

# Tip Sheets for Employees



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## Managing Work Stress Tips for Coping and Thriving at Work

Work stress is something we all face as employees—and we all handle it differently. There is no getting around it. But, not all stress is bad, and learning how to deal with and manage stress is critical to maximizing our job performance, staying safe on the job, and maintaining our physical and mental health.

### What is Work Stress?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines work stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker.

*Stress can cause physical, emotional, and behavioral disorders that can affect your health, vitality, and peace of mind.*

Some jobs, by definition, tend to be higher stress. Jobs that are in dangerous settings, that deal with demanding customers, that have demanding time pressures, and that have repetitive detailed work are often very stressful. However stress is not limited to any one particular job or industry.

### Stress, Stress, and More Stress

Although infrequent doses of work stress pose little threat and may be effective in increasing motivation and productivity, too much and too prolonged can lead to a downward spiral — both professionally and personally.

*25% of employees view their job as the #1 stressor in their lives.  
-Northwestern National Life*

### Causes of Work Stress

Stress may be caused or amplified by a number of factors including:

- Negative relations with colleagues
- Long and/or irregular hours
- Too little work
- Repetitive work/boredom
- Lack of job satisfaction
- Working alone
- Job insecurity
- Organizational change
- Heavy emotional demands
- Poor working environments
- Increased accessibility (mobile phones, e-mail, pagers, etc.)

### Symptoms of Work Stress

While the symptoms can be something other than work stress, here are the most common symptoms and early warning signs of work stress and burnout:

- \* Apathy
- \* Negativism/Cynicism
- \* Low morale
- \* Boredom
- \* Anxiety
- \* Frustration
- \* Forgetfulness
- \* Fatigue
- \* Depression
- \* Alienation
- \* Anger/Irritability
- \* Physical problems (headaches, stomach problems, fidgeting)
- \* Absenteeism



Everyone has bad days from time to time, but if you've noticed three or more of the above symptoms, and you've experienced them for some weeks, you may need to do something about your stress level. BHS is available to assist you with any personal or professional issue you may be facing. Call Business Health Services today!

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### Strategies for Managing Work Stress

While many of the methods of preventing work stress need to be developed and supported by the organization, there are things that workers can do to help better manage work stress. Here are 6 tips for dealing with work stress:

**Get time away.** If you feel the stress building, take a break. Walk away from the situation. Perhaps walk around the block or take in a little meditative time. Exercise does wonders for the psyche. Just finding a quiet place and listening to music or reading a magazine can reduce stress.

**Fight through the clutter.** Taking time to organize your desk or workspace can help ease the sense of losing control that comes from too much clutter. Keeping a to-do list can also help.

**Talk it out.** Sometimes the best stress-reducer is simply sharing your stress with someone close to you. The act of talking it out and getting support and empathy from someone else is often an excellent way of blowing off steam and reducing stress.



**Find humor in the situation.** When you, or the people around you, start taking things too seriously, find a way to break through with laughter. Share a joke or funny story.

**Have realistic expectations.** While many of us are working longer hours, we can still only fit so much work into one day. Having unrealistic expectations for what you can accomplish sets you up for failure — and increased stress.

**Maintain a positive attitude** (and avoid those without one). Negativity can suck the energy and motivation out of any situation. Try to develop a positive attitude — and learn to reward yourself for little accomplishments (even if no one else does).

711 W. 40th Street,  
Suite 207  
Baltimore, MD 21211

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**1-800-765-EAPS**

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