

Dealing with Job Stress

The accumulation of job responsibilities in today's workforce can feel stressful at times. We may feel over worked, over tired and under appreciated. We may begin to think of work all the time and associate negative feelings and images with our workplace. It can become too much. What we require is a little time to sit back and relax. Without time to ourselves to recover from the demands of work we can, over time, become distressed. This could develop into burn out.

Symptoms of Burnout

- Feeling trapped
- Feeling out of control
- Doing just enough to get by
- Apathy
- Feeling: helpless, hopeless, useless, empty, numb, tired, nervous, cynical, irritable, angry, bored, withdrawn, resentful, depressed.

How to prevent Burnout

The best way to avoid burn out is to take care of yourself. Eat well-balanced meals and exercise regularly.

When we exercise, our bodies release endorphins. These are natural chemicals that the body produces when we exercise. They

help us feel more relaxed, less anxious and overall less stressed.

At Work

Try not to:

- Eat lunch at your desk
- Neglect your breaks
- Have unrealistic self expectations

Try to:

- Go outside for fresh air
- Meet a friend for lunch
- Go for a nice stroll
- Go for workouts during the lunch hour

Relax

If you find yourself feeling stressed out, consider some of the things listed above. Perhaps, even treat yourself to massage or aromatherapy sessions. Also, consider participating in a relaxing activity:

- Yoga
- Qigong
- Tai Chi
- Meditation
- Imagery Exercises
- Stretching

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Some of these activities are available at most exercise facilities and your company may sponsor some lunch hour workshops. Others can easily be done during a break, even at your desk or in your office if there is nowhere else to go.

Try the following easy exercise on a regular basis, even before you feel stressed at work.

Quick Relaxation Exercise

- Get comfortable. You can either sit in a chair, or if you can, lie on the floor.
- Tighten the muscles in your toes. Hold for a count of 10. Relax.
- Flex the muscles in your feet. Hold for a count of 10. Relax.
- Move slowly throughout your body- legs, stomach, back, neck, face- contracting and relaxing muscles as you go. Remember to breathe deeply and slowly.
- Finally, remain still for about 30 seconds to soak up all the relaxation that you can.

Breaks

Most people believe that you have to wait for the next 2-week vacation in order to relax. However, the healthiest way to keep your mind and body relaxed is to take several breaks and “mini-vacations” during the workweek and the weekend.

Begin by viewing your “water cooler” breaks differently. Don’t think of them as separate activities. See them as a continuum of activities that help you accomplish your goals for the day. Try doing something completely different from work oriented tasks.

A few short 5-15 minute breaks in the day really add to your productivity and decrease your stress levels.

On the weekends, try to do things with friends and family. Drive out to the country and have a picnic, or arrange for any other weekend activity that is easy, fun and most importantly, removed from the office and work environment.

Please contact your FSEAP professional to learn more about work related stress.

References:

Melissa C. Stöppler, M.D. *Ways to Relax Courses and self-instruction in structured relaxation programs*. Retrieved December 2002; <<http://stress.about.com/library/weekly/aa050801a.htm>>

Melissa C. Stöppler, M.D. *Exercise to Control Stress: An Interview with About's Exercise Guide*. Retrieved December 2002; <<http://stress.about.com/library/weekly/aa010201a.htm>>

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