

How To Manage Stress at Work



Have you ever thought how nice it would be to work in Spain where your day starts mid-morning, you take lunch a couple hours later and then enjoy a siesta? Even though that leisurely Monday through Friday routine sounds wonderful, your workday reality is probably quite the opposite. If you're like most Americans, your typical day at the office involves getting there early, eating at your desk, running from one meeting to another and working late. Maybe you're even there on weekends. By the end of the week all the stress leaves you on empty mentally, physically and emotionally. While stress isn't going away anytime soon, there are some simple measures you can take to manage it.

Don't Gossip

Every office has that person that makes it their duty to know about everyone else's business. They know that Bob is going through a nasty divorce, Julie has her eyes on that promotion and Mike has been subject to disciplinary action. Even worse, they make it a habit of sharing all these tidbits with everyone around them. Even though you might be tempted to learn some juicy little nugget, nothing good ever comes of it. Before you know it, you're embroiled in a nasty game of he said she said that can lead to damaged relationships and bring down the morale of everyone in the organization.

Start Your Day Fresh

This goes back to the night before and making sure you get enough sleep. Once you're up and about, give yourself the time you need to properly start your day. Incorporating habits into your morning routine like meditation, journaling and

getting some physical exercise help you arrive at the office with a clear head and positive attitude making it easier to handle stress the rest of the day.

Keep Your Desk Clean

How many times have you come into the office knowing where you left off the day before but unable to find the right report buried in the pile of papers on your desk? You go about frantically searching high and low trying to make sense of where everything is at and before you know it, you're stressed out before you get anything done.

All it takes to avoid this type of chaos is a little tidying up when you're done with your day. Not only will this habit reduce your level of stress in the morning, it will increase your productivity as well. It also helps you mentally to start "disconnecting" from work, which can also reduce work related stress.

Avoid Multitasking

The distractions you face at work are untold. Between notifications, email alerts, phone calls and interruptions from colleagues, it's amazing we're able to get anything done at all. And guess what all the constant stimulation does? Increases stress. If you want to maintain your focus throughout and reduce stress, focus on only one project at a time. Everything else will be there when you're done and you'll get a sense of accomplishment instead of feeling like you have several things hanging.

Know What's Expected

One of the biggest contributors to stress in the workplace is not knowing what you're expected to do. This can be as simple as a poorly written job description or inadequate communication from the top. Whatever the case, it's almost impossible to do your job when you don't know what you don't know. If you find yourself in this position, be proactive and schedule a meeting with your supervisor to discuss what's missing and the problems you're having. If done in a respectful manner, this conversation often lowers stress for both parties and can also save you some time by focusing on what you know needs to be done.

Take Breaks

There's someone you work with that spends the entire day in their office. They only times they get up from their desk are you use the restroom and microwave lunch. You know who this person is. They're probably dead serious 100% of the time, seemed stressed and maybe even unhappy. Now think about the people that get out of the office at lunch and take short breaks throughout the day. It's not that the latter doesn't care about their job. Rather, they realize the importance of staying physically and mentally fresh. You might think that the desk jockey gets a lot more done each day but, it's almost always the opposite.

So, whenever you feel stressed or overwhelmed, take a short break to stand up, leave your office and move around. Getting away from a problem or project for a little bit when you're stressed will help give you a new perspective, which in many cases reduces the stress and may even allow more creativity to finding a solution to the problem. When you come back, you'll find yourself ready to tackle whatever is in front of you with a clear mind.

As much as we'd all love it, stress in the workplace isn't going away anytime soon. It's how you manage and handle the stress that makes all the difference. If you're not careful, stress can affect your productivity, relationships with everyone around you and even your health. But, if you take some actionable steps to manage and reduce stress, you'll find yourself happy, healthy and maximizing your potential day in and day out.

As a Life Sciences recruiter for the pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries, I can help optimize your work place by building an efficient team. A great team will work together well and decrease stress in the workplace. Contact me, Jeff King at jking@rqfocus.com or (541) 639-3501.