



Shape Up Your Workplace

A Monthly Series brought to you by Get Healthy CT

Workplace Wellness Idea #13: Reduce Stress in the Workplace

Get Healthy CT aims to provide businesses with ideas that will facilitate healthy behaviors of their employees to improve employee satisfaction, productivity and showcase the employer as a role model for health. To support this, we will provide a “Workplace Wellness Idea” each month that employers can implement at low or no cost.

Reduce Stress in the Workplace: The average workplace today is a fast-paced, ever changing environment. New technology, economic changes, new competition and other factors lead companies to be nimble and quick to respond to changes. These changes often lead to increased stress in the workplace.

According to WebMD “Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to. When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger.... Some stress is normal and even useful. Stress can help if you need to work hard or react quickly...But if stress happens too often or lasts too long, it can have bad effects. It can be linked to headaches, an upset stomach, back pain, and trouble sleeping. It can weaken your immune system, making it harder to fight off disease. If you already have a health problem, stress may make it worse. It can make you moody, tense, or depressed. Your relationships may suffer, and you may not do well at work or school.”

As an employer, you can help your employees reduce stress on the job by providing them with some ideas on how to manage or reduce their stress. Some simple techniques can be found on the next page.

If you want more information on how to handle stress, please visit GetHealthyCT.org, or e-mail GetHealthyCT@gmail.com.

Let's work together to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in the workplace!

Ten Steps to Master Stress, Increase Energy and Improve Happiness

1. **Change your mind about stress.** If you think stress is bad for you and will harm you; it will. Take control of your stress by watching your self-talk - change it to the good. Your beliefs have more to do with how you respond to stress than the actual stressor. Watch the TED Talk by- Kelly McGonigal on "How to Make Stress Your Friend" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU>
2. **Learn Relaxation Techniques:** Practice deep breathing using your diaphragm whenever you feel tense. Do Yoga, stretching, Tai Chi, Progressive Muscle Relaxation or Guided Imagery.
3. **Practice Mindfulness Meditation.** You can find guided meditations on the internet and your smartphone. Or you can simply pay attention to what you're doing when you're doing it. Focus on all your senses while showering, doing the dishes, eating, walking or hugging.
4. **Take Five** – Schedule strategic breaks in your day, especially if you're busy. Try setting an alarm to go off every hour to remind you to take a break.
5. **Focus on Gratitude** – Focus on the positive things in your life. Write down three to five things for which you are grateful, why you are grateful for them and who is involved. Do this three times a week.
6. **Get out of Your Head and into Your Body** - Doing physical activity is a great way to burn calories and reduce stress. Find an activity that you enjoy, such as walking, running, biking, stretching, calisthenics, tai chi, and make time to do it three to five times a week. You can use the Get Healthy CT Local Resources Directory to find activities near you at <http://gethealthyct.org/pa-city-search/>
7. **Seek out Social Support.** At work, you can create social support groups, where you can spend half the time complaining and half the time finding solutions. At home, you can talk with family and friends. Follow the same time breakdown as above.
8. **Develop Transition Rituals** to leave work stress behind when you leave the worksite. This could be something symbolic as a way to separate work from home/personal life, e.g. exiting a certain door as your leaving, starting your car, or crossing a bridge. Or it could be an action such as changing your clothes, listening to music or an audiobook.
9. **Sleep/Eat/Pray/Love:** Improve your sleep hygiene to get a good night's sleep every night (see the Get Healthy CT October 2015 monthly Health Feature for ideas). Eat healthy foods, and use comfort foods and alcohol in moderation. Lift up your spiritual life by praying or reading inspirational books. Nurture and improve your relationships.
10. **Make time for Laughter, Entertainment and Fun.** Go out with friends, family and/or co-workers, or laugh on your own by watching YouTube comedy, sitcoms, cartoons or reading funny books. Find positive escapes such as reading, movies or live music.