

Eight ways to manage stress

Stress is an increasingly common issue in today's work environment, affecting more than 40 million employees across Europe. If left untreated, it also has the potential to lead to longer-term physical or psychological ill health.

Unfortunately many people find it difficult to broach the subject of stress at work due to the negative reputation attached to it. There is a widely held misconception that those who get stressed are unable to handle their job, or that they are somehow weaker than others. This is not the case and everyone is different.

Stress can rear its ugly head in all sorts of situations and most people will experience stress at some point or another in their working lives. For those currently battling with stress-related issues, the following tips may be useful.

1. Prioritise and be assertive

Think about which tasks are urgent and make a decision. Remember that you can't do everything yourself, so be prepared to delegate where appropriate and don't be afraid of saying 'no' when you have to.

2. Relax consciously

Be aware of when you need to take a break; if you take a minute to stop and think during an activity you'll be surprised how much your body tenses up for no apparent reason. When you notice this happening, take a minute to consciously relax by taking slow, deep breaths and concentrate on eliminating the tense feeling in your muscles.

3. Tidy desk - tidy mind

Keep your work space as clear as possible. Do the papers on your desk really need to be there? If it's not essential, throw it away! A cluttered desk is like a visual stress trigger, so keep it tidy.

4. Exercise regularly

Exercise can help relieve stress, but think carefully about the type of exercise you wish to do. Doing strenuous exercise if you aren't used to it can actually do more harm than good. If you are unsure of your capabilities, assess your overall fitness by having a check up.

5. Learn to cope with change

The first step has got to be a change of attitude. You have to accept that the problem that you have in getting through all the work each day is not the volume of work, but the way you handle it. Take time to observe what you do at present and think about what changes you can make to become more efficient.

6. Manage yourself better

There are several checkpoints you can use to achieve this:

- a.) Monitor how your time is spent.
- b.) Set yourself goals so that you know what you need to achieve.
- c.) Develop plans that enable you to achieve those goals.
- d.) Remove activities that are time wasters.
- e.) Delegate to save time.

7. Maintain a sensible diet

It goes without saying that you should try to eat regular, balanced meals but also bear in mind not to rush through your meals. Not only can this cause indigestion, but by rushing you're also denying yourself a valuable 'pause point' in the day when you can stop for a few minutes and reflect on what you're doing. The healthier your body is, the better equipped it will be to handle stressful periods, so it makes sense to keep it in good shape.

8. Don't worry

Many people who get excessively stressed have a tendency to worry about everything all of the time. Concern yourself with issues that you have some or total control over. If you can't control a circumstance it's going to happen whether you get stressed about it or not, so don't worry about it.

REMEMBER!!

It's unwise to ignore your body's reactions to stress, it can lead to further problems later in life. If addressed properly and promptly, stress levels can be reduced more easily. Ultimately, the key to combating stress lies in taking time to observe yourself and making sure you are equipped to deal with the challenges you face. This may seem indulgent on a busy working day, but it can actually make you more productive in the long-term.