

805 LIVING

THE BEST OF FALL



Mind BODY Soul

By Linda Kossoff

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Santa Barbara furniture company Yaasa has developed a sleek new table, available in three contemporary finishes, that allows for switching from sitting to standing while at work with the touch of a button.

Thinking on Your Feet

Banishing sedentary lifestyle habits may make you smarter as well as stronger.

Medical science tells us that avoiding prolonged sitting is beneficial to our muscles, heart, circulation, and overall health. New research reveals that spending a little more time on our feet each day can even improve brain function. Published in the medical journal *PLOS One* and highlighted in *The New York Times* this year,

a study by Prabha Siddarth, Ph.D., and his colleagues at UCLA examined the effects of sedentary behavior on adult subjects aged 45 to 75. The results showed that a daily habit of prolonged sitting reduced the thickness of these subjects' medial temporal lobes. "The [brain's] medial temporal lobe is involved in memory,

and thinning [of that lobe] is associated with memory impairment," says Muhammad Asif Taqi, M.D., a neurologist at Los Robles Regional Medical Center (losrobleshospital.com) in Thousand Oaks. "Exercise induces uptake by the brain of insulin-like growth factor-I, a circulating hormone with potent neurotrophic [nervous tissue growth] activity. Sedentary lifestyle diminishes this effect."

So standing more is better, but what if you work at a desk? Taqi suggests taking breaks throughout the day and, if possible, altering your environment to enable you to stand while working. Increasingly, we see people using standing desks to afford them more time on their feet while on the job. One such option is made by Santa Barbara-based adjustable furniture company Yaasa (yaasa.com),

whose new height-adjustable table is designed to be décor-friendly as well as functional.

“We looked into what’s on the market and realized that our competitors were missing out on the design aspect of the product,” says Johannes Sauer, who founded Yaasa with a team of investors in 2016. “Plus, their products were very heavy and complicated to assemble—so light weight, simplicity, and design were key factors in our product development process. Also, with more people working from home, we wanted to create a product that fits well with home décor and still allows for switching between sitting and standing positions throughout the day.”

Constructed using laminated paper honeycomb and hidden electronic motors, the Yaasa Adjustable Desk offers button-touch height control (from 27 to 46.5 inches) and is available in white, bright, and dark finishes.

Varying between sitting and standing is great, but how can a desk worker incorporate some actual movement? Joel Heath, founder of FluidStance (fluidstance.com) in Santa Barbara, has an answer. A naturally active person who began to experience back and hip pain after working 60 to 80 hours a week at a desk job for a footwear company, Heath found that logging hours at a standing desk only shifted his pain to his knees and hips. He decided to develop a product that would allow the body to move while remaining in a confined space.

“The goal was to embrace natural movement while at a desk— increase activity level by 10 percent but impact on the body by only 1 percent,” Heath explains. Using the research of Geoffrey Alan Gray, D.P.T., founder and president of Heeluxe footwear testing and innovation lab in Goleta, Heath developed FluidStance, a boardlike device he calls a deck, which allows the user to remain at a standing desk and maintain focus on the work at hand while shifting from side to side. The device is intended to create just enough instability to require that users control their center mass, ultimately improving their ability to maintain balance.

“Users have told me, ‘I didn’t know it would be this easy’ and ‘I can stand so much longer with it than without it,’” says Heath, whose 80-year-old mother spends time on the board while watching television. “Balance is a use-it-or-lose-it proposition, and we all know that lack of balance can result in debilitating and even life-threatening falls. A little bit of gentle instability on the board can help you gain that control.”

Four types of the FluidStance deck are made from different combinations of sustainable materials, and one is intended specifically for children. “We always tell kids they need to sit still to learn, but I think that often the opposite is true,” Heath points out. “After all, balance inside and outside encourages the process of connectivity in the body—of course that’s going to make us smarter.” ♦



Used while working at a standing desk, a FluidStance board encourages balance-building movement.



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