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From this week's Business of Life

Relaxation biz thrives during financial stress

By: Kevin Davis September 29, 2008

With the economy in a flurry, the business of stress-busting is booming.

"I've been inundated with new referrals," says Howard K. Weissman, a licensed clinical psychologist and director of the Chicago Stress Relief Center. "I've never had so many clients come to see me as a result of financial stress."

Mr. Weissman counsels individuals and visits companies for on-site stress-relief programs; he estimates business is up 25% this year. "A lot of individuals are coming to me reeling," he says. "Stress is affecting their bodies and their lives."

Clients complain of insomnia, anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome and other problems. "It's pretty hard to avoid the buzz that's going on," he says.

Others hit the spa. Tiffani Kim Griffith, owner of Chicago-based Tiffani Kim Institute, also has seen a recent surge in business. "More corporations are coming into the spa with their staff and

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for staff parties," she says. "They're also re-grouping after having a bad day."

For some, the relaxation business has been as volatile as the financial markets. "We took a hit over the summer," says Keith Sellers, owner of Westmont-based Corporate Massages Inc., which brings its services to workplaces. "We had six weeks without a phone call. Then, in the middle of August, it just exploded."

And then there's the old-fashioned route to relief. The Ceres Café in the Chicago Board of Trade Building has been busy serving stiff drinks to traders and brokers. "Everybody's stressed. I'm stressed," says manager Eve Mourlas. "They're really, really concerned."

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