress occurs, there is a shift from the central nervous system to the endocrine (hormonal) system. This shift is not good, to say the least. There is a very strong connection between chronic stress and disease. The association between stress and disease is colossal—about 85 percent.

If the stress hormone cortisol continually lingers in the blood stream, it will destroy white blood cells. This sets the stage for all kinds of health-related problems, from autoimmune system diseases (such as Lupus, Rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia and Epstein Barr) to cancer. Hans Selye saw this decades ago in his research. He called it the General Adaptation Syndrome, which states that the body adapts to the stress placed on it. In other words, the body's way of adapting to chronic stress is by developing a chronic disease. This is precisely why stress management habits are es-

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More than 3,000 organizations across the U.S. and Canada are members of WELCOA. With the most comprehensive benefits of any organization, WELCOA membership will save you time and money in your quest to build a results-oriented workplace wellness program.

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Stress Tip #5. Eat For A Healthy Immune System

Chronic stress tends to suppress the immune system through the overactive role of the stress hormone cortisol. Basic living depletes essential nutrients. Chronic stress depletes them even quicker. Good quality foods can help negate stress to bring your immune system into balance. Organic fruits and vegetables and free-range meats are the best sources of food to build a healthy immune system.

Stress Tip #6. Get A Good Night's Sleep!

A good night's sleep helps you re-charge, and it boosts the immune system too. Down pillows and 1,000-thread count sheets are a great start to a good night's sleep, but don't stop there. Remove any items that contribute to poor sleep hygiene, such as a TV in the bedroom, your computer, Blackberry and/or iPhone. Also, because stress is cited as the leading cause of insomnia, it's a good idea to keep a pen and paper on the night stand. Write down any consuming thoughts that steal precious moments of quality sleep.

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The Well Workplace Healthletter is an effective and extremely cost-efficient solution for any organization that wants to provide their employees with timely and accurate health information. Distributed to millions of employees across the nation, the *Well Workplace Healthletter* is a fun and engaging medium that speaks directly to your employees' needs.

The Well Workplace Healthletter covers all aspects of health and wellness, including:

- Exercise
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- Self-Care
- Work and Family
- Personal Finance

The Healthletter promotes positive lifestyle changes and behaviors and is perfect for any organization. To learn more or to order, visit <http://welcoa.org/store>

In the past, burnout was usually the result of a lack of time combined with an abundance of work. However, this is now shifting to “cerebral burnout” due to information overload.

Stress Tip #7. Go Natural

Getting in touch with nature can help ease your tension. So, step out of the office or worksite and step into nature; a park, a riverbank, a greenhouse, a garden, even the nearest floral shop. Time spent in front of a computer—days on end—will slowly rattle your nerves on end. Recalibrate your body's rhythms to the rhythms of the natural world—every day if possible. Surround yourself in the company of trees, flowers and wildlife no matter where you live or work.

Stress Tip #8. Lean On Your Friends

There are times to cherish solitude, and there are times to cherish good friends and family. Friends help cushion the fall of a stressful day. We don't need many friends (and certainly not thousands of virtual friends) but we do need a handful of close friends to bond with and feel supported by in tough times. The hustle-bustle of life can often leave people with many virtual friends, but few “real” people to call up and socialize with. Make it a point to regularly socialize in person. Consider organizing a potluck dinner party, scheduling a round of golf or going outside and talking with your neighbors; all of these activities can help you celebrate life's simple pleasures.

Stress Tip #9. Tickle Your Funny Bone

Humor heals a stressful mind. Laughter and even smiles are essential tools for

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emotional balance in the face of stress. Make a point to find one funny thing to laugh at each day. Focus on things that tickle your funny bone (e.g., jokes, photos, a stand-up comic, etc.). Collect these items in a “tickler” notebook and rely on it as your humor resource. Irony, parody, satire, blue collar, white collar or no collar, laughter is great medicine for the mind, body and spirit. By the way, I highly recommend the book, *The Geography of Bliss* by Eric Weiner. It’s a great resource on how to discover the joys in life.

YOUR #1 RESOURCE FOR WORKPLACE WELLNESS INFORMATION



To access hundreds of free documents and receive the latest developments in workplace wellness, visit WELCOA at www.welcoa.org.

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Stress Tip #10. Create A Relaxation Survival Kit

Stressful times call for clever measures! Use your five senses to relax; it’s effective and fun. Create a relaxation survival kit for your senses. Gather items to soothe the body through sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. It’s essentially a first aid kit for stressful times.

Items in your kit might include a vile of lavender (smell), a Hawaiian Beach post card (sight), a classical CD (sound), bubble wrap (touch), and some Belgian chocolate truffles (taste). Make one for the home and office. Don’t forget to replace the chocolate!

Stress Tip #11. Get In Tune With Music Therapy

Music, it is said, soothes the savage beast. Instrumental music (without words) soothes it best. Make a play list of 20 soothing pieces of instrumental music. Consider playing this relaxing, instrumental music during stressful commutes from home and work, or perhaps once you get home. Consider piano solos, Hawaiian slack-key guitar, violin concertos, Spanish flamenco and Icelandic folk music. Explore new melodies that give your mind a mini-vacation and soothe the savage beast that resides in you when tension runs high.

H: What should be included or considered in a worksite wellness stress program?

S: Well-designed stress management classes are an open door to address the nexus of mind-body-spirit interaction. I think if corporate leaders are wise, they would read the writing on the wall (or computer screen). The human mind does not function well with information overload. The ability to multi-task shouldn’t always be viewed as a gift; ask anybody who’s gotten into a car accident while text messaging. There has to be periods of down time, time to quiet and focus the mind.

I think every worksite wellness program should have a meditation program. When I worked with Olympic athletes, we called this mental training. Any athlete knows the importance of mental training and mental discipline. Regardless of what you call it, a designated time and place at the workspace to quiet the mind is essential in regard to quality work productivity. Exercise classes are also a must, but

The Facts...

More than 400 large, medium, and small-sized companies have achieved a Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum-level designation for their workplace wellness initiatives. To learn more simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/wellworkplace/index.php?category=19>





from Dr. Luke Seaward

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don't stop there. Anger management courses, healthy nutrition workshops, better sleep seminars, humor therapy days—the list is quite endless and wellness directors can get really creative if they want to.

Wellness is ultimately a colossal topic, and programs should be designed to honor the integration, balance and harmony of the mind, body, spirit and emotions. I live by the motto: *To know and not to do, is not to know*. Knowledge is great, but without the application behind it, it's pretty much worthless. The best wellness goals must be put into motion.

H: You just released a new movie and DVD—tell us about it.

S: For the past two years I have been working on a documentary film titled, *Earth Songs: Mountains, Water and the Healing Power of Nature*. It's narrated by renowned British actor, Michael York. As producer, director, cinematographer and screenwriter, I created *Earth Songs* to promote relaxation, particularly for chronically ill hospital patients as well as for corporate wellness programs. Since its release this January, the responses from audiences around the country have been astounding.

As a whole, our relationship with nature is abysmal. In his best-selling book, *The Last Child in the Woods*, author Richard Louv calls this problem a “nature deficit disorder” and it's not just kids who have it. For the first time ever, public health officials have noticed a vitamin D deficiency in people of all ages, and it has everything to do with not getting enough direct sunlight.

Our world is in dire straits. Global warming is just the tip of the melting iceberg. Our oceans are years away from a complete collapse of the natural fisheries. Our waters are polluted with chemical run-off. The list is quite long. Al Gore's movie was great, but it left people a bit hopeless. I produced *Earth Songs* in an effort to allow people to fall back in love with Mother Nature. The film

The Facts...

More than a thousand business leaders and workplace wellness professionals have completed WELCOA's Level I and Level II training courses and have been certified as WELCOA Well Workplace Certified Practitioners. To learn more simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/wellworkplace/index.php?category=17>



ABOUT WELCOA



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If preventive measures aren't taken, we're going to see significant consequences on employees' health status.

includes breathtaking footage from Iceland, the Caribbean, Patagonia, Greenland, Peru, the Canadian Rockies, Hawaii and several other beautiful places.

You can view clips and purchase the *Earth Songs* DVD on my website at www.brianlukeseaward.net.

UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

WELCOA 2010 Webinar Series

We are pleased to announce our dynamic 2010 WELCOA Webinar Series. This year, we are focusing on a number of exciting topics that will help you in your quest to build and sustain a results-oriented wellness program. Each Webinar is conducted

by a nationally-recognized expert in the field of workplace wellness. And perhaps best of all, each session is offered in a Webinar format which allows you to access the information without having to leave your office.



*The Webinar series is free to WELCOA Members. If you are a current WELCOA Member and would like to register, please [visit this link](#).

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Become a WELCOA member for only \$365/yr and attend all these webinars for free or sign-up "a-la-carte" using the links below.

JANUARY

Title: *Demystifying HIPAA*

Date: Wednesday 1/20

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

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FEBRUARY

Title: *Part 1: The Art and Science Of Changing Unhealthy Behaviors*

Date: Wednesday 2/3

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

Title: *Part 2: The Art and Science Of Changing Unhealthy Behavior*

Date: Wednesday 2/17

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

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MARCH

Title: *Step By Step: How To Increase Physical Activity In The Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 3/10

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

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APRIL

Title: *Fighting Fatigue: A Practical Approach to Overcoming Fatigue And Low Energy Issues In The Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 4/21

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

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JUNE

Title: *Winning By Losing: How To Promote Healthier Eating In The Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 6/16

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

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SEPTEMBER

Title: *Stressed Less: A Roadmap to Managing Unhealthy Stress In the Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 9/15

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

Date: Wednesday 9/22

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

Date: Wednesday 9/29

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

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WELCOA hit
the nail on
the head...
Loved it!”

“...it is comforting to know that...
WELCOA exists, and that they are
pushing us in the right direction.”

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WELCOA has certified more than a thousand of the best and brightest health and business leaders in the U.S. through its comprehensive and dy-

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*To learn more about the certification series, be sure to visit <http://www.welcoa.org/consulttrain/certifications.php>.

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MAY

Title: *Well Workplace University – Level II: The Seven Basic Principles Of Effective Workplace Wellness*

Date: Wednesdays 5/12, 5/19, 5/26

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

AUGUST

Title: *Well Workplace University – Level II: How To Effectively A Comprehensive Workplace Wellness Initiative*

Date: Wednesdays 8/4, 8/11, 8/18, 8/25

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

Title: *Well Workplace University – Level III: The Art And Science Of Changing Unhealthy Behaviors*

Date: Wednesdays 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

“WELCOA offers valuable information that is greatly appreciated.”



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Announcing WELCOA's First Annual National Two-Day Training Summit

How To Harness The Power Of Physical Activity To Change
Employees' Lives And Transform Your Organization's Culture

September 8 and 9, 2010 — Qwest Center, Omaha, NE

Physical activity is one of the most essential elements for employee health and well-being—and it's one of the most difficult programs for American businesses to effectively integrate into the culture of their organizations. In this powerful two-day training summit, participants will better understand the importance of physical activity AND how to effectively implement dynamic programs that capture and keep employee interest.

What Makes WELCOA's Training Summit Different Than Other Conferences?

Plain and simple, most conferences are a mile wide and an inch deep. To be sure, there are loads of speakers who provide general content and topic overviews on a variety of subjects but, in this traditional format, you never really get what you need to be successful. When you leave the event, you feel good but your efforts quickly fall short when you get back home.

This conference is different! In addition to zeroing in on a single topic—increasing physical activity in the workplace—with some of the nation's best researchers and practitioners, you'll also walk away with all of the materials that you need to be effective—and all of the materials are FREE to conference participants.

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Leading-Edge Sessions And Presenters

- *Harnessing The Power Of Physical Activity To Change Lives And Transform Culture*
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- *Designing A Physical Activity Program That Works*
- *Nudge: Changing The Environment To Promote Physical Activity*
- *Helping Your Employees Eat Right For Life: Combining Sound Nutritional Practices With Physical Activity*
- *How To Coach Your Employees To Help Them Achieve Optimal Health*
- *Examining The Best Physical Activity Practices Of America's Healthiest Companies*

In addition to learning from some of the nation's best, you'll receive all of the materials you'll need to be successful including:

Check Out The Materials You'll Take With You

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ PowerPoint and teaching materials | ✓ Assessment tools | ✓ Operating plans |
| ✓ Exercise plans | ✓ Evaluation instruments | ✓ Sample budgets |
| ✓ Coaching protocols | ✓ Employee health information | ✓ Case studies |
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Save Your Spot by July 9th!
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SEPT 8-9
QWEST CENTER
OMAHA

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Become One Of WELCOA's First Certified Professionals In Physical Activity

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WELCOA will be offering continuing education credits for this event.



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Saving Your Spot Is Easy

Simply complete the attached reservation form and fax it back to us at **402-827-3594**. Or for the fastest response, simply confirm your spot online at:
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SEPT 8
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Registration fee
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