

STRESSORS: WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T CONTROL

Under Pressure: Managing Workplace Stress

Identify your stressors.

Where does your most intense stress come from at work? Is it the environment around you? Is it situations that are occurring? Is it physical strain or negative thoughts? Identify one stressor to focus on today.

Identify the aspects of this stressor that you can't control.

Ideas for managing the aspects of the stressor that you can't control:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Which aspects of this stressor can you control?

Action plan for addressing the factors you can control:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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MANAGE YOUR TIME

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Learning to prioritize and manage your time effectively can help release some of the pressure you feel. These practical tips can help you start now!

Establish priorities

Create an “A B C” to-do list. “A” tasks are pressing “must do’s.” “B” tasks can wait until “A” tasks are done. “C” tasks can be left until time allows. Schedule your day to focus on the “As” and “Bs.” Otherwise, you’ll likely find that most of your time is spent reacting to urgent, but less essential tasks.

Create realistic “to do” list

A list offers great structure, but adding time makes it a realistic plan rather than a wish list. Factoring in time also helps you avoid an unachievable endless list.

Use your down time

Have something cued up for unexpected down time. For example, if you’re waiting for a call and the person is late, turn to your “to do” list for a task to insert.

Maximize technology

Do you know all the ways that your digital devices and software can help you stay organized? Take some time to learn what they can do. Personal scheduling software programs or apps can automate many tasks.

App ideas

Cozi Family Organizer: www.cozi.com

Sync, share, and edit everyone’s schedules.

Any.do: www.any.do

Task list, schedule and reminders all in one spot.

Focus Booster www.focusboosterapp.com

Set time intervals for work, and cycle in breaks.

Todoist www.todoist.com

Create, organize, and prioritize your to-do list.

Get input on prioritizing

If you’re not sure on a priority, don’t guess. Talk with your manager or coworkers to clarify timelines for each task.

Avoid perfectionism

Don’t waste time perfecting things that don’t have to be perfect. Review once and move on. Paying excessive attention to every detail is a form of procrastination. We can all excel – doing the best that you can, given the circumstances – without being perfect. Set goals that are realistic for you, not some invisible judging committee.

Put off procrastination

It’s natural to gravitate toward what’s easy, but when the hard stuff has to happen – the best time is first up, when you can give it all you’ve got. And you get the benefit of being motivated by making progress.

Don’t spread yourself too thin

Find out if it’s okay to turn off your cell phone and instant messenger for set periods of time. If someone asks you to do something that you really don’t have time for, assert yourself politely but firmly. It sets those healthy personal boundaries.

Build flex into your schedule

With a back-to-back schedule, you’re always scrambling, and a single interruption can disrupt the whole day. Build in buffer time around tasks.

Be prepared

If you’re ready for the unexpected, your schedule may be thrown off, but *you’re* not. The more prepared you are, the better you are able to manage the inevitable shifts in your schedule that will occur.

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RELEASE THE STRESS

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Work stress is often something we can't avoid. It's important to find ways to release the mental and physical tension it can cause. Try doing one or more of the following short exercises each day to create a moment that is stress-free. Or do them at the end of the day to release stress before going home.

Deep breathing:

Breathe in (expand your stomach)...breathe out (deflate your stomach). Repeat slowly at least five times. Focus on your breathing to clear your mind of other thoughts.

Pleasant words:

Inhale deeply through your nose, and as you exhale say a chosen word or phrase to yourself (for example, "Peace," "Calm," "I'm okay."). Repeat 3 – 5 times.

Tackle tension:

With each breath, focus on tightening then relaxing, one at a time, your feet, legs, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, jaw, and forehead.

Mind over matter:

Revisit a favorite event for a moment. Try to recall and even re-experience the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch associated with the event.

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