



How to Cope with Job Stress

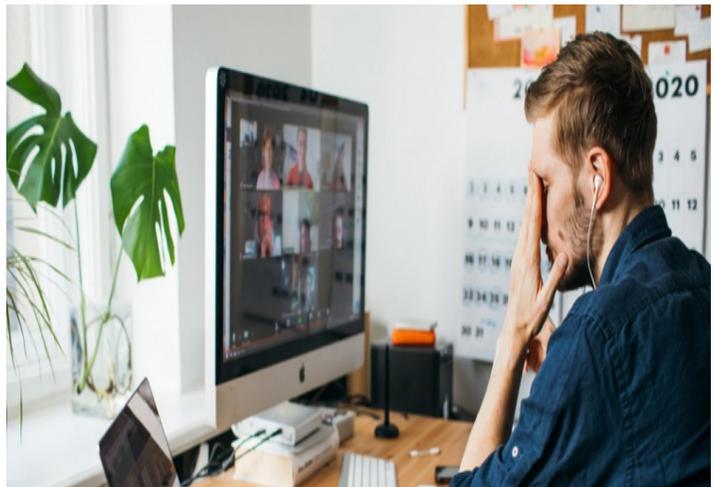
Everyone experiences some amount of stress in their occupation. Over time, stress can affect job performance, impair physical and mental health and cause strains on your relationships. Although job stress may seem unavoidable, it can be quite manageable when you adopt the appropriate techniques and attitude.

Understanding Stress

Stress is a normal response to life changes. An ability to react to stress is crucial for human survival. Each of us possesses an innate “fight or flight” response mechanism to potentially harmful or dangerous situations. When faced with stress, the adrenal glands secrete stimulating hormones; extra glucose is burned for energy; the heart rate accelerates; blood is channeled to working muscles; and your brain releases epinephrine, cortisone and other hormones to get you ready for the challenge.

While stress can keep you sharp and alert, prolonged stress can strain the body. Unrelieved tension builds up, causing an array of physiological and psychological symptoms that may include:

- A weakened immune system (lower white blood cell count)
- Headaches and migraines
- Stomachaches and ulcers
- Back and muscular pain
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Concentration difficulties
- Chronic fatigue
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Dizziness and lightheadedness
- Depression
- Panic attacks



Job stress also may lead to:

- Deterioration in work relationships
- Decreased productivity
- Low workplace morale
- Work absenteeism
- Substance abuse

Ways to Cope with Workplace Stress

If you feel yourself getting stressed about your job, try these tips to decrease your stress level and improve your performance:

- **Identify your stressors.** By recognizing the reasons behind your stress, you can learn to feel more in control and work to change the stress. Determine whether the stress you experience at work is due to worries or conflict at home.
- **Avoid setting too many lofty goals.** Set realistic expectations, and attempt challenges that are doable.
- **Anticipate boss and co-worker stress.** Prepare a few responses to stressful situations that may be presented to you by a supervisor or co-worker. For example, instead of reacting hastily to a question or request by a co-worker, ask whether you can get back to the person with your decision at a later time.
- **Learn to delegate responsibilities.** If you are a manager, empower your subordinates to take on more responsibilities and make more decisions. Encourage this as an opportunity for growth and training for a possible future promotion. Divide extra tasks fairly and reasonably.
- **Be more assertive in your responses to requests.** Be honest, but tactful. Learn to seek alternatives or to say no when necessary.
- **Examine your schedule.** Is your work schedule compatible with your home/personal life? Perhaps you can try a different shift, vary your work days or arrange to work from home on certain days.
- **Redefine your role.** Work with your supervisor on revising your job description to include more creative, empowering and satisfying duties.
- **Consider a different position, department or work location.** Ask your boss if this is possible.

Here are some suggestions for getting organized to eliminate clutter and reduce stress:

- **Organize your workspace.** Rearrange it for maximum efficiency. Create lists and schedules to help you meet deadlines.
- **Tackle one task at a time if possible.** List your duties in order of priority, and complete one at a time. This can make you feel more organized and in control, leading to a sense of greater accomplishment.
- **Learn time-management techniques.** Take a class or read books on how to better manage your time.
- **Do not procrastinate.** Tackle your most difficult projects first. Putting them off may lead to increased anxiety and stress.

Remember that stress affects not only job performance, but also career satisfaction. Be aware of the consequences stress is imposing on your life, and make a commitment to reduce your stress level.

As a reminder, if you would like more information, or to speak with a mental health professional, please reach out to your Living Resources Program:



1-844-207-LINK (5465)
GuidanceResources.com (Web ID: LivingME)

Source: All information contained in this handout has been provided directly by your Living Resources Program.