



FS/HAAF GARRISON SAFETY OFFICE

Outsmart the Darkness: Your Weekly Safety Spotlight™



Ergonomics & Mental Wellbeing

Physical discomfort can *really* impact our mental state – and vice versa! Let's explore the link between ergonomic setup, physical wellbeing, stress levels, and productivity. How can creating a comfortable and supportive workspace help reduce anxiety and improve focus?

Physical Discomfort Fuels Stress & Anxiety

- Chronic pain (neck, back, wrists) directly activates the body's stress response, releasing cortisol and adrenaline. This prolonged activation can lead to anxiety and feelings of overwhelm.
- Constant physical strain drains mental energy. When your body is working *hard* just to maintain posture, less cognitive resources are available for tasks requiring focus and creativity.
- Discomfort can *create* a sense of helplessness and lack of control, contributing to feelings of frustration and reduced self-efficacy.

Poor Posture Impacts Mood & Confidence

- Research shows a correlation between slumped posture and negative emotions like sadness and low self-esteem. (Amy Cuddy's "power posing" research, while debated, highlights the body-mind connection).
- Constricted breathing due to poor posture can reduce oxygen flow to the brain, leading to fatigue and decreased alertness, impacting mood.
- Slouching can project an image of insecurity, potentially impacting social interactions and confidence levels.

A Cluttered Workspace = A Cluttered Mind

- Physical clutter creates visual noise, which can overwhelm the brain and make it harder to focus.
- A disorganized workspace can contribute to feelings of being out of control and increase stress levels.
- Spending time searching for items in a cluttered space wastes time and energy, leading to frustration and decreased productivity.

Precautions, Hazard Abatement, Etc.

- **Proactive Assessment:** Regularly assess workstations for ergonomic risks (chair height, monitor position, keyboard placement).
- **Microbreaks & Movement:** Encourage frequent short breaks for stretching and movement to alleviate physical tension.
- **Employee Education:** Provide training on proper posture, lifting techniques, and the importance of recognizing early signs of discomfort.
- **Adjustable Workstations:** Invest in adjustable chairs, desks, and monitor arms to allow for personalized ergonomic setups promoting upright posture.
- **Posture Reminders:** Utilize apps or software that provide gentle reminders to maintain good posture throughout the day.
- **Mindfulness Practices:** Encourage practices like mindful breathing and body scans to increase awareness of posture and promote relaxation.
- **Regular Decluttering:** Schedule regular times to declutter and organize workspaces.
- **Storage Solutions:** Provide adequate storage solutions (shelves, drawers, filing cabinets) to keep items organized and out of sight.
- **"A Place for Everything":** Implement a system where every item has a designated place, making it easier to maintain organization.