

Tips for Reducing Stress in the Workplace

We all encounter stress in our daily life. Since we spend a good part of every day at work, reducing stress in the workplace is a big step toward overall stress management, not to mention overall mental health.

Some stress is good for us. It keeps us motivated and gives us energy. But chronic stress is unhealthy – and counterproductive. When we continually experience high levels of stress, we do not perform well. It can also lead to depression, and other mental illnesses.

You can take steps toward stress reduction. Perhaps the most important step is simply taking care of your body. By getting the proper amount of sleep, eating healthy foods and exercising, you will be better prepared to deal with stressful situations. Some other stress-reduction tips are:

Prioritize and Organize

Having too many tasks to accomplish is stressful. The workload can look mountainous if we don't break down tasks into more manageable "chunks." Start by scheduling your day – prioritizing what you need to do, what you would like to do and what can wait. Feeling out of control is often what leads to higher stress levels. By planning and scheduling time to accomplish tasks, you exert a level of control over your situation.

Be a Calming Influence

Speaking of control, you cannot control how other people will act. Don't let someone else control your mood or stress levels. You choose how to react to others. If you remain calm, your behavior may affect others and bring the stress levels down for everyone.

Let Go of Perfection

We would like to perform every task perfectly, but that isn't possible. So why hold onto the idea of perfection? Don't let perfectionist tendencies get you down. Do your best, work hard and let it go.

Turn Negatives Into Positives

Negative thinking is another sure-fire stress inducer. For one week, try looking for the positive in every situation at work. It may be hard at first, and even seem ridiculous. But you can train yourself to think positively. If we make a concerted effort to look at things positively, we won't change the circumstances, but we will change how the circumstances affect our bodies in the form of stress.

Take Time Off

It's true – taking vacation days and lunch breaks typically *increases* productivity. Over the long haul, people who use their vacation time are more satisfied with their jobs and better able to handle work stresses. Even taking a lunch break every day is helpful in reducing stress levels and maintaining productivity.

Connect with Others

Being with other people is a natural stress-reliever. That can mean kicking back with the people who know you best or chatting in an online forum with someone who shares your stresses and concerns. The sense of belonging is a powerful human need, and fulfilling it in positive, constructive ways will make you feel more relaxed.

Ask for Help

Remember that there's no weakness in reaching out for help. Ask family and friends for support. Tell them openly and honestly about the issues troubling you. Also make use of EAP and mental health services when self-help strategies aren't enough.

Learning to manage stress is an important life skill. Apply these techniques, as well as your own stress relievers, to your workday. By taking an active role in combating chronic stress, you will become more productive, happier and ready to take on new challenges.