

The SOLUTION source

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre Newsletter
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor on behalf of Thunder Bay Counselling Centre

For You & Your Family

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Job Stress

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety defines workplace stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. The costs of workplace stress are not limited to those who experience the stress. The Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine reports that health-care expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress. Prolonged stress can be costly to employers since it can result in increased absenteeism.

We all know that stress in all areas of our life is inevitable so thinking we can avoid it may make things worse. What we can think about is how to manage it.

There is more to life than increasing its speed

- Gandhi

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Timmins Family Counselling Centre
Centre de counselling familial de Timmins



Ways to Manage Stress at the workplace:

ONE THING AT A TIME

You'll feel better and less stressed if you just do one thing at a time. This will make it easier to focus and to do a job of higher quality.

If you have to multi-task a few things during your day then set some time for that. Single-task during most of your day, but set aside an hour in the afternoon for instance to do all of that multi-tasking stuff.

WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN

If your memory is anything like mine then it might be a bit like a leaky bucket too often. So write everything down. Your ideas, tasks and stuff you just have to remember.

KEEP YOUR DAILY TO-DO LIST VERY SHORT

DON'T MAKE MOUNTAINS OUT OF MOLEHILLS

One of the best ways to make your day and life easier, lighter and less stressful is to not build mountains out of molehills. To not create extra drama, overthink or create a problem out of something that doesn't matter much. So how can you handle this bad habit?

Well, when a big problem is starting to build in my mind I first say something like: hold on now. This helps me to pause and become more receptive to change my line of thinking. Then I ask myself; Will this matter 5 years from now? Or even 5 weeks from now?

Those two steps have helped me to build a lot less mountains in my life.

SPEND 80% OF YOUR TIME FOCUSING ON A SOLUTION

And only 20% of your time dwelling on your non-molehill issue or problem instead of taking the common path and doing it the other way around. You'll live a much more action-filled life and feel less pessimistic and powerless if you do.

ASK INSTEAD OF GUESSING

Reading minds is very hard. Misunderstandings will be plentiful if you try to do it. So communicate instead. You'll have a lot less unnecessary conflicts, negativity and waste less of your and other people's time.

STAY ON TRACK BY ASKING YOURSELF QUESTIONS EVERY DAY

One good way to find clarity, to not get behind on work and to actually do what matters each day is to ask yourself questions regularly.

Questions like: What is the most important thing I can do right now?

And: Is doing this bringing me closer to my goal?

If you like, write one of the questions down on a post-it note and put it where you will see it every day. It is very easy to forget to ask yourself the question otherwise.



LET YOUR LUNCH BE A SLOW TIME OF RELAXING

Don't wolf down your lunch in 7 minutes flat. That will only ramp up the stress that you bring with you from the first few hours of work.

Instead, let your lunch be a time of relaxation. Eat slowly and focus on the smell, texture and taste of the food. Put down the fork and knife between bites to make that easier.

I have found this to be a wonderful way to relax midday and to get the best experience out of what you are eating.

By doing so I am less distracted, it is easier to think clearly and I feel less stressed.

GET IT DONE WITH??

An unfinished task that is tumbling around in the back of your mind can cause quite a bit of stress and negativity within. So if you know you have one of those then ask yourself:

What is one small thing I can do today to start getting this task done? Then take that first step and put yourself in motion towards finishing it.

STOP TRYING TO DO THINGS PERFECTLY

Go for good enough instead and when you are there then you are done and can move on to the next task or project. Set this more human bar to measure success by not only to finish things but also raise and then keep your self-esteem at a healthy level. Because when you measure yourself to a perfect standard then it will pretty much be impossible to keep your self-esteem up and feel good about yourself more than once in a while.

ASK FOR HELP

You don't always have to go it alone. You can ask your friend, parents or partner or even someone you don't know that well for a helping hand. You might not always get it, but you may be surprised at how helpful and kind people can be if you just ask.

And then later on when they ask then you can return the kindness.



SLOW DOWN

If you slow down your body then in my experience your thoughts will once again become clearer and slower too. So sometimes when I am stressed and trying to do everything quickly, then I force myself to slow down. I move slower, I eat slower, I talk and walk slower.

It may be uncomfortable for the first minute or so, but after a very short while my mind stops racing and stress starts to melt away and is replaced with a bit more inner calmness.

TELL YOURSELF: JUST TAKE CARE OF TODAY

Focus only on that. Forget about all those tomorrows and about all your yesterdays. Go small, narrow your focus greatly and just take care of today. Then you can take care of tomorrow when it comes.

This one is very helpful when you feel overwhelmed.

JUST BREATHE

Release the stress, calm your mind and body down and reconnect with the present moment again by fully focusing on your breathing. Breathe with your belly for just 1-2 minutes and focus only on the air you are breathing in and out.

(by Henrik Edberg)

Time Outs

MEDITATE RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

Most of us spend a great deal of time sitting behind our desks, or in conference rooms or colleagues' offices, so having a short practice that helps you relax while at work can be beneficial. What I call the desk chair meditation gives you a way to incorporate a short mindfulness practice into your day.

You may need to be creative to find a quiet place. Many people have told me that they're best able to do this practice by first leaving their office and finding an empty conference room, or even leaving the building to sit in their car during part of their lunch break. The desk chair part need not be taken literally. This meditation can be done anywhere you are able to sit quietly and practice, even an airplane seat.

The main part of this practice involves what's called a "bod scan", which is very simple to do. Begin by bringing your attention to the sensations of your breath. When you're ready, direct your attention to the soles of your feet, opening your mind to whatever sensations are there to be noticed. Perhaps you are noticing the pressure on the soles of your feet as the weight of your legs rests on them. Perhaps the soles of your feet feel warm or cool. Just notice. No need to judge or engage in discursive thinking. If your mind is pulled away or wanders, redirect your attention, firmly and gently.

Move your attention next to the tops of your feet, ankles, lower legs, knees, and so forth. Gradually scan through your body, noticing sensations, noticing discomfort and noticing areas of your body where you detect an absence of sensations. You simply don't notice any changes in your shoulders right now, for example. No need to search for sensations; just keep scanning through your body, taking your time and being open to what is here.

(Excerpted from Finding the Space to Lead: A Practical Guide to Mindful Leadership by Janice Marturano)

Take A Break

Stress itself is not the issue so much as the inability to recover fully from it before the next stressful event occurs. If our lives are such that they are always stressful, then our bodies never get the chance to recover.

Observing nature reveals over and over again the importance of rhythms and cycles-basic life principles that we would do well to follow. There is a natural need for the body to cycle between activity and rest, movement and stillness. Why then don't we do it? Why is that for so many of us, there is little to no time when we aren't doing something, when we fully free ourselves from our cell phones, computers, e-mail, voice mail - whatever it is that keeps us wired. Why is there so little downtime?

The reasons for this seem simple enough:

First. Our minds live to be distracted. It may be a means of escape from something in our lives that we don't want to face; it may be a way to avoid the unpleasantness of boredom. Left to its own devices the nature of the mind is to stay busy. Our distractions are addicting! Facebook, Twitter, video games, surfing the web, etc.

They are so powerful and our minds are so distractible, that we must counter these tendencies intentionally.

Second. Being busy is rewarded in our culture. Productivity is king and we all look up to those who are most successful, who accomplish the most or who make the most money. Is it time to start honouring those who can slow down and enjoy the simple things in life?

Third. We simply forget. It may seem unnecessary to be reminded to do something that is good for us. But if we are not reminded constantly, most of us forget to stop doing things in order to give ourselves time to do nothing.

(Henry Emmons, M.D.)



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