

How to Cope with Job Stress

Everyone experiences some amount of stress in their occupation. Over time, stress can affect job performance, impair physical and mental health and cause strains on your relationships. Although job stress may seem unavoidable, it can be quite manageable when you adopt the appropriate techniques and attitude.

Common Causes of Job Stress

Job stress often is caused by:

- Job insecurity (downsizing, co-worker terminations)
- Lack of creativity and flexibility in your position
- Deadline pressures
- Excessive workloads
- A workplace change (e.g., department restructuring, office relocation)
- A leaner workforce and limited resources
- Stressed co-workers and bosses
- Intimidating technology
- Information overload

Ways to Cope with Workplace Stress

If you feel yourself getting stressed about your job, try these tips to decrease your stress level and improve your performance:

- **Identify your stressors.** By recognizing the reasons behind your stress, you can learn to feel more in control and work to change the stress. Determine whether the stress you experience at work is due to worries or conflict at home.
- **Avoid setting too many lofty goals.** Set realistic expectations, and attempt doable challenges.
- **Anticipate boss and co-worker stress.** Prepare a few responses to stressful situations that may be presented to you by a supervisor or co-worker. For example, instead of reacting hastily to a question or request by a co-worker, ask whether you can get back to the person with your decision at a later time.
- **Learn to delegate responsibilities.** If you are a manager, empower your subordinates to take on more responsibilities and make more decisions. Encourage this as an opportunity for growth and training for a possible future promotion. Divide extra tasks fairly and reasonably.
- **Be more assertive in your responses to requests.** Be honest, but tactful. Learn to seek alternatives or to say no when necessary.
- **Examine your schedule.** Is your work schedule compatible with your home/personal life? Perhaps you can try a different shift, vary your work days or arrange to work from home on certain days.

- **Redefine your role.** Work with your supervisor on revising your job description to include more creative, empowering and satisfying duties.
- **Consider a different position, department or work location.** Ask your boss if this is possible.

Here are some suggestions for getting organized to eliminate clutter and reduce stress:

- **Organize your workspace.** Rearrange it for maximum efficiency. Create lists and schedules to help you meet deadlines.
- **Tackle one task at a time if possible.** List your duties in order of priority, and complete one at a time. This can make you feel more organized and in control, leading to a sense of greater accomplishment.
- **Learn time-management techniques.** Take a class or read books on how to better manage your time.
- **Do not procrastinate.** Tackle your most difficult projects first. Putting them off may lead to increased anxiety and stress.

Relaxation and exercise are effective ways to reduce stress. Follow these ideas:

- **Take occasional breaks.** Listen to your body. If you feel tired, nervous, tense or have achy muscles, take a break. Step away from your work for a few minutes, or practice relaxation techniques to recharge your mind and body. Do not work through lunch; take a real break.
- **Practice breathing exercises.** Drawing slow, deep breaths from the diaphragm promotes a more efficient exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide than chest or shoulder breathing. Exhale slowly and evenly. If you are highly stressed, try this while lying on your back.
- **Try meditation.** By sitting in a comfortable, quiet environment, closing your eyes and freeing your mind from its many concerns for even a few minutes each day, you can learn to achieve relaxation quickly.
- **Ergonomically improve your workspace.** A more supportive, comfortable chair, desk and computer accessories may reduce physical stress.
- **Socialize with co-workers.** Do not be an island; strike up interesting conversations with fellow employees to release tension.
- **Take advantage of paid days off.** Consider spreading your days off over several weeks instead of taking them all at once.
- **Minimize taking work home.** Enjoy your time away from work, and use it to recharge yourself. Teach yourself to be efficient at work so that you can enjoy your time at home.
- **Consider counseling.** Talk therapy with a professional can release pent-up anxiety and prove to be an effective outlet for discharging unhealthy stress.

Remember that stress affects not only job performance but also career satisfaction. Be aware of the consequences stress is imposing on your life, and commit to reducing your stress level.

Here when you need us.

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