

10 WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE



WikiJob

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Workplace stress is **defined, by the Priory healthcare service**, as a negative reaction to excessive demands or pressure placed on a person from their work.



40% of US workers report their job is very stressful and 25% of people feel their job is the number one source of stress in their lives.



Workplace stress has a big impact on both employees and employers. For employees it can lead to less productivity, unhappiness on the job, an **increase in sick days taken and physical ailments**; ultimately, it can lead to **a form of depression called burnout**.

Workplace stress can also spill over into people's lives, leading to worsening personal relationships.

For employers and the business as a whole, workplace stress can lead to a loss of revenue and a quick turnaround in employees. It can also lead to **a toxic workplace**, low morale among employees and a reputation of not being a good place to work.

It can also affect the amount that an employer may need to pay in **health insurance** if many employees experience health issues related to stress.

But it is not all doom and gloom – there are ways to battle workplace stress and make your life a happier one.

What Are the Signs of Workplace Stress?

Workplace stress is also **defined by the CDC** as physical, emotional and psychological harm that happens when a job's requirements are not in alignment with a person's abilities and resources, perhaps because their needs are not being fulfilled.

Employees can start to show stress due to any number of factors on the job. They include:

- Long hours
- Tight deadlines
- Heavy workloads
- Lack of support
- Lack of resources

Work stress is different from feeling challenged at work.

Facing challenges at work is good for the mind and helps you grow in your job and career. They help employees gain new skills and learn new parts of the job. At the end of a work challenge, an employee should feel proud and energized at what they have learned and accomplished.

The feelings of workplace stress are quite different.

Most often people do not realize they are experiencing workplace stress and instead attribute their problems as a part of having a demanding job. They tend to ignore the symptoms and brush them away as consequences of working hard.

Stress can manifest emotionally, physically and behaviorally. The most common workplace stress symptoms people experience include:

- Insomnia leading to tiredness
- Irritability or **outbursts of anger**
- Low mood

- Consuming too much caffeine or alcohol to cope
- Low productivity accompanied by feelings of low achievement
- Regular absence and a higher sickness rate
- Being accident-prone
- Being cynical and defensive
- Finding fault with everything
- Headaches
- Backache
- Indigestion
- Weight loss or gain
- Shortness of breath
- Regular or lingering colds

Symptoms such as chest pains, shortness of breath and even headaches can sometimes be a sign of a physical ailment and should be checked out by a doctor.

To be on the safe side, be careful not to dismiss everything as work stress and have regular health check-ups.

What Causes Work-Related Stress?

Everyone has different limits of what they can handle and what will cause them stress. While there is no one determining factor, the changing workplace and view of working hours play a big part.

Many people no longer work a simple nine-to-five job. While there are **lower-stress jobs still around** many employees work much longer hours, including continuing once they are at home.

With technology making people easily reachable, the expectation has often become that work can be done whenever-wherever and **employees never really get to turn off their 'work mode'**.

Further, whenever there are job cuts, work can get moved onto another employee who already has a full workload. **Afraid of losing their own job, the employee will not**

complain.

There is often the feeling that those who have a job should be grateful they do and do whatever they need to keep it. Work-related stress is seen as a natural side effect and not something to be questioned.

Employees may often view work stress, or talking about it, as something that makes them appear weak or a poor employee. So **rather than broach the subject with their superior, they suffer in silence.**

Top 10 Tips for Managing Stress in the Workplace

Luckily, there are many things you can do to help cut down on workplace stress.

Many are things that you can begin at home, such as sleeping and eating well. Others you may have to put a bit of innovation into such as bringing some wellness into the office.

1. Start the Day Right

A good night's sleep can lead to a great start to your day.

Wake up with more than enough time to get ready for work without the need to rush – having additional time means that unexpected occurrences will not ruin your schedule.

Relax with a good breakfast and leave with enough time to get to work without feeling stressed. Consider how long your commute is and add some extra time.

Try to **stick to a good sleep schedule** that gives you the amount of sleep you need.

Go to bed at the same time every night, turning off the TV and other screen devices one hour before bedtime. Avoid the temptation to sleep in late on the weekends as that can throw your schedule off.

Try to avoid dealing with work issues at home – leave work at work – and if you cannot, set yourself a cut-off time well before bedtime.

2. Make Time for Wellness at Work

Take time out for yourself during your workday. **Schedule some time each day to step away from work.**

Go for a walk, sit, read or even close your eyes and just relax. Turn off notifications for emails and texts and turn the ringer off on your phone. Just concentrate on yourself.

Try to **stay well hydrated** during the day – it is good for your mind and will ensure you get up from your desk to use the bathroom.

If you can, try to **sit near a source of natural light to boost your mood** and vitamin D levels.

You can use **smart blinds connected to your phone** to control the amount of natural light you get while not having to squint.

3. Have Healthy Habits – Exercise and Good Nutrition

Make sure to have regular, filling snacks and eat a proper lunch while at work. **Do not skip meals because you feel you have too much work** – tasks feel harder and situations feel worse when you are hungry.

Avoid foods that are high in fat and sugar. Not only will they not fill you up, but the sugar

will also give you a quick burst of energy followed by a crash.

Also, avoid caffeine as much as possible – the odd cup of tea or coffee could perk you up, but chugging energy drinks every hour will do nothing but make you feel anxious.

Get up regularly and stretch, even walk around. **A regular exercise program outside of work can help ease any tension** you are feeling as well as make you feel more energized in the long-term.

Running is a relatively cheap exercise to take up because you only need a pair of trainers, although later you may feel like proper exercise clothes and running watches may help.

4. Manage Expectations/Requirements

Do not promise your supervisor more than you can produce. Be realistic about what you can accomplish in a day and do not take on more than that.

Be firm with your limits and do not allow yourself to get pressured into taking on more work than you can handle. This is part of being assertive.

Know the requirements of a project before you agree to take it on. If it involves more work than you feel you can handle, then ask for the support you require on the project or more time to do it.

5. Avoid Conflict

Avoiding conflict can be difficult in the workplace, but it is important when possible.

You are in proximity with many other people, all with **different personalities** and possibly working styles than you. When people are tense there are bound to be raised emotions.

Try to **keep your emotions steady**. Not only can raised emotions cause more friction, but they can also worsen your stress levels.

Raised emotions are rarely a good move for your career either.

Where conflict cannot be avoided, it can often be resolved to a satisfactory compromise.

Conflict resolution skills are important for maintaining a **healthy working environment**, part of managing workplace stress.



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6. Prioritize and Organize

Making yourself a to-do list at the start of work can help you to prioritize what needs to be done first as well as help you get organized for the day.

Only make your list as long as what you can accomplish in a workday, and do not add to it for that day.

Stick with your list and **check off what you have accomplished**. Marking things as complete on your to-do list will also give you a physical record of your accomplishments, which will help you acknowledge what positive things you have done each day.

Being organized and having a clear list of prioritized work set out in front of you should help alleviate choice paralysis later in the day when deciding what to do next.

Set deadlines for yourself that are reasonable and stick with them. To re-iterate from above, do not promise more than you can accomplish.

7. Build Positive and Supportive Colleague Relationships

Having strong relationships with your colleagues means there is someone there to support you when you need it.

Maybe they can be someone to talk to or can take a bit of your workload away.

Having a positive work relationship also gives you someone to take a break with or even lunch. Having someone to talk to can help relieve stress.

Consider how good your **interpersonal skills are** and where you can try to improve.

8. Control Your Workload

When you are prioritizing your workload, consider what you need to get done and if there is a particular order it must be done in. **Make a to-do list and use a calendar to schedule when you will complete each task.**

Block off your calendar for your work so you do not get scheduled into something else, such as a meeting.

Blocking off the time tells others you are busy and cannot spare that time. This can also show you where you might have some spare time to put something else in, such as a moment of peace or a short walk.

9. Avoid Unhealthy Habits

Do not take up unhealthy habits to ease stress.

Smoking is a fine example of a habit that may alleviate short-term discomfort but ultimately utterly destroy your health. It is not only bad for your health, but multiple smoke breaks cut into work time, giving you less time to do your work, making you more overwhelmed.

Snack and drinks that are high in sugar will give you a quick energy burst but will leave you feeling tired and sluggish. **Caffeine** has a similar effect, as it merely pushes forward your feelings of tiredness until later, rather than truly relieving them.

Try not to go home and just sit in front of the TV. **Slumping in front of the TV** is easy, but it is simply a distraction from your feelings at the time.

Browsing the internet on your smartphone at the same time as watching TV means you will not properly engage with either activity and will be left feeling unfulfilled.

If you want to watch TV, decide on something specific to watch and give it all your attention so you can engage with it fully and gain more from the experience.

There is nothing wrong with having a drink at the end of a hard day, but try to **limit your alcohol intake**.

Not only can it worsen your sleep and make you feel bad in the morning, but it can also

lead on to a more frequent habit.

If your workplace performs **drug and alcohol testing**, too much alcohol the night before may result in a positive result, which will only cause you problems.

Instead, consider exercising, spending some time with friends or family, or trying an activity that requires some active engagement, such as reading.

Reading a fiction book you fondly remember from your childhood can be a good stress reliever, as it is simple and generally requires only enough active engagement to be satisfying.

10. Bring Mindfulness to Work

Mindfulness is the ability to be present in the moment and non-judgmentally acknowledge all the feelings and sensations you are having.

It allows you to take a moment and let unpleasant sensations, such as being overwhelmed, wash over you and pass on without tensing up and keeping them with you.

If you are feeling work stress, it is highly likely others are as well. If your workplace does not already have a healthy workplace plan or other **workplace wellbeing initiatives** in place, take it upon yourself to instigate some.

Maybe try a yoga lunch hour, a massage day or even a meditation lunch-and-learn.

Even the act of standing up for your own and other people's wellbeing can make you feel better, especially if other people then stand up with you.

Being assertive strengthens your self-belief and helps towards **positive personal development**.

Final Thoughts

Reducing stress is not easy. It takes time and dedication and there is no quick fix.

Talk to your employer honestly about how you feel and whether you can start some wellness initiatives in your workplace. Implement as many of the steps above as you can to try and manage your emotions at work.

But, while workplace stress is a real problem, it can definitely be dealt with. By trying the tips provided above, hopefully, you can find yourself in a happier and healthier workspace.