How-To Manage Stress at Work

If you have had a job, you probably experienced work-related stress. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 40% of workers report their job at "very or extremely stressful." In these severe situations, a person's lifestyle can become compromised. The following are a few common reasons why Americans experience stress at work:

- Low Salaries
- Excessive Workloads
- Few Opportunities for Growth or Advancement
- Lack of Social Support
- Work that is Not Engaging
- Conflicting Demands or Unclear Expectations

Do not let stress overwhelm you. Learn to manage your stress before it takes a toll on your life.

Take a Deep Breath

When stress chemicals overwhelm our body, we experience the "fight or flight" response. Breathing deeply relaxes you muscles and allows fresh air into your lungs that helps relax your body. Next time you feel stressed over a surprising email or overwhelming amount of projects, practice the deep breathing relaxation technique. You can practice deep breathing without even leaving your desk.

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
2. Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The

hand on your chest should move very little.

3. Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.
4. Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

Eliminate Interruptions

Interruptions can add hours to your work day. You may have blocked out time for an important task. However, if phone calls, emails, or co-workers interrupt your schedule, your task could take hours longer than planned. It's important to find ways to prevent interruptions from disrupting your focus.

The first step is to plan for expected interruptions. Notify coworkers that you do not want to be disturbed within a certain time period. Turn off email notifications and send all phone calls to voicemail. Eliminating interruptions can help you get your work done faster and more thoroughly.

Eat Right and Sleep Well

I am sure you have heard of the phrase "stress eating" before. When we are stressed, we seek high fat, sugary, "comfort" foods. Often, these foods stress out our body chemistry leading to fatigue, trouble sleeping, weight gain, and other diseases.

While a sugar rush might be appealing after reading a nasty email, long-term rejuvenation derives from an early bedtime and tall glass of water.

Identify Self Imposed Stress

Many stresses can be alleviated from simple lifestyle changes. For example, focus on your level of self-confidence rather than seeking approval of others.

Procrastination can also lead to high amounts of work stress. Make sure your perception of work is not tainting what your work actually is.

Prioritize Your Work

Most jobs encounter deadlines. Prioritizing your work can help you complete difficult projects. The Liquid Planner Blog explains how to efficiently prioritize your work. Follow these steps to start meeting your goals every day. Find more information within their article.

1. Collect a list of all your tasks
2. Identify urgent vs. important
3. Order tasks by estimated effort
4. Be flexible and adaptable
5. Know when to cut
6. You do not have to live with chronic work stress. Managing your stress can help you enjoy daily life.