

How to deal with stress at work: Tips for maintaining your well-being

Workplace stress is at an all-time high, with **94%** of workers reporting feeling stress on the job, and it causes a whopping **1 million Americans** to miss work each day. Anyone with a job can likely attest to this, as it's normal to experience stressful situations at work, even if you love what you do.

Meeting stringent deadlines, dealing with difficult co-workers, long hours on the clock, and difficulty getting enough sleep are all common stressors to experience because of your job, regardless of your profession. While a little bit of stress at work is common, chronic stress can have negative effects on your health. So if your job stress is out of control, you may experience higher blood pressure, insomnia, and a weakened immune system.

So what can you do to cut down on the amount of work-related stress you experience?

Of course, switching jobs is always an option, but finding a completely stress-free job is next to impossible for most. That's why a more effective method is to learn how to deal with stress at work.

Learning to manage stress at work effectively is one of the best things you can do for your mental & physical health (not to mention your career). You'll perform better on the job and enjoy a more rewarding home life with lowered stress levels.

That's why I've put together these effective tips for dealing with stress at work.

Top sources of workplace stress

Certain situations at work are more stressful than others, such as a fast-approaching deadline for a project that you haven't started or collaborating with an unruly co-worker. After all, if your workday consisted of watching TV and playing video games at your leisure, you likely wouldn't have any stress at all.

Yet, most of us don't have that luxury, and we regularly deal with these sources of work-related stress:

- **Excessive workloads.** It's challenging to have a stress-free day when you're constantly fighting against the clock to get everything done. Some positions have more pressing responsibilities than others, and at times the workload can become too much. Contending with an excessive workload and long hours is a recipe for burnout, which can cause health problems like heart disease and high blood pressure.
- **Low salaries.** According to a [2021 study](#) by the American Psychological Association, low pay is the #1 cause of excessive stress in the workplace. Inflation is on the rise, and Americans are struggling financially as a result. Having to stretch funds and dealing with the uncertainty of paying bills and other expenses is a significant cause of stress for many employees.

- **Reduced opportunities for advancement.** Staying in the same position for years without an opportunity to advance can make employees feel stuck and cause stress. This stressor is also related to low pay, as advancing in a company often means receiving more money. Yet, without opportunities to move up, many employees feel that there's no way out of their financially tight situation.
- **Lack of support.** Employees feel alienated and stressed when work ceases to become a team effort. That's especially true if they're already dealing with an excessive workload. If employees don't have proper support from co-workers and their superiors, their stress levels can rise.
- **Work that's not challenging or engaging enough.** Most professionals don't just want to go through the motions at work; they actually want to engage and challenge themselves. Yet, not every job provides exciting work that makes a real impact, which can lead employees not only to lose focus but also to feel stress due to a mundane work environment.
- **Unclear or unrealistic performance expectations.** Not knowing what you're supposed to do can be a massive source of stress, especially if your managers are telling you two different things. For instance, one manager may reward you for a task while your supervisor scolds you for it — which can become a very difficult situation. Unrealistic performance expectations are also stressful, as employees struggle to meet insane quotas and deadlines that throw their work-life balance out of whack.
- **Not having any control over job-related decisions.** Not having any control over your job can certainly make you feel the effects of stress. Without any say over what you need to do, each upcoming work week becomes a source of anxiety — as you're at the mercy of your superiors.

These are the most common reasons employees report feeling stress at work, but they certainly aren't the only ones.

The good news?

No matter what types of stressors you're contending with in your workspace, you can successfully deal with them through proper stress management. There are many ways to learn how to deal with stress at work, and they don't involve quitting your job to find something better (remember, stress can rear its ugly head at ANY workplace, even one you love).

Coping with stress is the best way to preserve your mental health and avoid the complications that come with chronic stress.

When stress gets out of control

If you don't learn how to deal with stress at work, you could develop some health problems that can wreak havoc on your life. That's because your work stress doesn't just go away at the end of the day if you don't deal with it. Instead, it lingers inside and can drive up your blood pressure & heart rate, increase your risk for heart disease, and weaken your immune system's defenses.

Beyond that, excessive work-related stress has also been linked to obesity, depression, and anxiety.

People also tend to cope with stress in unhealthy ways. For instance, it's common for stressed employees to cope by eating junk food, smoking cigarettes, or drinking alcohol — which can lead to other health problems

such as cancer.

Insomnia is another condition that's directly linked to stress levels, especially work-related stress. That's because it's common for stressed-out employees to lay awake at night worrying about money problems, their excessive workload, or a steadily approaching deadline — ruining their sleep quality. Yet, this is another vicious cycle, as the less sleep you get, the more likely you will feel groggy, irritated, and stressed at work.

Insomnia is also closely related to [absenteeism](#), which is when you show up to work but aren't productive at all. It can be challenging to keep up with your work tasks when you're sleep-deprived and have nonexistent energy levels.

All these reasons are why it's imperative to learn healthy ways to cope with your stress to avoid all these complications, bad habits, and negative thoughts.

Tips for how to deal with stress at work

Now that you know what elevated stress levels will do to your health, it's time to learn some healthy ways to find stress relief.

The fact is that no matter how stressful your job is, there are always ways to become less stressed. It could be that breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques are all you need to destress, or the situation could be more serious.

If you're dealing with an excessive workload or unruly co-workers, for example, then you'll need to seek help from your superiors or the human resources department.

Either way, there are steps you can take to make your work life less stressful, so let's learn how.

Develop healthy stress responses

First, you need to alter the way you respond to stress. If your remedy for a long, stressful day at work is to disappear inside a bottle, you should reevaluate that response.

Instead of drinking your sorrows away, why not hit the treadmill instead?

It's a fact that exercise reduces the [negative effects of stress](#), but its benefits don't stop there. Exercise also boosts your mood, improves your confidence, and pumps out copious amounts of 'feel-good' endorphins.

Besides physical activity, another healthy stress response is to get lost in the things you love. Make time for your favorite hobbies and activities, such as reading novels, working on cars, yoga, playing music, and whatever else interests you. Engaging in a hobby or a fun activity will engage your brain and help you relieve stress in a very healthy way.

Seeing loved ones and family members after a hard day of work can also make the stress melt away, so don't forget to socialize in response to stress.

Last but not least, improving your quality of sleep will go a long way toward relieving stress and improving your mood — not to mention gifting you with enough energy to power through the work week.

Speak with your higher-ups

If your stressors are too much to handle (such as insane workloads or 14-hour workdays), then you need to be proactive and take action.

Speak to your manager or supervisor and discuss developing a plan to help you out. The purpose here isn't to complain but to diligently seek a solution to your issues. Whether you're facing an impossible workload or are dealing with abuse from co-workers, don't be afraid to speak up.

Your manager or supervisor's job is to create a work environment that encourages productivity, so they have every incentive to help you by addressing your co-workers or dividing up some of your workloads.

Your higher-ups can also make candid suggestions to help improve your performance. For instance, it could be that you need help implementing better time management, which will make your job and your life easier.

The point here is it's much better to speak up and seek help than it is to suffer in silence.

Create a pre-work ritual

What are your mornings like before you get to work?

Are you scrambling to shower and get dressed before devouring a cup of cold coffee left over from the night before? If so, it's likely that you show up to work already stressed from rushing around. That's why there's real benefit in developing a pre-work ritual that lowers your stress levels before you clock in.

First, ensure that you're waking up early enough to prepare for work at a relaxed pace while not sacrificing sleep.

Next, prepare yourself a nutritious breakfast and a fresh cup of coffee. Afterward, you could unwind for a few minutes with a newspaper or novel while eating. Then you can commute to work with a full stomach, a peaceful mind, and plenty of energy to face the day.

Do this, and you'll likely experience less stress during the day overall.

Develop a stress-free work environment

Does your office chair dig into your lower back for all eight hours of the day? Then it's worth seeking out a replacement or at least using pillows to compensate.

The idea is to do what you can to eliminate as much stress as you can from your desk.

If you stare at computer screens all day, taking regular breaks for your eyes can help relieve stress. I recommend implementing the 20/20/20 rule.

What's that?

For every 20 minutes you spend looking at a screen, you look away at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds straight. That will help you avoid eye strain and other complications like headaches and eye-watering.

If you can decorate your desk/workspace, do your best to use calming colors and decor, as that can help reduce stress. Blues, greens, pinks, and whites are very soothing colors, so use them wherever you can around your work area.

Take a walk at lunch

Spending eight hours straight locked in an office building isn't good for anyone's well-being, so taking a break for a brief walk at lunchtime can be a real lifesaver.

After you eat, try walking around the building or the block if you have time.

This will give you time to appreciate nature, breathe in some fresh air, and get some much-needed exercise. Also, seeing the sunshine and hearing the birds chirp will help boost your mood, which can help give you enough strength to get through the rest of the day without experiencing any stress.

Final thoughts: How to deal with stress at work

No matter what type of job you have, stress at work is, at times, inevitable. The answer, then, is not to run — but to find healthy ways to cope with and relieve your stress. Deep breathing, exercise, hobbies, and seeing friends and family are all healthy stress responses — so aim to include them in your routine.

The more that you can deal with your work-related stressors, the more you'll be able to forget about work and unwind during your personal time.