

Stress Management Tips: Top Ten Ways to Beat Work Stress

Monday morning is almost everyone's least favorite part of the week, but this is particularly true if work stress is a problem. Stress increases anxiety and lowers creativity---two factors known to negatively impact enjoyment and productivity in the workplace. Enter your workday with these top ten ways to beat work stress and greatly increase your career satisfaction.

1. **Stop shooting for perfection.** Perfection can be a standard to shoot for, but becomes unhealthy when it is the only standard accepted. Some people take the goal of [perfection](#) too far...and there is a price to pay. True perfectionists are never satisfied. Chronic or daily attempts to achieve [perfection](#) are driven by feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. This not only impacts the person and their health, it seriously damages the morale of their co-workers. Remember: perfection is not possible for humans.

2. **Take your lunch break.** Many employees pride themselves on skipping lunch and see it as a sign of their commitment to being productive. The reality is that lunchtime is when people are most likely to become anxious, irritated, or send out snappish e-mails. Once they eat, they almost seem to say, "What was that all about?" We usually don't see the connection between low blood sugar (caused by hunger) and our stress levels.

3. **Stop gossiping.** Ouch! This one is going to hurt a little, but the pay-off is big. When you gossip, you are telling the person you are gossiping to that you will do the same thing when he/she is not present. You also have the added stress of keeping straight who you have told what. Gossip really adds up to appearing (and being) untrustworthy. Not the best trait to cultivate as a co-worker!

Gossip is mostly laziness in making small talk anyway. Instead of relying on this old standby to spark-up the lunch table chat, have a few topics prepared before you get there. What if someone else starts gossiping? Don't respond judgmentally. Just acknowledge the person's concerns ("He really bugs you, huh?") and switch topics gracefully.

4. **Dress for success.** This is a different take on another reliable piece of classic business information. If you are wearing things to work that make you feel fat, old, frumpy or just uncomfortable, you are unwittingly causing yourself a stressful day at work.

We are directly influenced by how we feel about ourselves... including our physical appearance. Instead of trying to look like you have on a new set of clothes every week, just jazz up the one that fits perfectly -- and looks great on you -- with a scarf, earrings, different tie... you know the drill.

5. **Admit your mistakes.** By being willing to demonstrate through your words and actions that talking about, and learning from, [mistakes](#) is a necessary part of long-term career success you allow others to be honest about their missteps too. This may seem on the surface like a declaration that you are not a skilled professional, but just the opposite is

true. You will be amazed at the impact this courageous act will have on your reputation and trustworthiness. It actually takes strength to admit that you are not perfect.

6. Make a date with yourself. Why do we have to take a class to learn how to manage our stress? Why do we not do the things we know we should until a doctor tells us we must? The answer is likely that many of us do not see ourselves as a priority. You have not incorporated into your to-do list that you are also an important relationship that needs attention.

You are a valuable resource in your work life and you need to be "recharged" if you are to effectively manage your career. Put time in your work schedule that builds in time for you: take lunch, take a walk, or catch up on important relationships.

7. See where your work makes a [difference](#). If you aren't sure if your work is to make other's lives at least easier, then you are going to experience a lot more stress than your fellow coworkers. To make your work meaningful (and way less stressful), you must see it through the eyes of working for the benefit of others. Where does your job help the organization meet its goals? How does your work impact your local community?

8. Make friends. According to a recent Gallup poll, employees who have a [best friend](#) at work are seven times more likely to be engaged in their work than those who did not have a best friend at work (those without a best friend at work were only 1 in 12 self-defined as being productive and happy at work).

Developing a friendship with a co-worker who has a work ethic you admire and someone who can "keep it zipped" is a must-have. No matter how great your significant other, friend, or neighbor is at solving problems or listening to your work concerns, they are not your best option. Why? Because they don't work where you do. Only a coworker can completely understand the personalities and culture of your workplace.

9. Watch your language. Our language is not arbitrary. Research suggests that even "joking" about our stress is picked up by the subconscious as truth. So saying aloud, "Gosh, I feel like I've been hit by a freight train!" is confirming your stress as a sure thing in the near future.

No one has control of EVERY thought. Luckily, it's only the ones causing stress that you need to worry about. When you notice stress creeping in, it's time to stop what you are doing, back it up, and see what thought started the ball rolling. Shift your thinking to look for what's going right, instead of focusing only on what may not be going well.

Spend time with coworkers who are positive and productive and limit your [negative self-talk](#). Your thoughts create your behavior, behaviors become habits---and habits create your life. Stop participating in the "who's the most stressed" contest and focus instead on what's going well and how much you've already learned and accomplished in your career.

10. Simplify, simplify, simplify. Author Elaine St. James ("Simplify Your Life") says, "Maintaining a complicated life is a great way to avoid improving it." If you find yourself saying more than once a week 'Where did the day go?' or 'I know I was busy, but I'm not sure what I got done' then you are a candidate for [simplifying your work life](#).

First on the list is to de-clutter. Get familiar with your garbage can (or recycling bin) and use it often. Set aside a day THIS WEEK to go through your piles and folders. Anything

older than one year is probably a throw-away item. Financial records are one of the exceptions to this rule.

Next, start planning weekly at the end of each workweek. Take the last 20 minutes of your work week to plan for the one ahead. If you don't start putting the important items in your time management tool on a weekly basis, then each day is just a crisis management session waiting to happen.

Keep educated with articles like this one. There are unlimited resources available that are quick and useful. Take what works and throw out what doesn't (where IS that recycling bin?).

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