

Solutions

Health and Wellness Information from
Family Services Employee Assistance Programs (FSEAP)

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Newsletter



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Workplace Stress

Stress is a normal part of life and a normal part of any job. In fact, it is often what provides us with the energy and motivation to meet our daily challenges both at home and at work. In the workplace, we regularly experience stress-causing situations, react to them with heightened tension, then return to a more relaxed state when the situation is resolved. However, as with most things, too much stress can have negative impacts. When challenges at work become too demanding, we begin to experience negative signs of stress. Learning how to deal with and manage stress is critical to maximizing our job performance, staying safe on the job, and maintaining our physical and mental health.

When stress crosses the line from normal to excessive, it can trigger physical and emotional responses that can be harmful. Below are the most common symptoms and warning signs that people experience when struggling with stress at work.

Symptoms and Warning Signs of Job Stress

- Difficulty concentrating
- Physical problems (headaches, upset stomach, sleep disturbance)
- Poor relations with family and friends

- Anger/Irritability
- Apathy
- Negativism/cynicism
- Low morale
- Boredom
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Alienation
- Absenteeism
- Crying/anxiety

Managing Stress at Work

Increase Your Body's Resistance to Stress

Stress cannot always be avoided, but there are steps you can take to lessen its impact on you. The best way to avoid the negative effects of stress is to take care of yourself. Begin by making intentional choices and make changes that can help you to avoid what stress you can. Start by practicing a healthy lifestyle which includes the following:

- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet
- Make time for hobbies and leisure
- Drink plenty of water
- Get adequate rest and sleep
- Enjoy fresh air and sunshine
- Build supportive relationships
- Exercise daily
- Laugh often

Change Your Body's Reaction to Stress

Often we are not aware of the tension our bodies hold at the end of a busy day. Try the following easy relaxation exercise on a regular basis, even before you feel stressed at work:

fseap Now we're
talking.

WHAT THE EFAP CAN DO. Whether it is to help you become unstuck, to unplug from the daily grind or build resiliency to deal with life's stressors, counseling can help you in your quest to achieve a healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle. You don't have to do it alone. Call your EFAP today.

Relaxation Exercise:

Get comfortable. You can either sit in a chair, or if you can, lie on the floor.

Tighten the muscles in your toes. Hold for a count of 10. Relax.

Flex the muscles in your feet. Hold for a count of 10. Relax.

Move slowly throughout your body-- legs, stomach, back, neck, and face-- contracting and relaxing muscles as you go. Remember to breathe deeply and slowly.



endorphins. Endorphins are natural chemicals produced by the body that enable us to feel more relaxed, less anxious and less stressed overall.

- Limit your caffeine intake, as it can create tension and build anxiety. Drink juice, water, or herbal tea instead of coffee.
- Try to balance work and play. The healthiest way to keep your mind and body relaxed is to take “mini-vacations.” On the weekends, plan fun activities with friends and family.
- Discuss your workload and work priorities with your manager if you feel overly stressed. Focusing on solutions can relieve stress and help you focus.
- Seek counselling when stress becomes too much to manage; seeking support before stress becomes too much is even better!

Tips to improve stress management

- Cultivate positive relationships at work. Sometimes the best stress-reducer is simply talking it out with a trusted co-worker. Receiving positive support and empathy from someone else can help to reduce stress and open the door to sharing creative ideas and problem solving about how to manage stress. Remember to reciprocate and help them when they are in need.
- Laughing is one of the easiest and best ways to reduce stress. Share a joke with a co-worker, watch a funny movie at home with some friends, and try to see the humour in the situation.
- Maintain a positive attitude (and avoid people without one). Negativism sucks the energy and motivation out of any situation, so avoid it whenever possible. Instead, develop a positive attitude and learn to reward yourself for your accomplishments, however big or small.
- Take charge of your situation by taking 10 minutes at the beginning of each day to prioritize and organize your day. Regular planning will help avoid stressful rushes.
- Fight through the clutter. Taking the time to organization your desk or workspace can help ease the sense of losing control that comes from too much clutter. Keeping a to-do list and crossing things off it helps.
- Take a few short 5-15 minute breaks in the day. Walk away from the situation, perhaps walk around the block or find a quiet place or listen to music. This will add to your productivity and decrease your stress levels.
- Join an exercise class or go for a walk over the lunch hour. When we exercise, our body releases



Stress Management Resources

Other good sources of stress management information include the following websites:

<http://www.ccohs.org/oshanswers/psychosocial/stress.html> (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety)

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/work_stress_management.htm (Helpguide.org)

http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=2-28&lang=1 (Canadian Mental Health Association)

How your EFAP can help

✓ Confidential services

✓ Information to help with work and life

To access EFAP services,

just call **1.800.667.0993**

TTY 1.888.234.0414

www.fseap.bc.ca

