

# Reducing Stress in Your Workplace

A few simple changes could make all the difference.

**S**tress is a major factor in the lives of just about everyone. Studies conducted by the American Psychological Association show that 64 percent of Americans say they are taking steps to reduce stress in their lives. Adverse health effects from stress are huge, impacting a whopping 43 percent of adults.

The best way to reduce stress is to look at the environment around you. Here are five easy steps that you can take to reduce stress in your day-to-day life:

**Lighting** // Poor lighting in offices can have many negative effects. It can affect your mood, put a

great strain on your eyes and cause fatigue. Try working by a window whenever possible. Use full-spectrum lightbulbs at or near your desk. Also, remember that a few minutes of sunlight each and every day will make a huge difference as well.

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**Breathe** // Pause. Breathe. Take some time, even if it's in your car during your lunch break—although a park bench would be preferred—and spend a few minutes breathing deeply, meditating and officially checking out of the world, for just a little bit, and focusing on you.

The stress throughout your day may come in doses of rushing here and rushing there. If you are rushing to a meeting, before you walk in the room, stop just outside the door and take a deep breath. It will release much of your stress and change how you show up in the room.

**Sounds** // Too much sound can be a big stressor. Take control of the sounds around you. Leave the radio off when you're in the car and revel in some peace and quiet.

If you're at the office and can do it, try closing a door—for even just a few minutes—to quiet the ringing phones and office chatter.

**Technology** // Just say no—to technology, that is. Turn off your cell phone, and stow it for an hour or two. Resist checking email incessantly, and know that it will all be there when you are ready for it again. And remember, voice mail is a handy way of managing your daily calls on your schedule, instead of letting phone calls control you. In fact, scheduling time for technology is not a bad idea at all. Try it, and see how much better it feels to be in charge of technology rather than it being in charge of you.

**Space** // Clutter has a way of creeping up on us. Take a look around your surroundings—at work, home, or your car—on a regular basis. Make it your goal to reduce clutter, eliminate piles and create systems. Also, look at what you can add to your space that brings you joy, such as photos, art or a plant. These actions will help to create a relaxing, inviting environment, wherever you are, and will go a long way toward reducing stress. ■



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