

# 4 tricks for turning stress at work into positive action



Nearly nine months into the pandemic, uncertainty about the future is likely creating stress at work for both you and your employees.

Questions like when you'll return to the office, attend face-to-face meetings, or enjoy happy hours with co-workers again remain unclear. This can cause stress and frustration to mount, putting a serious dent in employee motivation, positivity, and productivity.

You can't change the uncertain reality you and your employees are facing now. However, you can choose how to let the resulting stress affect your life, personally and professionally.

Here are some ways you and your employees can improve your emotional intelligence and learn to channel stress at work and negative feelings into a healthier form of energy.

## **Practice pausing between stimulus and response**

Now that many workplace conversations that would typically take place in person are being had over email and instant messenger, context can get lost. This creates opportunities for misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Use the physical distance these channels allow to break old habits of immediately responding before thinking.

Whenever you are asked to provide input or perspective, take a few seconds to pause. Consider what the person has actually said (not what you might immediately assume they meant) and choose a thoughtful response.

## **Consider frustration as a signal to address what's broken**

Frustration and stress at work can be a clear indicator that the current way of doing things isn't effective anymore. When frustration creeps in, try to hone in on exactly what is causing the irritation.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by a growing workload, for example, revisit how you have scheduled your workday. Try tackling the most important projects first, when your mind is most fresh and engaged.

If you are frustrated by the lack of perceived progress on a large project, make a list of what has been done so far. Next, determine what needs to be done to reach completion. Finally, identify what is blocking progress, and brainstorm new ways to remove them.

## **Rearrange your daily routine**

Without having a commute or work-related travel, a sense of "Groundhog's Day" can rear its head. If your days feel uninspired, take the opportunity to reconsider how you can reinvent the order of your day.

If you've always hit the gym in the morning before work, consider dedicating the early morning hours to a new activity. Activities like reading, meditating, walking outside, or journaling could be good substitutes. Shift your routine so you work out at lunch or the end of the workday, for a change of pace.

If you're in the habit of checking email first thing in the morning, experiment with how different the cadence of your day feels if you wait to respond to emails until after 10 a.m. Instead, hold group meetings first thing in the morning.

When you experiment with new approaches to your day, you can figure out how to best accommodate your ebbs and flows in energy. This helps you remain productive and inspired without burning out.

## **Laser in on the long term**

Nothing lasts forever, and the workplace stressors you're currently experiencing will one day be in your rear-view mirror. When you feel negativity setting in, look at the problems you currently face. Now imagine you're seeing them one year from now. What current problems won't exist at all in one year? If you were to look back on your life a year from now, what do you hope you will have accomplished?

When you take the time to put short-term challenges in perspective, you begin to see that you have a choice of which issues and opportunities truly deserve your energy. This helps you focus on how to pursue the longer-term accomplishments that truly are your priority.

**Additional Resource:** Employee-supervisor relationships are still a top stressor - [but that doesn't mean they can't be improved](#).