



# Manage your stress at work

Numerous studies show that job stress is far and away the major source of stress for American adults and that it has escalated progressively over the past few decades.\* Negative work stress can come from a variety of factors including having little control but lots of demands, fear of being laid off or fired, working additional overtime due to budget cuts or pressure due to constantly rising expectations.

## Start your day off right

After scrambling to get the kids fed and off to school, dodging traffic and combating road rage, and gulping down coffee in lieu of a healthy breakfast, many people arrive at work stressed, and become more reactive to stress at work. In fact, you may be surprised by how much more reactive to stress you are when you have a stressful morning. If you start off the day with good nutrition, proper planning, and a positive attitude, you may find the stress of the workplace rolling off your back more easily.

## Be clear about your role

One of the factors that contributes to job burnout is unclear requirements. If you don't know exactly what's expected of you, or if the requirements keep changing with little notice, you may find yourself much more stressed than necessary. If you find yourself falling into the trap of never knowing if what you're doing is enough, it may help to have a talk with your supervisor and go over expectations, and strategies for meeting them.

## Stay away from conflict

Interpersonal conflict takes a toll on your physical and emotional health. Because conflict among co-workers is so difficult to escape, it's a good idea to avoid conflict at work as much as possible.

That means staying away from gossip, not sharing too many of your personal opinions about religion and politics, and steering clear of colorful office humor. Try to limit contact with those who don't work well with others. If you do have to deal with conflict try these conflict resolution strategies.

## Stay organized

Even if you're a naturally disorganized person, taking the time to plan ahead to stay organized can help you decrease stress at work. Being organized with your time results in less rushing in the morning to avoid being late and being able to leave at the end of the day with a clear mind.

\* The American Institute of Stress, *Workplace Stress*, January 12, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.stress.org/workplace-stress/>

## Get comfortable

Another surprising stressor at work is physical discomfort. You may not notice the stress you experience when you are in an uncomfortable chair for a few minutes. But if you practically live in that chair when you're at work, you can have a sore back and be more reactive to stress because of it. Even small things like office noise can be distracting and cause low-grade frustration. Do what you can to ensure that you're working from a quiet, comfortable and soothing workspace.

## Form positive relationships

While the negative effects of stress are very real, much of the stress we experience can be alleviated simply by talking about it. That's why positive relationships at work are so important. Even if they can't solve your problems, the simple act of verbalizing your stress with someone you trust can actually reduce the severity—or clear it up altogether.

## Start exercising

Many people are feeling ill effects from leading a sedentary lifestyle. One way you can combat that, and manage stress at work at the same time, is to get some exercise during your lunch break and perhaps take short exercise breaks throughout the day. This can help you blow off steam, lift your mood, and get into better shape.

## Keep perfectionism in check

Being a high achiever can help you feel good about yourself and excel at work. Being a perfectionist, on the other hand, can drive you and the people around you a little nuts. Especially in busy, fast-paced jobs, you may not be able to do everything perfectly. But striving to just do your best and then congratulating yourself on the effort is a good strategy. Your results will actually be better and you'll be much less stressed at work.

## Don't lose sight of your purpose

Each of us is more than the work we do. Taking the time to understand what motivates us and makes us happy is time well spent. When we starve our purpose—by not engaging with our work, suppressing our creativity, or ignoring our relationships (including the one with ourselves)—we trigger our stress response. When our life is full of nothing but work and obligations, we begin to feel bitter, resentful, depressed, and even angry. The antidote to these feelings is to infuse your life with a sense of purpose and gratitude for what you have every day.

## Establish boundaries.

In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Develop some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.

**Help is available. For additional information, visit [MagellanHealth.com/MYMH](https://www.MagellanHealth.com/MYMH)**