Six Ways to Control Your Workplace Stress



Tired of stressing out at work? Three studies that span more than a decade show findings that are very much the same. It looks like learning to control the environment may be the key. Or, at least, a really good place to start.

The three studies done about workplace stress demonstrate the overlap with control of the situation and the stressor. The American Psychological Association's Center for Organizational Excellence did a study in 2013 that showed the top five stressors were low salaries, lack of opportunity, workload, long hours, and undefined job expectations. A report released by The American Institute of Stress (AIS) in 2006 said that 28 percent of workplace stress involved issues with people—second only to workload. Again, this identifies issues that could be in the "control" column. The AIS also points out that work-life balance was a major concern too. Looking back all the way to 1999, a report entitled Stress…At Work conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, stated that between 30 and 40 percent of the respondents suffered from stress or extreme stress at work. They identified workplace stress as the interaction between workers and their environment.

Dealing with control issues will require some introspection—working from the inside out. This takes time, but the payoff is big. Here's a step-by-step plan to take control of workplace stress. Some of them take place outside the workplace, but it's all a part of the overall goal; you'll see.

1. **Take control of your own schedule and give yourself permission to get enough sleep.** Everyone's talking about sleep these days, but it's key. Lack of sleep can become an excuse for bad performance, irritable moods, and lack of concentration. You can fix this one. Start experimenting. Six hours may be all you need to be sharp and alert—but it could be more or maybe less. Start going to bed five or 10 minutes earlier and see how you feel. Keep adding minutes till you wake up feeling refreshed. Now you know your target.

2. **Take control of your morning and eat breakfast.** Don't skip this one! It doesn't have to be a big deal, just something simple and nutritious with some coffee or juice. This can take about 15 minutes and will change how you feel and the tone of your entire day. If you are with family members, it might give you a chance to work out some scheduling that will alleviate family chaos and stress later. Or, it could just be some quiet time.

3. **Take control of your workday and set aside a few minutes every hour or so to regroup.** This will give you a chance to rest your eyes and take some strain off your

brain. You have the power to do this. Even if you work “on the clock,” you get a break and it’s up to you how you use it. Make it simple. Just stroll around your building or the parking lot. And, studies show that sitting for eight hours can lead to heart disease and other illnesses (even if you get a good workout before or after work). Get in touch with yourself. Some fresh air and time away can give you an entirely new perspective. This is truly when the “aha moments” happen!

4. **Take control of a people issue and put the “team” back into “teamwork.”** When you need help or want to consult on a project or problem, do it! Try not to become isolated or feel like you have to have all the answers. Working with your coworkers to solve a problem or just work out a small detail can make all the difference. Everyone needs to be needed, right? A coworker could have valuable information you need and he/she doesn’t know it and neither do you if you don’t reach out.

5. **Take control of your obsession to be flawless and leave perfectionism to those who never want to finish a job—ever.** Setting unrealistic goals only leads to long hours, stress, and frustration. Do what you are hired to do and the best job that you can, but be realistic.

6. **Take control of your health and sprinkle in some exercise anywhere you can.** It was suggested to walk around on your break, but this exercise means some serious sweating. This can mean a walk or jog before or after work. If you belong to a gym, go! Do what you enjoy and remember to change it up once in a while to keep it fun. And, the added bonus here is you will be healthier overall, and that is a stress buster right there.

You can do this! Just work slowly through the list. Workplace stress didn’t happen overnight, so to learn how to deal with it will take some time too. Be patient with the process as you take control of your life!