

+ SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

Coping with Workplace Stress

Everyone can experience workplace stress. Stress can look and feel different depending on the cause. It can be ongoing, growing over time as we cope with heavy workloads, frequent changes to workplace processes, or the cumulative stress of certain occupations or industries. Stress can also be acute, following a particular event or situation, such as the loss of a valued employee, or significant organizational change. No matter the cause, stress can stand in the way of performing and feeling your best. The information below will help you identify when you may be experiencing the effects of workplace stress, and some strategies for coping with it effectively.

Indicators of stress

You may not always notice the impact of stress, or you may attribute the effects to something else. Keep in mind, your response to stress may be different from someone else's. It is important to be aware of what unhealthy levels of stress look like for you so you can address it proactively. Below are some common indicators you may notice when stress is becoming a concern:

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	WORKPLACE
+ Low energy	+ Forgetfulness	+ Anxiety, worry	+ Drop in job performance
+ Changes in appetite	+ Difficulty making decisions	+ Irritability	+ Procrastination, avoiding responsibilities
+ Jaw clenching	+ "Overthinking", fixating on an issue or problem	+ Sensitivity to criticism	+ Communication difficulties
+ Headaches, migraines	+ Difficulty concentrating	+ Restlessness	+ Tardiness, absenteeism
+ Difficulty sleeping	+ Persistent negative thoughts	+ Feeling unmotivated	+ Feeling disorganized or scattered
+ Fatigue	+ Disorientation, feeling "dazed"	+ Sadness	+ Withdrawal from social connections at work
+ Upset stomach, nausea	+ Distressing dreams	+ Overwhelmed	+ Dreading Mondays
+ Muscle tension/aches	+ Racing thoughts	+ Anger, frustration	+ Conflicts with others
+ Frequent illness	+ Thoughts or images of a particular event	+ Emotional outbursts	
+ High blood pressure		+ Helplessness	
+ Sweating		+ Fear	
+ Weight gain/loss		+ Grief, sense of loss	
		+ Numbness or apathy	

These effects of stress are usually temporary, but their severity and duration can be reduced when you practice good self-care. Read on to learn strategies for coping with stress in a healthy way.

Physical self-care strategies

- + **Getting enough sleep to feel rested** is key to stress management. It impacts both mood and energy level. Establish a routine and get to bed at a reasonable hour.
- + **Physical activity** is a good way to reduce feelings of stress and tension. It will also help you sleep better, if it's done at least several hours before bedtime. Talk to your doctor before starting any exercise routine.
- + **Eat well-balanced meals** at regular times of the day. Prep meals ahead of time if you find you lack time during the day. Bring your lunch rather than eating out.
- + **Try deep breathing, meditation or progressive relaxation exercises.** These are easy ways to help you release tension in the moment, and can help you refocus on the tasks of the day. Search online for easy relaxation techniques you can incorporate into your day.
- + **Avoid alcohol and drugs** as a means to cope, unless your doctor gives you a needed prescription.

Cognitive self-care strategies

- + **Focus on what you have control over.** Give your mind a break from worries about things outside of your control. Make a "to-do" list of tasks for each day, crossing off each one as you complete them. This can help you feel more purposeful and in control.
- + **Use a mantra.** Repeat encouraging and positive self-statements, such as "I can handle this". Write down an inspirational quote or phrase, and put it in an accessible place. Glance at it throughout the day and repeat to yourself when you feel stress.
- + **Remind yourself of your abilities and strengths.** Think about other times in your life that have been difficult. How did you get through them? Can you use those same strategies now?

Emotional self-care strategies

- + **Get support from others.** Reach out to friends, family members, coworkers, your manager, or a mentor for support. Talk out your thoughts and worries with others who can give voice to your fears or help brainstorm solutions.
- + **Laugh!** Finding a way to laugh helps us feel lighter and more positive. Watch a funny video during break time. Frame photos of fond memories and have them easily accessible in your workspace.

- + **Be compassionate with yourself.** Remember that you can't "fix" every situation or have all of the answers. Treat yourself as you would a friend who is facing challenges – by giving comfort and kindness.

Workplace self-care strategies

- + **Manage your time effectively.** Prioritizing work tasks can help release some of the pressure you feel. Tackle important tasks first so that you aren't pressed for time later. If you are unsure about what is a priority, don't guess. Talk with your manager or coworkers to clarify timelines for each task.
- + **Put a check on perfectionism.** In addition to the stress of our daily tasks, we can put extra pressure on ourselves by striving for perfection. Give yourself permission to be "okay" with "just okay" when you are able to.
- + **Use your down time.** Take advantage of breaks to send a text message to a loved one, or do something unrelated to work. Be intentional about using vacation and break time to unwind so you can return to work feeling refreshed. Do activities that help you relax during your personal time, like reading a book or going for a walk.
- + **Create clear boundaries between your personal and work lives.** This can be especially difficult for those who work from home. Create a ritual to separate your work day from your personal time, such as shutting your office door or changing into casual clothing. Resist the urge to check work emails or messages when you are off the clock.
- + **Advocate for yourself.** Talk to your manager when you are experiencing stress. They may be able to help by redistributing workloads or giving you extra support. Know your limits. Say "no" when you can't provide the time or attention needed to a new request or project.
- + **Get organized.** A workspace free of clutter helps you feel more calm and in control. Don't waste precious time or energy trying to find things that you need.

Get support.

Your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is available 24/7 to offer emotional and work/life support to you and your household members.