Five Ways to Conquer Work Stress

Do you typically feel stressed out at work? It's not surprising. Work is most often cited as the primary stressor in people's life. And it can lead to major problems:

- It is estimated that over one-half of all physical illnesses are stress related.
- Stress can lead to high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, increased susceptibility to colds, and prolonged healing from wounds.
- Stress can impair short-term memory and decision making, both of which can undermine work performance.

You may not be able to change your job, but you can reduce your stress at work. Here are some tips:

1. **Use your support system.** Don't be afraid to ask for help, or to talk with friends, coworkers, and family members about your stressful situation. Their input, reassurance and caring can support you through stressful times.

2. **Know when to let go.** If you've already done all you can, or if the situation is beyond your control, don't spend any more time worrying about it. Remind yourself that worrying won't change anything and may make things worse.

3. **Change your point of view.** Instead of just imagining the worst outcome, also imagine the best outcome, and the most realistic outcome. This will help put things in perspective. Also, ask yourself “If the worst happens, will I live through it? Will it matter next month or next year?” Even if the worst outcome happens, it’s often not as bad as we imagine.

4. **Don’t be too hard on yourself.** If you didn’t perform as well as expected, don’t beat yourself up. Instead, figure out what you learned from the situation and apply it next time you face a similar situation.

5. **Use your sense of humor.** The old adage “laughter is the best medicine” may have some truth to it. Research shows that the use of humor can help reduce tension and protect against negative emotions. Use your imagination to find something ironic or absurd about the stressful situation.

You may already be using some of the above stress-reducing techniques. This is a good time to practice something new. The more tools you have for managing stress, the better prepared you'll be. Less stress not only promotes physical health, but it also improves work performance. In this case, less truly does lead to more.

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