

Make Your Workplace a Happier Healthier Experience

Combat work-related stress and make your work environment a happier, healthier experience.

Take back some control.

There are lots of things that happen at work that are not within your control. But, try to look at what is within your control. You may not be able to control events that happen around you, but you can control your response to those events. Ask yourself, *where can I get control in my work environment? Where can I get some job satisfaction and job challenge? What can I do with what I've got?*

Look for new challenges.

Try to find something each day that provides a challenge, even if it is just a different way of looking at routine tasks. Challenge creates excitement. It motivates and revitalizes and puts the wind back in our sails.

With down-sizing and restructuring, many have found the definition of their job has changed. If your role at work has drastically altered course, remember, you still have choices. You can sit back and say *look what they've done to me* and be miserable. Or, you can look at new opportunities and new challenges to put your positive energy toward.

Strike a balance between work and play.

In any stressful work situation, it is important to maintain a balanced life. Remember you are more than your occupation. Enrich your life in other areas. Involve yourself in activities outside of work. If you perform well at other things, it provides a better perspective at work. Gain strength from the areas in your life where things are going well. This will make you a happier person at work.

Derive support from colleagues.

We all need a lot more support from our colleagues in the workplace these days. Little things mean a lot, like potluck lunches and birthday celebrations. We also don't laugh as much as we used to in the workplace, yet a sense of humour can be vital. In work environments such as social service agencies where counsellors listen to horror stories every day, laughing, joking, and informal social links at work are critical. Decide that you will laugh at whatever you can laugh at and take advantage of the mutual support of colleagues.

Respect your fellow workers.

While it is important to establish the support of colleagues at work, you do not have to be friends with all your co-workers. In fact, you may find some personalities difficult or annoying. By keeping the work function in mind, it is often easier to let go of some of the animosities related to personality traits we may find unpleasant. Make an effort to think of something useful or valuable about the person you dislike. They also may have something to teach you...even if the something is simply *patience*.

In problem situations, honest, open communication will help you to understand each other and resolve issues without allowing resentment to build. Again communication, understanding, respect and negotiation are all skills that are helpful in dealing with difficult co-workers.





Establish realistic expectations.

With increased workloads and cutbacks, many are feeling they can't do their job the way they wish they could. It is necessary to come to terms with cutbacks, to look at what can be done and what can't be done, to do the best with the resources at hand. Keep in perspective the big picture and establish reasonable objectives. Prioritize and make lists. Do what you can each day, and recognize each accomplishment. Look at what you can achieve, not at what you can't. Sometimes it is necessary to reframe success, to reset your goals and be satisfied with the results.

Find some time of solitude.

Most of us need to have some period of solitude in our day in order to be really productive. If you face continuous interruptions you may feel as if you are running as fast as you can simply to stay in place. Make a genuine effort to schedule some uninterrupted work time in your day. For some this may mean arriving at work a little earlier or staying a little later. However, you may find that this opportunity to work in solitude or at least quiet is nourishing as well as productive.

Approach tasks you don't like doing in a new way.

Everyone has aspects of their job that they don't like doing. When faced with an undesirable task, set small, personal goals to get the job done. Divide that big job into smaller tasks and conquer a few at a time. Reward yourself when you have to do something unpleasant and follow-up with a task you do like to do.

Set up a pleasant routine around what you're doing. If you don't like paperwork, make yourself a cup of tea, turn on some music that you like in the background. Create an environment that will make the task more enjoyable.

Avoid procrastination and putting off those jobs you don't like to do. Don't handle the same sheet of paper more than once – deal with and be done with it. Otherwise, those tasks build up and seem overwhelming.

Create an environment that has a positive effect on you.

Environment has to suit the individual. It should not be a vast, impersonal space that says nothing of its occupant. Make sure your surroundings reflect you. Include things that you know will have a positive effect on you. There are many inexpensive things you can do to create a nice space for yourself – colour, plants, lighting.

For some, clutter and a messy desk isn't a concern. For those who feel a crowded desk overwhelming, take five minutes at the end of the day to organize your desk. It will be much easier to face the next morning.

Maintain a co-operative attitude.

In hard times, it is difficult to focus on the shared goals of employer and employee. When facing pay cuts, decreased hours, layoffs, the result is hostility and an adversarial we-they attitude. People start to look at *what's in it for me* versus *how can I help out in any situation*. Yet, maintaining an attitude of cooperation and a team approach to make your company or service the best it can be, can make your days more positive and rewarding.

Management has a role to play.

Clearly, management is faced with an increased workload, along with their staff. However, it is important for management to find time in their day to get out from behind the desk and be a presence in the office. Managers must be visible and accessible and need to be aware of and show appreciation for the different tasks people perform. Clear communication between management and staff is vital in these days of ongoing change. It is also important for management to invite input from staff on work issues, particularly those that will directly affect staff.