



Stress Got You Down?

Try these stress busters to help revitalize your productivity

Stress is a common problem that can wreak havoc on your mind and body. We all face a variety of stressors every day: demands at work, a heavy workload, taking care of family, paying bills... all these things can cause your body's stress-response system to work overtime.

Chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, fatigue, digestive problems, weight gain and decreased productivity. And if you don't take steps to decrease stress, it can lead to more serious health problems as well, such as heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke to name a few. But stress doesn't have to control your life.

There are several ways we can reduce workplace stress and learn to react to stressors in a more healthy way.

For Employees:

- **Identify your stressors.** The first step to reducing stress is to identify the issues that are causing stress. Once you know what the stressors are, you can start to develop strategies for coping with them. For example, if you find yourself reading work emails in the middle of the night, stop the habit. Thinking about work in the middle of the night will impair your sleep and wellness.
- **Set realistic expectations.** One of the biggest causes of stress is feeling like we have too much to do. If we set unrealistic expectations for ourselves, we're setting ourselves up for failure and disappointment. Instead, we should break down our tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks and focus on one thing at a time.



- **Take breaks.** It's important to take breaks throughout the day, even if it's just for a few minutes. Get up and move around, step outside for some fresh air, or do some stretches. Taking breaks will help to improve focus and concentration, and it will also give our mind and body a chance to rest. Ideally going on a walk or meditating for 15 minutes can do wonders for your wellness.
- **Learn to say no!** Delegate tasks to others when possible, and don't be afraid to say no to new projects if you're already feeling overwhelmed. Boundaries help reduce stress and set clear expectations, especially around available work hours. Also, respect others' time off and after work hours.

For Employees, *con't*:

- **Don't let work spill into your off time.**

If we're constantly saying yes to everything, we're setting ourselves up for stress and burnout. Balancing life and work is an art but we need to make time for our other commitments outside of work, and for self care.

Sometimes going to your child's sporting event or talent show can be the stressbusters you have needed.

- **Take care of yourself.** Make sure you are getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, and exercising regularly. These things can all help to reduce stress levels. Make sure that you incorporate a physical activity that also lowers your stress level.

- **Find healthy ways to relax.** Everyone has different ways to relax. Some people find relief in reading, listening to music, spending time in nature, or being with loved ones. Find activities that help you to de-stress and plan for them in your day.



- **Take up a hobby.** Make sure you have interests outside of your work environment that keep you vibrant. This can be learning a language, playing a sport or a musical instrument.

- **Schedule vacation time and practice “not thinking about work”** when you give yourself time off. Sometimes a three-day weekend can do the trick.





For Employers:

- **Create a supportive work environment.** Employees should feel comfortable coming to their employers with concerns about stress. Employers should also create a work environment that is conducive to relaxation and productivity, such as providing ergonomic workspaces and breaks throughout the day.
- **Offer stress-management training.** Employers can provide employees with training on stress management techniques, such as relaxation exercises and time management skills.
- **Provide opportunities for professional development.** This can help employees feel more confident in their skills and abilities, which can reduce stress levels. A class in public speaking or team dynamics can help some employees. Ask your employees what type of classes they may be interested in and follow up through HR or any other channels to make sure it happens.
- **Encourage a healthy work-life balance.** Allow employees to take breaks throughout the day, leave work at a reasonable hour, and take vacations.
- **Be flexible with work hours.** Employees appreciate being able to adjust their work hours to fit their individual needs.
- **Model great behavior.** When employers model the behaviors and values that are expected, they help employees understand what is expected of them.
- **Celebrate successes.** Employers should recognize and celebrate employee successes, which can help to reduce stress levels and boost morale. Have award programs or something as simple as lunch with the boss.
- **Make the work environment fun** by arranging potlucks or a team lunch. Food is a great stressbuster. An ice cream social in the summer or cookies and cocoa can go a long way in revitalizing employees.
- **Plan retreats.** Employees really appreciate the time spent off campus with other employees to problem solve or for brainstorming sessions.



By taking steps to reduce workplace stress, employees and employers can improve their physical and mental health, productivity, and job satisfaction.

Here are some additional tips for reducing workplace stress:

- **Take time for yourself.** Make sure you have time for activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with family and friends, reading, or listening to music.
- **Avoid multitasking.** When you try to do too many things at once, you're more likely to make mistakes and feel stressed.
- **Seek professional help if needed.** If you're struggling to cope with stress on your own, talk to a therapist or counselor. Also, ask about an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or what resources are available at your workplace.



For more free remote and hybrid work tips and resources, visit the Twin Cities Telework website at tctelework.com.
