

Three Stress Reduction Tips for the Office

Recommendations to balance mind and body and keep you at the top of your game at work and during other stressful situations.

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A study by Towers Perrin shows that companies with employees who call themselves "truly engaged" outperform their non-engaged counterparts on the S&P by 17 percent. For most of us, engagement is a byproduct of our mental and physical outlook at work. Although the goal is to achieve excellence in what we do, let's face it: No matter how you feel leaving the house as you go to work, there's no telling what surprises the day holds. Very quickly, the mind and body respond to situations around us, and the momentum of stress allows very little pause to course-correct.

But we can take actions to ease physical and mental stress. From how we feel to how we think and consequently lead, there are many choices we can make to relieve the onslaught of stress. Instead of quitting your job and heading to an ashram to find relief, there is a lot you can do to enhance your experience and performance no matter how unrelenting your day.

Test drive these recommendations and see how you feel:

Feel Better

If you're reading this, chances are you are sitting. Are your legs crossed? Shoulders slumped? Are you slouched to one side or the other? Is your shoulder hiked to your ear cradling the phone? Take a moment to sit upright, uncross your legs and slide your buttocks to the back of the chair. With your hands resting on your thighs, exhale and roll your shoulders to the front, then inhale to roll them back several times slowly. This oxygenates your entire body and emphasizes releasing the physical tension in your shoulders and neck—a major pressure point for the central nervous system.

Think Better

Are you caught up in the events of the day, running from one place to another with your mind responding constantly to whatever is at hand? Practice cultivating clarity and centeredness by trying this: As you sit at your desk, notice the rhythm of your breath. As the words you are reading register in your consciousness, keep observing a slow steady rhythm to your breath. Notice how calming it is to allow the mind to be active while remaining centered and grounded in your breath. Try this as you move through the day.

Lead Better

As a leader in your organization, readiness to solve problems can become a knee-jerk response to any dilemma. However, a key function of any leader is to cultivate greatness in others. The next time someone approaches you for answers or solutions to a challenge, challenge whomever is presenting the problem to uncover solutions. Done with courage, conviction, and confidence, that person will be driven to call upon their own resourcefulness. If they emerge with an answer immediately, fantastic, but if they

need time to investigate and assess, set a time to review their solutions. This transforms your work conversations from burdensome advice-giving to conversations based on mutual respect and coach-like encouragement. The bonus benefit is that you will shoulder one less burden in your day.

Taking care of yourself while riding the work rollercoaster pays big dividends in energy, clarity and centeredness in the midst of chaos, and will optimize your performance and experience at work. These micro self-mastery practices all draw your awareness out of firefighting mode or unconscious responding and into a sense of centered, masterful choice, enhancing your sense of well-being. Cultivating mastery allows the excellence you are capable of producing and the well-being you are capable of experiencing to be at *your* whim, and not that of happenstance.

Tevis Gale is founder of Balance Integration Corp., which provides work/life balance and creativity tools for numerous leading organizations including Google, AOL, Viacom, Yahoo, Edelman Public Relations, Disney, Cleary-Gottlieb and the Young Presidents Organization (YPO).