

# Coping With Workplace Stress

A certain amount of stress in the work we do is a natural and healthy occurrence. However, when you are constantly feeling stressed and have no outlet for reducing it, this can cause issues in your work and the workplace. Over time you may naturally associate the workplace or content of your work with feelings of stress that reach into your personal life. If you do not have a good way of coping with this stress, your productivity will likely be disrupted, and you may feel less of a sense of purpose and motivation in the work you do. It can be helpful to know what kind of reactions you might expect operating in a stressful environment and what you can do to reduce this stress.

## COMMON REACTIONS DUE TO WORKPLACE STRESS

- Fear and anxiety - about coming into work or future difficult and stressful tasks
- Anger and blaming - at coworkers, yourself, leadership, or the organization for the amount of pressure you feel
- Sadness - over the nature of your work
- Confusion or difficulty thinking clearly
- Poor concentration and decreased productivity for a time
- Irritability
- Reluctance to come into work
- Physical reactions - such as fatigue, headache, stomach ache, muscle tension, or difficulty eating or sleeping

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE STRESS

- Be flexible - there might be many challenges, and being flexible will make it less stressful and allow you to be more adaptive
- Take care of yourself
  - Eat healthy and drink lots of water - your body and mind need the nutrients to recover from stress and expel the stress chemicals
  - Engage in regular exercise - this helps to boost chemicals that improve mood, reduce stress, and improve sleep
  - Try to maintain your usual sleep routine - if having trouble sleeping, get up and do a relaxing activity for a little while to distract your mind from worries
  - Do some things you enjoy - part of taking care of yourself is making time to relax and have fun; this gives you a break from stress and helps to maintain balance
- Talk to someone - family, friends, coworkers, a counselor, faith mentor, or anyone you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with and who is helpful to you
- Support your coworkers - at least some of your coworkers are going through the same things as you, talk to each other and be a support to one another
- Do something relaxing or fun - relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, or prayer can help relieve anxiety. Consider incorporating enjoyable activities into each day. Let the people in



your life know what is going on and how you are feeling - they need to know that your reactions are not their fault, but because of what is going on at your job

- Think about other times when you have coped with difficult situations. What positive coping strategies worked for you then? Can you practice those now?

### WHAT TO AVOID

- Using drugs and/or alcohol to cope with stress or sleep - they actually prevent restful sleep and can reduce your body's ability to handle stress
- Be cautious with caffeine or other stimulants, as they can increase anxiety
- Blame or hostility - blaming others for the stress is generally unhelpful, and can hurt morale
- Negative thinking - try to focus on what you CAN do, and where there might be new opportunities for growth
- Isolating - although it is not uncommon to feel like isolating from others when under stress, it is usually not helpful and can make coping with your struggles more difficult