

Stress Management in the Workplace

Job stress is a common and costly problem in the American workplace, leaving few workers untouched.

1. A recent American survey, published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, noted that for those working 12 hours a day, there was a 37% increase in risk of illness and injury in comparison to those who work fewer hours.
2. A study done by Northwestern National Life, reports that one-fourth of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives.
3. A St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co. study concluded that problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than any other life stressor, even financial or family problems.

Stress in the workplace frequently hits you with a double whammy of two-way pressures that come from a combination of both internal and external stressors. Stress results in decreased job satisfaction, reduced production, and increased conflicts, which all lead to – you guessed it – more stress! When you ignore stress signals, you are more liable to become ill or fatigued and to experience injury. As an employee, there are several steps you can take to preserve your health by reducing workplace stress.

External Stressors

Frequently employees tend to ignore problems created by external stressors because they feel that the problems are trivial, petty, or don't (or won't) merit the attention of the employer. However, often these problems have an easy solution. For instance, stress can be caused by something that seems as trivial as an incorrectly positioned chair or computer screen. Other examples of external stressors include loud or continuous noise, nosy or noisy co-workers, demanding bosses, and complaining customers. If external stressors are causing problems for you, the worst thing you can do is ignore them. Identifying and examine external stressors for possible solutions. Even if all of them aren't resolved, any positive change you will result in a happier, healthier you.

Internal Stressors

Internal stressors are not workplace problems by perceptions. Some examples are feelings of dissatisfaction, irritability, inability, and the feeling that your efforts aren't properly rewarded or recognized. One helpful way to reduce internal stress is to remember what you liked about your job when you started it. Consider what has changed as well as what needs to change for you to be satisfied in your position again.

Why are you working?

Work is the exertion of undertaking mental or physical activity for a purpose or out of necessity. It is also defined as proceeding along a path towards a goal. Most workplace stress starts when we lose sight of the necessity of our work, the purpose of our job, and/or our goals. You can reduce much of your stress and regain your perspective by redefining why you are working.

Change your focus

You may not be able to cut back on hours at work, but you can work to live and not live to work. Because of the number of hours many employees work per week, the job can easily become all-encompassing. We wake and get ready for work, drive to work, spend eight or more hours at work, and finally drive home from work. As you can see, although we aren't getting paid, we are "at work" for much longer than eight hours a day! Learning to keep work in focus during work hours and life in focus after hours will take you a long way towards managing workplace stress.

1. School yourself to wake and get ready, not for work, but for your day.
2. On the drive to work, listen to music, humor – anything that isn't related to work.
3. Take an alternate route to work. The change in scenery will help you stay alert to the road and keep your mind off the job.
4. Plan your work and work your plan. Devote every paid minute to your job. Deviate from your work plan only when absolutely necessary.
5. Take your allotted breaks. Remember: the opposite of stress is relaxation. Don't work through lunch or coffee breaks. This also means don't think or talk about work during your breaks.
6. Instead of coffee, drink water, juice, or electrolyte infused drinks. Dehydration often is the cause of fatigue. Coffee and soft drinks that contain caffeine may seem to "keep you going", but in reality they add to stress and don't keep your body hydrated.
7. Keep a copy of Stress Management Tips, Stress Reliever Games, and Stress Relieving Exercises nearby and refer to it when you need to get through a stressful occurrence.
8. Just as you plan your work, plan your time away from work. At day's end, leave work behind you and focus on your plans for the evening. Work to live. Relaxation away from work means less stress... and a better day tomorrow!

<http://www.stressmanagementtips.com/workplace.htm>