

Risk Management Notes

Managing Workplace Stress

Tips for Managing Job Stress

1. Get time away. If you feel the stress building, take a break. Exercise does wonders for the psyche. But even just finding a quiet place and listening to your iPod can reduce stress.
2. Fight through the clutter. Take the time to organize your desk or workspace to ease the sense of losing control that comes from too much clutter.
3. Talk it out. Sometimes the best stress-reducer is simply sharing your stress with someone close to you. The act of talking it out and getting support and empathy from someone else is often an excellent way of blowing off steam and reducing stress.
4. Cultivate allies at work. Just knowing you have one or more co-workers who are willing to assist you in times of stress will reduce your stress level. Just remember to reciprocate and help them when they are in need.
5. Find humor in the situation. When you or the people around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to break through with laughter. Share a joke or funny story.
6. Nobody is perfect. If you are one of those types that obsess over every detail and micromanage to make sure "everything is perfect," you need to stop. Change your motto to performing your best, and leave perfection to the gods.
7. Maintain a positive attitude (and avoid those without one). Negativism sucks the energy and motivation out of any situation, so avoid it whenever possible. Instead, develop a positive attitude and learn to reward yourself for little accomplishments (even if no one else does).

People experience stress in many parts of their lives. Although stress is an essential element of many activities at work and at home, stress becomes harmful when it reaches an intensity that begins to impair daily activities.

In this difficult economy, you may find it harder than ever to cope with challenges on the job. Both the stress we take with us when we go to work and the stress that awaits us on the job are on the rise – and employers, managers and workers all feel the added pressure. While some stress is a normal part of life, excessive stress interferes with your productivity and reduces your physical and emotional health, so it's important to find ways to keep it under control. Fortunately, there is a lot that you can do to manage and reduce stress at work.

When stress on the job is interfering with your ability to work, care for yourself, or manage your personal life, it's time to take action. Start by paying attention to your physical and emotional health. When your own needs are taken care of, you're stronger and more resilient to stress. The better you feel, the better equipped you'll be to manage work stress without becoming overwhelmed.

Taking care of yourself doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul. Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy and make you feel like you're back in the driver's seat. Take things one step at a time, and as you make more positive lifestyle choices, you'll soon notice a noticeable difference in your stress level, both at home and at work.

Get moving

Aerobic exercise—perspiring—is an effective anti-anxiety treatment lifting mood, increasing energy, sharpening focus and relaxing mind and body. For maximum stress relief, try to get at least 30 minutes of heart pounding activity on most days but activity can be broken up into two or three short segments.

Make food choices that keep you going and make you feel good

Eating small but frequent meals throughout the day maintains an even level of blood sugar in your body. Low blood sugar makes you feel anxious and irritable. On the other hand, eating too much can make you lethargic.

Drink alcohol in moderation and avoid nicotine

Alcohol temporarily reduces anxiety and worry, but too much can cause anxiety as it wears off. Drinking to relieve job stress can also start you on a path to alcohol

abuse and dependence. Similarly, smoking when you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed may seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant – leading to higher, not lower, levels of anxiety.

Get enough sleep

Stress and worry can cause insomnia and lack of sleep leaves you vulnerable to stress. When you're sleep deprived, your ability to handle stress is compromised. When you're well-rested, it's much easier to keep your emotional balance, a key factor in coping with job and workplace stress.

When job and workplace stress surrounds you, you can't ignore it, but there are simple steps you can take to regain control over yourself and the situation. Your growing sense of self-control will also be perceived by others as the strength it is, leading to better relationships at work.

As you learn to manage your job stress and improve your work relationships, you'll have more control over your ability to think clearly and act appropriately. You will be able to break habits that add to your stress at work—and you'll even be able to change negative ways of thinking about things that only add to your stress.

In many cases, the origin of the stress is something that cannot be changed immediately. Therefore, finding ways to help maintain good mental health is essential. There are many ways to be proactive in dealing with stress. In the workplace, you might try some of the following as suggestions:

- Laughing is one of the easiest and best ways to reduce stress. Share a joke with a co-worker, watch a funny movie at home with some friends, read the comics, and try to see the humor in the situation.
- Learn to relax, take several deep breaths throughout the day, or have regular stretch breaks. Stretching is simple enough to do anywhere and only takes a few seconds.
- Take charge of your situation by taking 10 minutes at the beginning of each day to prioritize and organize your day. Be honest with your colleagues, but be constructive and make practical suggestions.

Your health is everything and you need to take care of yourself. Take control of your situation and fix it and you will have better mental and physical health, as well as better relationships with the people around you.



20 Tips for Stress Management

IDENTIFY STRESS TRIGGERS. List the situations that cause worry, stress and tension and note how the stress affects you, your relationships and your job. It will be easier to relieve your stress when you know what is causing it.

SET REALISTIC GOALS. When setting goals, make sure they are important to you and are achievable. Prioritize your list and take small steps to reach them.

LEARN TO SAY “NO.” If you are feeling overwhelmed, simplify your life by eliminating activities that are unnecessary or stressful. Stop taking on more than you can or should handle.

BALANCE WORK AND PLAY. Spend quality time with your family, play games or do something creative. Taking time for play can help you relax, lower blood pressure and improve productivity at work.

COMPROMISE. Listen to other’s opinions and focus on finding a way to compromise. Someone else may have a better solution to your problem.

KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE. Even though you usually can’t stop a stressful situation from happening, you can control how you respond. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

THINK POSITIVELY. Imagine what you want, instead of worrying about what you fear. Look for the positive in every situation and surround yourself with others who do as well.

STAY ACTIVE. Try to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. It will help reduce stress and improve the health of your body and mind.

CREATE QUIET TIME. Just 10-20 minutes of quiet reflection can help relieve chronic stress, increase your tolerance to it or restore patience. Listen to music, pray or meditate to help clear your mind.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy such as reading, gardening or sports.

LAUGH OFTEN. Laughter is not only good for a quick pick-me-up, it can actually help stimulate circulation, improve the immune system, relieve pain and make difficult situations easier to handle.

BREATHE. Take several slow, deep breaths before you begin to deal with a stressful situation. This will lower your heart rate, calm you and give you time to think about the best way to react to the situation.

SHARE YOUR FEELINGS. Communicate with friends and family to let them know your thoughts and feelings. Let others provide love, support and guidance. Don’t try to cope alone.

ACCEPT COMPLIMENTS. Learn to accept praise from others and yourself. Recognize when you have reached a goal, completed a difficult task or remained calm in a stressful situation.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP. Try to get at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Being well rested can help you deal with stress more effectively.

ACCEPT IMPERFECTION. No one is perfect so don’t expect perfection from yourself or others. Ask for help when you need it and forgive mistakes.

PRIORITIZE YOUR TIME. Spend time on activities that are important and meaningful to you. Rate each task in order of importance or urgency.

EAT HEALTHY. Good nutrition is important. Eat a variety of low-fat, healthy foods from each of the basic food groups.

GET ORGANIZED. Keep a calendar and list your tasks or activities for each day. This can eliminate the feeling of being overwhelmed or help avoid forgetting something important.

ASK FOR HELP. Support groups or a mental health professional can help you develop an appropriate strategy for dealing with daily stress or traumatic life experiences.