

How to Handle Stress in the Workplace

Written by Kiley Warren

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In recent years, our progressive society has prompted so many positive discussions on things of substance and topics that actually deserve our attention. Additionally, many of them surround issues that may have traditionally been dubbed as "taboo" or "inappropriate" to openly talk about.

One topic in particular that has surfaced within many of our conversations is mental health. No single human is perfect and, in some capacity, we're all struggling to stay on top of things and keep stress out of our daily lives. Fortunately, because of these conversations, people are finding solace and comfort in sharing their truths, and forming comraderies with others based around mutual emotions and encountered obstacles.

While it may not always be possible to eliminate stress from our lives completely – let's be honest, we're all only human – there are ways to limit and even control it, particularly in the areas or environments where we are prone to experience it the most. And yes, we're totally referencing workplace stress.

While work can obviously be a stressful thing, it's important to avoid carrying the emotions and baggage from your job into your day-to-day life. Now is as good of a time as ever to delve into the topic of stress and come up with some effective solutions of how to handle your stress in the workplace, even if you can't necessarily rid yourself of it.



Jennifer Ward, who is a local law expert and AZ President of the Employers Council, believes there are some simple ways to address some of the silly, common stressors that often contribute to unhealthy workplace environments. Many techniques are as helpful for employees, as they are too for their employers.

"Increased communication and transparency across all levels of the organization can help. Many times stress is created by uncertainty that feels like a threat and triggers the "fight or flight" response in employees who feel powerless. When managers communicate honestly and respectfully about employee performance and the state of the company, employees feel more secure and thus have lower stress," said Ward. Additionally, she noted that mindfulness can also help, as "workplace challenges are put in perspective when you take a couple of minutes to breathe and focus on releasing tension in your body and clearing your mind to help relieve spinning thoughts."

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There are also simple steps that you can take in your day-to-day life that will have a truly positive impact in not only the way that you work, but also in the way that you interact with your boss, colleagues and even clients.

1.) Be aware of your stressors.

This is arguably the most important tip on how to handle stress within the workplace. In short: you can't control your problems if you can't first identify them. Sometimes – especially at work – it can be easy to be in denial about what's stressing you out. You might even rationalize your intense stress by hailing that your anxiety is just a "part of the job." It's important to recognize the things that worry you or work you up. Start by keeping a journal and attempt to identify what is at the root of your rising emotions. From there, you'll probably be able to notice a pattern, which will allow you to take the first step in determining either how to manage these tasks differently, or how to eliminate them all together.

2.) Know your boundaries.

Despite what our busy society might try to sell to you, it is OK to say no – especially for the sake of yourself and your mental health. We're conditioned to believe that success is the key to a long and happy life. And if you're not taking advantage of every opportunity that comes your way, you're not doing it to put yourself in a state of success. The truth is though, if you're burnt out on a project or job before you even get the chance to make any real difference and take advantage of those opportunities, then you're not offering up your best self for your job. Have the courage to say no to the things that don't benefit you emotionally or mentally.

3.) Write down your tasks for the day.

When we get too in our heads, it can be easy to lose sight or control of over the things that actually matter. We can get so overwhelmed by thinking about what needs to be done, rather than just taking it one by one and addressing what we can get done in the moment. When you write out your tasks or goals for the day, you give them more of a sense of tangibility, which then gives you more motivation to actually achieve them. Beyond that, you can start approaching each one in a rational way, tackling each project one at a time.

4.) Find comradery.

Whether it be at work or in your personal life, it's always important to have people around you who you feel like you can talk to and be your true self with. Sharing your emotions and stresses is the best way to stop being in denial about them, and actually strive to manage them. Just ensure that the people you are talking to can be trusted – especially if you're looking to open up to someone about your emotions in the workplace – and don't be afraid to express yourself. We're all struggling and battling stresses in different ways, so finding common ground on those subjects is a great way to build effective and progressive communities towards personal change.