Introduction and Justification

Over a decade ago, Wainwright and Calnan [1] argued strongly that work stress had reached epidemic proportions within industrialized societies. Recent evidence suggests that little has changed and contemporary workplaces continue to be studied in the search for answers about what causes and what prevents work stress [2]. Stress effects on our physical and psychological wellbeing can be really harmful, damaging our health and our cognitive abilities. Society is increasingly conscious about it and, specifically, the organizations are considering it nowadays an important feature to allocate resources to mitigate the financial losses and the “brain drain” of their professionals due to it. Among the possible interventions that can be considered by an enterprise to promote the wellbeing of their employees, the spaces that are assigned to “recharge” energy can be a good chance. The word more frequently pronounced from the participants in the healthy sessions is "disconnect". And this experience is a proved phenomenon. People accumulate a need to recover, to recuperate stress and attention fatigue [3]. They are two different processes: Stress is a word that is almost ever associated to a negative emotion. However, it must be distinguished the “health tension” (that is helpful to keep people alert and motivated) from the ‘ill tension’ (when the pressure and demands become excessive, supported in the time or otherwise unmanageable). This generates distress. And it is a very frequent sensation during working time. Not only the specific working tasks can produce pressure in our days. Some researchers demonstrate that the cell phone notifications, emails or social media produce negative consequences when using during office hours (e.g., a research discovered that while phone notifications are short in duration, they tend to trigger task-irrelevant thoughts or mind wandering that damages task performance) [4]. Which are the consequences of maintaining the level of work distress? It is thought to affect individuals’ psychological and physical health. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market [5].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When affected by work stress people may:</th>
<th>Work stress is thought to affect organizations by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• become increasingly distressed and irritable</td>
<td>• increasing absenteeism</td>
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<tr>
<td>• become unable to relax or concentrate</td>
<td>• decreasing commitment to work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• have difficulty thinking logically and making decisions</td>
<td>• increasing staff turnover</td>
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<tr>
<td>• enjoy their work less and feel less committed to it</td>
<td>• impairing performance and productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• feel tired, depressed, anxious</td>
<td>• increasing unsafe working practices and accident rates</td>
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<td>• have difficulty to sleep</td>
<td>• increasing complaints from clients and customers</td>
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<td>• experience serious physical problems, such as:</td>
<td>• adversely affecting staff recruitment</td>
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<td>- heart disease,</td>
<td>• increasing liability to legal claims and actions by stressed workers</td>
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<td>- disorders of the digestive system,</td>
<td>• damaging the organization’s image both among its workers and externally</td>
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<td>- increases in blood pressure, headaches,</td>
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<td>- muscular-skeletal disorders (such as low back pain and upper limb disorders)</td>
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As another distinctly different concept from stress, attention fatigue is a common fact. Attention is best described as the sustained focus of cognitive resources on information while filtering or ignoring extraneous information. Concentration is needed to maintain a consistent behavioral response during continuous and repetitive activity. On the other hand, Directed Attention Fatigue is a neuropsychological phenomenon that results from overuse of the brain's inhibitory attention mechanisms, which handle incoming distractions while maintaining focus on a specific task [6]. Draugiem Group conducted an experiment using the time tracking app Desk Time to see what habits or practices might set their most productive employees apart. Breaks, it was revealed, were the secret sauce for incredible productivity. The ideal ratio, Desk Time showed, was a 52-minute work sprint followed by 17 minutes of recuperation. The most productive 10 percent of employees “make the most of those 52 minutes by working with intense purpose, but then rest up to be ready for the next burst. In other words, they worked with purpose. The reason these extended breaks work is that we need lengthy mental breaks regularly in order to feed our concentration for long periods [7]. So, there is a need to DISCONNECT with all the elements that keep us in alert and CONNECT with ourselves, with our mind and our body. And what kind of habits do people practice to “reset” themselves during working time? Some of them go outside the workplace to smoke. The main reason to continue with this practice is to stop with their routines, not to smoke it. Another group of people go to the vending machine to have a beverage or a snack, even when they are not really hungry or thirsty. But the majority of them keep sitting at their desks continuing with their tasks for hours and they end get distracted, which ultimately hurts their productivity. According to design aspects of the workspace, employees consider, in the top five, that having a “breakout or kitchen area” is the third most important aspect (even more than having “flexible workspaces” or “spaces that facilitate team work”) [8].

Recharging Rooms

People become hardly aware of themselves throughout the day. They are aware just in few moments, of their muscle tension or relaxation, or about phenomena that accompany them in a constant way such as breathing or intrusive thoughts which bombard them incessantly. To have time and space for it will bring them emotional balance. According to the WELL v2 TM pilot version (International Well Building Institute) and, specifically related to the WELL Mind concept (that promotes mental health through policy, program and design strategies that seek to address the diverse factors that influence cognitive and emotional well-being), restorative spaces are important to promote restoration and relief from mental fatigue or stress [9].

What are the recharging rooms?: They are spaces where employees can take a few minutes of downtime to relax (breathing more efficiently, for example), practicing yoga or meditating (paying attention to posture, for instance). There are organizations that offer gaming rooms or spaces where employees can share informal time among them. This is another way to relax. Which features can these spaces have? You must be comfortable through your senses: (something which can be presumably extended to the rest of the workplace): Thermal Comfort: it would be ideal that the employee who uses the room could control the temperature, because this variable depends on metabolic rate (among other five features), so it is, partly, a personal sensation. Sound Comfort: the sound plays an important role, not only when avoiding the harming or distracters ones, but when deciding which sound it could be the best. In this case, there must be multiple choice possibilities to decide what we need to listen to in each moment. Music can aid the employee wellbeing by helping people deal better with tricky situations, depression or anxiety [10]. In the same way, playing natural sounds could also benefit concentration. Researchers revealed that playing sounds from nature in the office, such as flowing water, could enhance cognitive abilities and optimize the ability to concentrate [11]. On the other hand, it wouldn't be a good decision to have a room designed to completely absorb reflections of either sound or electromagnetic waves and isolated from waves entering from their surroundings, because it has been demonstrated that our mental state can't tolerate this [12]. Visual Comfort: “Light is just for seeing”. Well, this is an old concept. Nowadays, we realize that light is needed for many other things such as synchronizing our non-visual system. Non-visual systems include the circadian rhythm, which, in turn, regulates our biological and physiological systems, as well as influences our emotional state and, therefore, plays a crucial role in our wellbeing [13]. So it would be interesting that it should have as much as natural light as possible and that the employees could control the light levels all over the day in this room, depending their preferences in each moment. Most people who practice meditation prefer darkness, so it can be used low intensity bulbs. Odor Comfort: odors do affect people mood, work performance and behavior in a variety of ways and it is based on what is known as associative learning (the process by which one event or item comes to be linked to another because of individuals past experiences) [14]. In particular, inhalation of rose essential oil holds promise as a strategy for the prevention or relief of at least some stress-induced effect, such as undue activation of the HPA axis (hypothalamus-pituitary-adreno cortical axis) and disruption of the skin barrier [15]. Besides, there are some “helpful elements” that can enhance the space: Flexible space that can be transformed easily. Internal locus of control, gives the employees the possibilities to decide and personalize the space and the moment to connect with themselves. Basophilic design, taking into account the human need to connect with nature. Research has shown that people recover better from mental fatigue and stress by viewing natural environments compared to urban environments [16]. Although we must consider that this feature does not only mean to include plants, but also natural light, water or even artificial elements that simulate life elements.
(they are really powerful tool in our emotions; for example, photos or painting related with nature, natural materials or colors that simulate life). Electronics disconnection: it would be interesting to cheer the employees leaving their device at the door or turned completely off. The ability to take a few disconnected minutes, or even to give ourselves permission to disconnect, can relive distress powerfully. An interesting model of these restorative rooms is the one designed by DO-WE (startup specialized in design and transforming workplace thorough Transformative Design) in Citibox (Spanish startup which allows the reception of packages in a safe way thanks to intelligent mailboxes and to an innovative technology).

But don’t confuse. The most important element of this area is the person that uses it. So it can be a relative “simple” space. The space is important, but it wouldn’t be helpful if it isn’t followed by a suitable or appropriate policy of organizational health supporting this type of measures. And all of it covered and reinforced by an organizational culture which supports the employees’ wellbeing. It is no good trying to be fashionable with spaces that offer an updated organizational image, but which are finally underused, or either because the organization leaders do not promote their use or even because it is frowned upon by the same leaders. And part of this policy must also offer an appropriate education about its use. As employees are going to take an active part in the implementation of this room till the very first moment, they will also need to be informed about the reason of it, the ways they can use it and the benefits of its use. Every design will be successful on the condition that it begins with a previously evaluation of the needs of the employees in each organization, their desires, other health and wellbeing routines, etc… and then we would design the spaces that satisfy these requirements.

**Photo 1:** “Safe area”. Citibox.

**Conclusions**

There is currently a phase of awareness about the implementation of the employees wellbeing in the organizations. These are increasingly more open to it and the employees claim more health plans having more spaces which promote their wellbeing (even putting aside those organizations that do not). The design and implementation of recovery rooms, together with other welfare measures, could be an excellent tool for increasing the sense of concentration and relaxation of the employees which in turn will make them perform their duties in a more expeditious and productive way.

**References**


7. Gifford J (2014) the rule of 52 and 17: it’s random, but it ups your productivity.


