

Taking Responsibility for Your Health – Dr. Bruce Panasuk

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In a day and age where life goes a hundred miles per hour, it is human nature to neglect what matters most in the end, our health. It can all be summed up with this phrase, “we should, we could, but we don’t”. Human nature impacts everything; not only HR and business but also sports, money, and of course our wellbeing.

Our healthcare system is based on the “diagnose and treat” model. This is unfortunate because seventy-five to eighty percent of disease is preventable. By diagnosing and then treating, we are waiting until it’s too late by letting the disease spread past the point of no return. Many diseases have no early warning signs. By the time you feel like something is wrong the “horse is out of the barn”. At that point we pray for the “miracles of technology in medicine” to save us, but often they can’t. Did you know that in 1956 the cure rate for cancer was 12% and that today nearly fifty-four years later it has only increased to 15%? The billions of dollars that went into a cure over the years have hardly made a dent. If technology can’t help us we have to take another approach.

We have to stop treating preventable diseases. The current healthcare system operates on the premise of treating things that are preventable. By doing this we hack at the fruit of issues (vs. their roots) by taking a pill or going under the knife. This makes what we really have a "sickcare" system. This is why we are set to break the bank on healthcare regardless of what the White House does. Let’s face it everywhere we look the foods we eat are loaded with calories and supersized. We are getting “Quarter Poundered”, “Whoppered”, “Big Maced”, and “Happy Mealed” to death from a very young age. The media tells us that it’s okay to do what tastes right. As a result we have become immune to large people by telling ourselves they are just “big boned” or “that’s just the way it is”. It comes back to human nature. We like to do what tastes right or feels good in the moment and then make pills the answer when things go wrong. We must get away from the “there should be a pill for that” mentality.

So, what should we do? What realistic steps can each of us take to solve this problem? Inactivity is the number one cause of death, not obesity which is simply a side effect of it. Regardless of our vice (food, alcohol, cigarettes, etc.), we can take steps to prevent preventable disease with exercise by riding, walking, running, or “ellipticalling” from our unhealthy behaviors. As a surgeon who sees the results of unhealthy behaviors on the operating table, Dr. Panasuk reminded us that the pain of discipline we will go through in the process will be much less than the pain of regret in the end. There is no quick fix for our bodies. They are no different from any other natural system (like a farm or body of water) that takes time to correct

itself once it is thrown off. This is the reason we as people must connect an ongoing healthy lifestyle to our well-being.

In HR we all know about the importance of making connections with people. We need to make sure that we create similar connections with our health. We have grown up to believe that we are not responsible vs. believing that we are irresponsible. There is a saying, “most of our problems are man-made and most often you are the man who made them”. So, take control of your life. Small attempts repeated can accomplish any undertaking. One can draw an analogy to being a cyclist, specifically to the power of the draft. People are more likely to do something if it’s easy. You can make the trip easier for others by being in front and letting them draft behind you. That’s being a leader. By demonstrating more leadership around our health we can overcome human nature and hold our heads high when we say “we should, we could, and we do”!