



Stress Management At Workplace: Need of the Hour

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ABSTRACT

While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with your productivity and impact your physical and emotional health. And your ability to deal with it can mean the difference between success and failure. You can't control everything in your work environment, but that doesn't mean you're powerless even when you're stuck in a difficult situation. Finding ways to manage workplace stress isn't about making huge changes or rethinking career ambitions, but rather about focusing on the one thing that's always within your control.

KEYWORDS

Stress management, Anxiety, Workplace

INTRODUCTION

For workers everywhere, the troubled economy may feel like an emotional roller coaster. "Layoffs" and "budget cuts" have become bywords in the workplace, and the result is increased fear, uncertainty, and higher levels of stress. Since job and workplace stress increase in times of economic crisis, it's important to learn new and better ways of coping with the pressure. Your emotions are contagious, and stress has an impact on the quality of your interactions with others. The better you are at managing your own stress, the more you'll positively affect those around you, and the less other people's stress will negatively affect you.

HOW TO MANAGE JOB STRESS

There are a variety of steps you can take to reduce both your overall stress levels and the stress you find on the job and in the workplace. These include:

- **Taking responsibility** for improving your physical and emotional well-being.
- **Avoiding pitfalls** by identifying knee jerk habits and negative attitudes that add to the stress you experience at work.
- **Learning better communication skills** to ease and improve your relationships with management and coworkers.

WARNINGS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS AT WORK

When you feel overwhelmed at work, you lose confidence and may become irritable or withdrawn. This can make you less productive and less effective in your job, and make the work seem less rewarding. If you ignore the warning signs of work stress, they can lead to bigger problems. Beyond interfering with job performance and satisfaction, chronic or intense stress can also lead to physical and emotional health problems.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF EXCESSIVE JOB STRESS

- Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed
- Apathy, loss of interest in work
- Problems sleeping
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Stomach problems
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of sex drive
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

AVOIDING JOB STRESS BY CARING OURSELVES

When stress at work interferes with your ability to perform in your job, manage your personal life, or adversely impacts your health, 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 you 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 reduction in your stress levels, both at home and at work.

GET STARTED

Regular exercise is a powerful stress reliever even though it may be the last thing you feel like doing. Aerobic exercise activity that raises your heart rate and makes you sweat is a hugely effective way to lift your mood, increase energy, sharpen focus, and relax both the mind and body. For maximum stress relief, try to get at least 30 minutes of heart-pounding activity on most days. If it's easier to fit into your schedule, break up the activity into two or three shorter segments.

PROPER FOOD HABIT

Low blood sugar can make you feel anxious and irritable, while eating too much can make you lethargic. Healthy eating can help you get through stressful work days. By eating small but frequent meals, you can help your body maintain an even level of blood sugar, keep your energy up, stay focused, and avoid mood swings.

GET GOOD SLEEP

Not only can stress and worry cause insomnia, but a lack of sleep can leave you vulnerable to even more stress. When you're well-rested, it's much easier to keep your emotional balance, a key factor in coping with job and workplace stress. Try to improve the quality of your sleep by keeping a sleep schedule and aiming for 8 hours a night.

GOOD RELATIONSHIP

Close relationships are vital to helping you through times of stress so reach out to family and friends. Simply sharing your feelings face to face with another person can help relieve some of the stress. The other person doesn't have to ret to

“fix” your problems; he or she just has to be a good listener. Accepting support is not a sign of weakness and it won't mean you're a burden to others. In fact, most friends will be flattered that you trust them enough to confide in them, and it will only strengthen your bond.

REDUCE JOB STRESS BY PRIORITIZING AND ORGANIZING

When job and workplace stress threatens to overwhelm you, there are simple steps you can take to regain control over yourself and the situation. Your newfound ability to maintain a sense of self-control in stressful situations will often be well-received by coworkers, managers, and subordinates alike, which can lead to better relationships at work. Here are some suggestions for reducing job stress by prioritizing and organizing your responsibilities.

- **Create a balanced schedule.** Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.
- **Don't over-commit yourself.** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.
- **Try to leave earlier in the morning.** Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing to your desk and having time to ease into your day. Don't add to your stress levels by running late.
- **Plan regular breaks.** Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to take a walk or sit back and clear your mind. Also try to get away from your desk or work station for lunch. Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help you be more, not less, productive.
- **Prioritize tasks.** Make a list of tasks you have to do, and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high-priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.
- **Break projects into small steps.** If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.
- **Delegate responsibility.** You don't have to do it all yourself. If other people can take care of the task, why not let them? Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step. You'll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to contribute differently to a task, revise a deadline, or change their behavior at work, be willing to do the same. Sometimes, if you can both bend a little, you'll be able to find a happy middle ground that reduces the stress levels for everyone.

REDUCE JOB STRESS BY IMPROVING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways. When, it comes to satisfaction and success at work, emotional intelligence matters just as much as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence is about communicating with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings, and defuse tension and stress.

Emotional intelligence in the workplace has four major components:

- **Self-awareness** – The ability to recognize your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.
- **Self-management** – The ability to control your emotions and behavior and adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Social awareness** – The ability to sense, understands, and reacts to other's emotions and feel comfortable socially.
- **Relationship management** – The ability to inspire, influence, and connects to others and manages conflict.

Although if a person having these characteristics he/she has to master in five key skills in order to raise your emotional intelligence and manage stress at work. The five skills are:

REALIZE WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED

Recognize your particular stress response, and become familiar with sensual cues that can rapidly calm and energize you. The best way to reduce stress quickly is through the senses: through sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. But each person responds differently to sensory input, so you need to find things that are soothing to you.

STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR INTERNAL EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

By way of your internal emotional experience you can appropriately manage your own emotions. Your moment-to-moment emotions influence your thoughts and actions, so pay attention to your feelings and factor them into your decision making at work. If you ignore your emotions you won't be able to fully understand your own motivations and needs, or to communicate effectively with others.

RECOGNIZE AND EFFECTIVELY USE NONVERBAL CUES AND BODY LANGUAGE.

In many cases, what we say is less important than how we say it or the other nonverbal signals we send out, such as eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gesture and touch. Your nonverbal messages can either produce a sense of interest, trust, and desire for connection—or they can generate confusion, distrust, and stress. You also need to be able to accurately read and respond to the nonverbal cues that other people send you at work.

DEVELOP THE CAPACITY TO MEET CHALLENGES WITH HUMOR

There is no better stress buster than a hearty laugh and nothing reduces stress quicker in the workplace than mutually shared humor. But, if the laugh is at someone else's expense, you may end up with more rather than less stress.

RESOLVE CONFLICT POSITIVELY

Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways can strengthen trust between people and relieve workplace stress and tension. When handling emotionally-charged situations, stay focused in the present by disregarding old hurts and resentments, connect with your emotions, and hear both the words and the nonverbal cues being used. If a conflict can't be resolved, choose to end the argument, even if you still disagree.

CONCLUSION

It's in a manager's best interest to keep stress levels in the workplace to a minimum. Managers can act as positive role models, especially in times of high stress, by following the tips outlined in this article. If a respected manager can remain calm in stressful work situations, it is much easier for his or her employees to also remain calm. Additionally, there are a number of organizational changes that managers and employees can make to reduce workplace stress. These include: Share information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures. Clearly define employees' roles and responsibilities. Make communication friendly and efficient, not

mean-spirited or petty. Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs. Consult employees about scheduling and work rules. Be sure the workload is suitable to employees' abilities and resources; avoid unrealistic deadlines. Show that individual workers are valued and Offer rewards and incentives. Moreover, Praise good work performance, both verbally and officially, through schemes such as Employee of the Month. Provide opportunities for career development. Promote an "entrepreneurial" work climate that gives employees more control over their work. Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees. Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment. Make management actions consistent with organizational values.

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