

Work Stress

Many businesses are currently experiencing a severe labor shortage, which creates a lot of stress for the employees who are left to pick up the slack. Even in “normal” times we often feel like we’ve got more on our work plate than we can handle. Now, *everyone* in the workplace is feeling overwhelmed and no one has the capacity to help out and lighten your load.

Beyond an increased workload, sources of stress at work can include: interpersonal relationships, deadlines, unclear responsibilities, scheduling, lack of autonomy, high-demand clients and customers... the list goes on and on.

Under stressful work conditions, people may be tempted to call it quits and look for a low-stress job. That option, however, is difficult to achieve and may lead to a career that is not engaging, fulfilling, or well compensated. A more realistic approach is to adopt coping strategies to reduce stress at your current job.

Here are some stress management techniques you can try if you are finding it hard to cope with work stress.

- **Start Your Day off Right:** After scrambling to get the kids off to school, dodging traffic and gulping down coffee in lieu of a healthy breakfast, many people arrive at work already stressed. This causes most people to be more reactive to stress. Conversely, if you start off the day with extra time scheduled for good nutrition, extended commute time and other unforeseen delays, you will find that work stressors are easier to cope with.
- **Clarify Responsibilities:** It is very stressful when you want to do a good job but you’re not clear on what’s being expected of you. This is the case now for many people as the workplace changes to deal with pandemic related circumstances. You can never communicate too much with your supervisor to clarify what is being expected of you, especially in light of unanticipated changes like increased workload, new work environments, or changes in processes. When in doubt... talk it out.
- **Get Comfortable:** A work stressor that doesn’t get enough attention is discomfort, such as sitting at a desk or completing physical tasks. You might not notice that you’re stressed if you’re sitting in an uncomfortable chair for just a few minutes, but if you spend all day in that chair, you may end up with a sore back and be more reactive to other stressors because of it. Even small things like office noise can be distracting and cause feelings of low-grade frustration. Do what you can to create a quiet, comfortable, and soothing workspace.



- **Take a Break:** It can be tempting to work through lunch or power through the whole afternoon without a moment of rest. Doing so may make you feel very productive and accomplished in the short-term, but will exacerbate work stress in the long-term. Build in small breaks throughout your day to rest your eyes, your brain, and your body. You’ll return to your tasks with more focus and ability to cope with stress.
- **Enjoy your “Commute”:** While some commutes can be long and tedious, the time in between work and home life is an important space to unwind and shift from work-mode to personal mode. Take the time in the car to listen to nice music or an entertaining book and allow yourself to unwind. If you don’t drive, schedule in different 10 – 15 minute activity that serves the same purpose, like a walk or meditation period.
- **Self-Care:** As with all difficult and stressful circumstances in life, it is important to have a strong self-care regimen. Be sure to schedule in time to do the activities that refuel your tank, lessen stress and provide enjoyment. Self-care should always include strategies for sufficient rest, good nutrition, exercise and social/emotional support.

Phases of work stress are often just that... a phase. Organizations go through periods of transition or heavy workloads. So you can rest assured that acute levels of work stress will be time limited. However, it’s important to utilize the strategies above to get through those phases with healthy mindset.

If you are struggling with work stress or any other difficult circumstance, call Family Services EAP today at 978-327-6666, email info@FamilyServicesEAP.org, or submit an inquiry online at FamilyServicesEAP.org. EAP services are **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL**.