

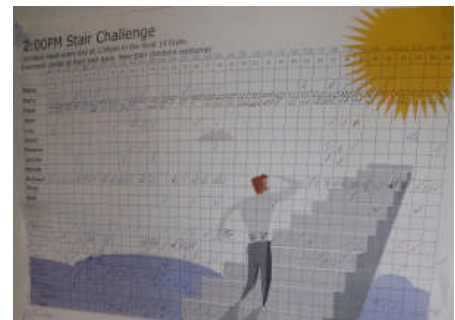
Stairway to well-being at work

“You don’t need a Phd to know that sitting on your bottom all day is bad for you.”

It was the middle of winter. It was cold outside. Bronwyn felt the need to move. She works in a large government department, and like many office workers, sits for many hours each day, in front of her computer.

Bronwyn had an idea. She wondered whether it would work. She wondered whether anyone else would do it with her. She wondered whether something like *stair walking* would catch on. She enlisted her workmates, many of whom are still regular stair climbers a year later.

It was simple. She got Trevor (the IT guy) to design a ‘Stair Challenge’ chart. She put it up on the wall where everyone could see and then asked people to put their names on it. The challenge takes place at 2pm daily. Staff who are interested take the lift down together to the ground floor, and then begin their walk up 14 flights of stairs (they all work on the 14th floor).



There’s one person who runs (she’s very fit). Everyone else walks, each at his or her own pace. Conversations are shared, jokes made, gossip exchanged. There is laughter, a little huffing and puffing and a great sense of achievement when they reach the top. It takes around 8 minutes to do, but around 15 minutes including chatting and laughing time. Each person then puts a little tick next to their name on the Stair Challenge chart to mark their successful climb.

The Stair Challenge is entirely free, voluntary, can be done individually, or at 2pm with the group, as many times a day, as quickly or as slowly as you like.

Peter is a committed participant and has learnt a thing or two about stair walking. “Going up the stairs is definitely more of a work out and it’s also less impact on your knees and ankles compared to going downstairs.” Peter also recommends stair climbing in moderation so that you don’t wear yourself out doing the same repetitive movements.

What are the benefits?



Peter lost 13 kgs. Next to his name, there are 6 ticks every day. This means he climbs the 14 flights of stairs 6 times a day, every day at work. “Bronwyn’s been the main motivator and driving force. She roped me in. After I got started, I became interested and wanted to do more and more...” Peter now regularly runs and bike rides with his partner. “People I socialise with have noticed that I look much more fit and healthy. I’ve had to buy new clothes! When they hear about the things I do, like stair climbing, they’re keen to do it at their workplace too”.

Apart from improving physical health, Bronwyn has found that there are other benefits to the stair challenge. “I’ve met people I wouldn’t otherwise know. Doing something like this helps us come out of our shell. People are more open. We can joke and chat about things outside of work.”

Bronwyn also knows that being active at work means that people are likely to be more productive. “Something simple like stair climbing helps break up a typical day at work, gets you moving and makes you feel great.”