

# Stress in the Workplace

Brigham Young University-Idaho  
Human Resources

## Introduction

---

No matter where you work, you will at one point experience something stressful in the workplace. Certain things that you encounter however can be controlled. Stressful things can be repetitive, which means either you have experienced it before, or others have experienced the same thing as well. Angry phone-calls at the front desk, numerous projects, anxiety, and time management, are all categories that stress can fit itself into. Knowing that there are people in the workplace that are going through the same things as you everyday can be therapeutic itself.

The purpose of this training is to be able to find peace in stressful situations that you might find yourself in at work, and be able to understand how to cope with stress inducing situations in the workplace.

### 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

## Recognition

---

The first step to fixing your stress is recognizing exactly what is causing it. In the left column of the box below, write down all the things that stress you out. On the right column write out all the things that calm you down during a stressful situation.

Things That Stress Me Out At Work	Things That Keep Me Calm At Work

# Effects of Stress in the Workplace

---

Feeling overwhelmed is never an easy thing to deal with, especially at work. Balancing work and life can sometimes be a challenging combination. Sometimes we might think that the best thing to do is to just ignore the stress, but that is not the case, especially if it can be reduced even in the slightest.

## **Effects of Work-Related Stress**

(Reference: University of Cambridge 2014, Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/stress/effects.html>)

### **A. Effects on People may include:**

#### *I. Physical*

- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal upset
- Raised blood pressure/cardiovascular disease

#### *II. Emotional*

- Anxiety and irritability
- Depression
- Easily altered emotions

#### *III. Intellectual*

- Loss of concentration
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty with thought process
- Loss of memory
- Poor decision-making

#### *IV. Behavioral*

- Substance misuse
- Inappropriate display of behavior
- Isolation
- Tardiness

### **B. Effects on the organization may include:**

- High absenteeism
- High labor turnover
- Poor time keeping
- Poor performance and productivity

- Low morale
- Poor motivation
- Increased employee complaints
- Increased ill-health, accidents, and incidents reports

All of these factors can be detrimental to your health emotionally, physically, and behaviorally. It is especially good to look at the effects on your body that way you can find a way to avoid all these things. However, we will be specifically addressing workplace stressors.

## **Stressors in the Workplace**

---

Despite personality differences with coworkers, wherever we work, we all can relate to these stress related struggles. If you have dealt with projects, people, or paperwork in the workplace, then you can definitely relate to the topics that are about to be mentioned.

### Alma 37:6

6 Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instance doth confound the wise.

### **The Top 5 Stressful Things in the Workplace**

1. Unclear Leadership
2. Deadlines being moved around
3. Unrealistic goals for projects
4. Problems with prioritization of tasks
5. Missing information

*(Reference: Business Insider, Natalie Walters 2015, "Here are the 5 things that stress people out the most at work", Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/things-that-stress-people-out-the-most-at-work-2015-10>)*

Even with the spirit invited into our workplace at BYU-Idaho and direction from the Church Education System, we can still find ourselves stressed out in one of these areas. After collecting data around the Human Resources office, the top 5 things that stressed people out in the office were

1. Time Management
2. Outside Distractions
3. One-on-One with Supervisors
4. Anxiety with work/organization
5. Phone calls/People in general

What if I told you there are ways to cope with each of these categories? Would you try your best to remember them the next time you got stressed at work? Thankfully for you there is

hope and a way to cope with certain things at work. They may be small and some may be unrealistic, but just refer to Alma 37: 6 next time you think like that.

## Time Management

---

*(Reference: The Creativity Post, Jordan Bates 2014, "Work Smarter, Not Harder: 21 Time Management Tips to Hack Productivity", Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, [http://www.creativitypost.com/create/work\\_smarter\\_not\\_harder\\_21\\_time\\_management\\_tips\\_to\\_hack\\_productivity](http://www.creativitypost.com/create/work_smarter_not_harder_21_time_management_tips_to_hack_productivity))*

Do you ever feel as if there is just not enough time in the day to finish everything? Feelings like this are common in the workplace since you are always asked to do tasks and finish up projects, all at the same time of trying to finish the ones that you were previously assigned. Here are some tips for trying to cope with things relating to how you manage your time at work:

### 1. Prioritize

- Out of all the things you need to do, what is the one thing that absolutely NEEDS to be done? Set aside the things that can wait in an orderly pile, close the tabs that you do not need on the computer, and just focus on the one thing that needs to be done. Sometimes physically seeing all the things you have to do can just stress you out even more than you already need to be, just put the things you do not need at the moment away and focus on the one that needs to be taken care of. Remember to breathe and to keep positive thoughts in your head to get you through it. You are capable of doing hard things, always remember that.

### 2. Learn to say "no"

- At some point in your career you will need to learn to say the word "no". Of course we are here to help each other at work, but do not take on commitments that you know you do not have time for or commitments that you know you cannot give your all for. It is okay to be polite and decline opportunities if you yourself no you are not ready for them or cannot handle them yet. Key word in that last sentence is "yet", just because you are not ready for it now, does not mean you will not be ready for it later on.

### 3. Lock yourself in

- If you know you get distracted easily, then you yourself are the only person who knows how to "lock yourself in". Whether that means putting the phone away so you don't get distracted from the text messages, or listening to instrumental music because you keep rocking out to things that get you distracted from the actual task, make the change. By putting your things away and keeping yourself focused you will be able to get much more done and decrease the chances of procrastination.

4. Commit to your plan to do something
  - Do not back out on your own plan to do something. Taking a short 3 minute break is better than just not doing any work. This goes along with taking one thing at a time, whatever it is just commit to it!
5. Find time for stillness
  - We forget to find time to just be still in the rush of everything, yet it is such an effective piece of advice that we can apply to ourselves. There is no need to constantly rush, and there is enough time in the day, so just find 3-5 minutes a few times a day for stillness and relaxation. Go to the bathroom, go to an empty meeting room and just collect your thoughts that way you can get back to work calmed, relaxed, and ready to start again.

## Outside Distractions

---

(Reference: Forbes, Jacquelyn Smith 2012, "How to Ignore Distractions in the Workplace", Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/06/22/how-to-ignore-distractions-at-work/#2a622a843fae>)

Since we are all human, it is common for us to experience life and its challenges daily. However, those challenges are not necessarily work related. Homework, weddings, and school, might be some of those challenges that we have to face every day. Sometimes the biggest challenges that we get are outside the workplace. Because of this, it can become difficult to leave all your life worries at the door and focus on work projects. Here are some tips to help you try to stay focused at work:

1. Limit technology interruptions
  - Just putting your phone away during work can do so much. By doing this, you will not be constantly reminded of the things that are stressing you out, and you will reduce the urge to check your phone for the thing that you are distracted about. Limit yourself to checking your phone maybe 2 to 3 times that way you can be totally focused on your work. Try to reserve your personal calls and errands for your lunch hour or for after work.
2. Take care of your health
  - Make sure you are getting enough sleep at night. Whatever your worries are outside the office, the best self-remedy you can do for yourself at night is just sleep. Make sure you get the full 7-9 hours of sleep that you need so you are ready the next morning to take on your day. Stay hydrated and exercise when you can.
3. Make goals each day
  - Write down some priorities/goals at the end of each day so you know what you need to focus on when you come into work the next day. The best motivator we have is ourselves, by writing out the things we need to do we are motivating ourselves early for the next day. This can help us transition into work mode

when we get to the office. Remember to always keep the vision and work goals in mind.

4. Take a stroll

- If you find yourself scrolling through your social media or non-stop thinking about something that you cannot seem to get off your mind, you probably just need a break. Go for a bathroom break, eat a snack, stretch or walk for a bit outside. Whatever “break” works for you, do it, but make sure you keep track of time so you are not gone for too long.

5. Talk about it

- You are allowed to have feelings and emotions so of course sometimes the best way to get things off your chest or out of your mind are to talk about it! If you have a close coworker or are even close with your boss, do not be afraid to talk to them. They are there to make sure you are progressing and want to make sure you are okay. Talking it out can be the best stress reliever, once you talk it out and feel validated you’ll be able to feel better and focus on the projects that you need to get done. Do not let it become gossip.

## **One-on-One with Supervisors**

---

Meeting with your boss can definitely be a nerve-wracking thing, even if they are the nicest person ever. You want to make sure you are doing the best that you can, and that they are noticing that as well. They control if you have a job so it is important to know what you are doing and probably best to act as professional as you can with them when they are placing a task on you. I’m sure at some point in our lives we will have to deal with a boss that we struggle to work with, so how do you deal with it? Here are some tips to help you in your next one-on-one:

1. Mindset

- Do not overthink the meeting. Come in with a clear and open mind and be as relaxed as you possibly can. Having confidence is key. Think about the reason why you got hired and how you know that you have something to offer at work. Remember that reason and be confident and positive. See the meetings as development opportunities. You are just going in there to receive a new project or to have just a regular weekly meeting. Your input is valued, do not forget that.

2. Ask questions and for feedback

- Your employer should be the one guiding the meeting so try to contribute as best as you can so your employer knows that you are interested and well invested on what the meeting is about. Write some goals or questions before the meeting that you can contribute to your employer. Make sure you are actively

listening as you ask your questions and internalizing what is being said and asked at the meeting. Ask what else could be going on better with the project you are working on or in your team that you could improve on. You will be able to show your boss that you really care about improving in your job.

3. Prepare yourself

- Before you head in, think of suggestions you can give to your boss. Show them that you are capable of thinking up solutions yourself. Prepare yourself before you go in with some ideas you want to present to the team, write out some notes before you go in there to show professionalism to your supervisor or boss. The more prepared you are, the more confident and less stressed you will be when you are about to head to your one-on-one meeting.

4. Be confident

- This one is easy said than done, but no one can be confident for you, only you can do that, and it is possible! Recognize the talents and good qualities that you have and write them down. Hang them up somewhere in your desk so you are constantly reminded of the great things that you contribute to the team. Think about what is holding you back from being confident and ask yourself if any of them are valid or logical, or are you just assuming all those things that are holding you back. Do not let one thing determine your self-worth!

5. Do what you say

- If you committed to something last meeting, make sure you do it before the next one so you can feel reassured that you have done everything that you were asked. Even if your supervisor has forgotten or has not asked about it in a while, you still **MUST** get it done. They asked you to do it, so you need to make sure you get to it. If they have forgotten about it, it will be more impressive for the next meeting you have by showing that you did not forget, and that you did what was asked of you.

## **Anxiety with Work**

---

*(Reference: Anxiety and Depression Association of America)*

Anxiety in the workplace is inevitable. You are constantly dealing with projects, people and phone calls, so feeling overwhelmed at work can become a routine. Coming into work knowing all the things that you have to do and projects that you have to work on can definitely be overwhelming. The way that you feel however, although justifiable, does not necessarily have to happen every time you come into work. Here is how anxiety has effected the workplace:

- 56% of employees reported that their stress/anxiety at work interfered with their work performance

- 51% of employees reported that their anxiety/stress effected their relationship with coworkers and peers
- 50% of employees reported that their anxiety/stress effected the quality of their work
- 43% of employees reported that their anxiety/stress effected their relationship with their superiors

(Reference: Anxiety and Depression Association of America 2010-2016, Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <https://www.adaa.org/workplace-stress-anxiety-disorders-survey>)

Anxiety is a very common thing, especially at work, that is exactly why it is important to address it. Here are some tips for managing your anxiety at work:

#### 1. Sleep

- If you are feeling anxious every time you walk into work, a lot of the times it's because you are tired, and just don't want to deal with anything. This is an easy solution, just go to sleep earlier! Get off your phone at night, get whatever work you have done early, and get yourself in bed on time. The best remedy to any problem you might be having is just sleeping! Get enough sleep at night, wake up and eat a healthy and hearty breakfast, and get ready for what the day wants to bring you. Bring some snacks to work to keep you awake and give you the energy you need.

#### 2. Organization

- Seeing the huge pile of things that we need to do is not the most welcoming sight to walk in on. Today, try to organize your paperwork in a neat order for the next day, or if you're leaving your shift, try to leave your desk clean and ready for the next person who is about to come in for their shift. Write out all the things you need to do on a piece of paper so that you are ready for the next day.

#### 3. Counseling Services

- Even if your anxiety is not at an intense level, whatever level you are at, therapy is there to help you with whatever you need. The Health Center offers an anxiety and stress workshop where they teach you techniques on how to deal with what anxiety/stress you are feeling. They cover many topics including sleep, worry, relationships, relaxation and time management. If you do not feel comfortable going alone, you can definitely bring someone close to you to attend the workshop with you where you can learn how to cope or relieve your stress in a healthy way.

#### 4. Physical Health

- Exercise and eating healthy can definitely effect how you feel in general. Try to avoid caffeinated drinks and start to make it a habit to eat healthy and exercise

regularly. Even just 30 minutes of exercise can make such a difference in your life. You will be able to have the energy you need when you eat healthy and you will be able to build up your self-esteem through exercising. DMBA's Wellness Program is also a good way to start. The Wellness Program encourages everyone to do challenges to help you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

5. Take a break

- Changing your scenery can help a lot when it comes to how you are feeling. Your environment can affect you in many ways. Sometimes you just need to get out of your office and go for a bathroom break. Go for a quick walk around the building, get some water, and eat a snack, whatever you need to do for about 5-10 minutes to take some sort of quick break.

## People

---

(Reference: Business Insider 2011, "9 Useful Strategies to Dealing with Difficult People at Work", Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/9-useful-strategies-to-dealing-with-difficult-people-at-work-2011-6>)

No matter what job you do, you are always going to have to be interacting with people. That can be a good and a stressful thing. Sometimes we get angry phone calls, angry emails, or even angry people coming in. You cannot please everyone, that's a fact of life. But there are some things that are possible to do to be able to calm yourself down when people aren't pleased. I

heard a quote from someone once that said "Even if you're right, you're wrong if you are the first one to show anger". A lot of the times our first instinct is to get angry, but is that really a good idea? Here are some tips the next time you are frustrated with the situation you find yourself in;

*Psalms 145:8*

8 The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

1. Stay calm

- This is probably the first step and the most important step you need to take. Just as I mentioned before, you lose when you show that you are angry or act out in anger. Arguing with someone will just prolong unproductivity and will not bring any good to either side. By staying calm, you are in control and more respectable. Your job is to keep the other person calm and yourself calm at this point. If you feel things are getting too out of hand, call for a supervisor to help you with the problem.

2. Listen and Validate

- Do not take personally when people are upset or angry. They are not necessarily angry or upset with you, but just frustrated about a certain situation that may not be going in their favor. When this happens, try not to get offended.

Remember that getting offended is entirely in your control. You can control how you feel. When someone comes to you upset or angry, the best thing you can do is try to help them as best as you can. Actively listen to them, make sure you are fully engaged in what they are saying to you, and summarize back what they have just said. Most of the time, they just want to be validated in how they are feeling, that's why it's important that you listen to them and try to ask them questions to understand where they are coming from.

3. Find a solution

- Once you have understood why the person is unhappy, it is time to offer them a solution. Ask them what they feel should be done or put forward your own fair and realistic answer to the problem. In most cases, that is all the customer is looking for-and may result in providing some degree of satisfaction. By giving them solutions that you can do for them, they feel validated since they know that you understand why they are unhappy.

4. Be empathetic

- There is a difference between *acting like you care*, and *actually caring*. Be an employee who actually cares for their customers, and not just acts it. Show your customers that you care and actually care about what is bothering them. Try your best to give them options, and figure out exactly what is wrong.

5. Take a break

- I know this one has been repeated A LOT, but that is because it is so critical in all of these categories, but especially this one. Sometimes we feel defeated after talking to an angry person. We might feel really stressed out and overwhelmed, so the best thing you can do is just take a break. After the customer has left, it is time for you to have some time alone. Find the closest empty space you can and sit in there for a couple minutes to calm yourself down.

6. Bubble wrap

- Not only is bubble wrap a great way to help cushion fragile items while we are shipping items, but it can also be a great stress reliever. Popping bubble wrap can be a quick and easy way on trying to relieve your stress in the work place.

## Mental Health

---

(Reference: National Alliance on Mental Illness 2017, "Mental Health By The Numbers", Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>)

Now that we have covered how to take care of yourself in certain situations in the workplace, it is time that we cover how to take care of yourself in general when it comes to your mental health. One in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at

some point in their lives. Around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide. Treatments are available, but nearly two-thirds of people with a known mental disorder never seek help from a health professional. Stigma, discrimination and neglect prevent care and treatment from reaching people with mental disorders, says the World Health Organization (WHO). Where there is neglect, there is little or no understanding. Where there is no understanding, there is neglect. It is important that we educate ourselves so that we understand how to take care of ourselves.

Try these tips to help find the right balance in your life.

### **Ten Things You Can Do for Your Mental Health**

*(Reference: University of Michigan 2017, "Ten Things You Can Do For Your Mental Health", Date Accessed: 14 February 2017, <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/tenthings>)*

**1. Value yourself:** Treat yourself with kindness and respect, and avoid self-criticism. Make time for your hobbies and favorite projects, or broaden your horizons. Do a daily crossword puzzle, plant a garden, take dance lessons, learn to play an instrument or become fluent in another language.

**2. Take care of your body:** Taking care of yourself physically can improve your mental health. Be sure to:

- Eat nutritious meals
- Avoid tobacco
- Drink plenty of water, preferably 64 ounces daily
- Exercise, which helps decrease depression and anxiety and improve moods
- Get enough sleep. Researchers believe that lack of sleep contributes to a high rate of depression in college students.

**3. Surround yourself with good people:** People with strong family or social connections are generally healthier than those who lack a support network. Make plans with supportive family members and friends, or seek out activities where you can meet new people, such as a club, class or support group.

**4. Give yourself:** Volunteer your time and energy to help someone else. You will feel good about doing something tangible to help someone in need — and it is a great way to meet new people.

**5. Learn how to deal with stress:** Like it or not, stress is a part of life. Practice good coping skills: Try some medication, do Tai Chi, take a nature walk, exercise, play with your pet or try

journal writing as a stress reducer. Also, remember to smile and see the humor in life. Research shows that laughter can boost your immune system, ease pain, relax your body and reduce stress.

**6. Quiet your mind:** Try meditating, Mindfulness and/or prayer. Relaxation exercises and prayer can improve your state of mind and outlook on life. In fact, research shows that meditation may help you feel calm and enhance the effects of therapy.

**7. Set realistic goals:** Decide what you want to achieve academically, professionally and personally, and write down the steps you need to realize your goals. Aim high, but be realistic and do not over-schedule. You will enjoy a tremendous sense of accomplishment and self-worth as you progress toward your goal.

**8. Break up the monotony:** Although our routines make us more efficient and enhance our feelings of security and safety, a little change of pace can perk up a tedious schedule. Alter your jogging route, plan a road-trip, take a walk in a different park, hang some new pictures or try a new restaurant.

**9. Avoid alcohol and other drugs:** Keep alcohol use to a minimum and avoid other drugs. Sometimes people use alcohol and other drugs to "self-medicate" but in reality, alcohol and other drugs only aggravate problems.

**10. Get help when you need it:** Seeking help is a sign of strength — not weakness. And it is important to remember that treatment is effective. People who get appropriate care can recover from mental illness and addiction and lead full, rewarding lives.

*\*Adapted from the National Mental Health Association/National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare*

# DE-STRESS

chood. Seminary. Mutual. Scripture study. Family history and temple attendance. Soccer. Band.

Karate. Choir. Art. Homework. Service. . . . You name it. There's a lot on your plate. Managing all that you have to do can be as exhausting as trying to accomplish those goals in the first place.

So make sure you take time to find the right balance of the things that matter most. You don't have to do

everything. But you *will* be happier if you focus on the *right* things.

How do you do it?

Here are some ideas to get you started. So go on. Enjoy life. You can do some fun and relaxing things and still do the things you need to do. Just remember to "counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good" (Alma 37:37).

## !!! WARNING!!!

You are under no contractual obligation to complete every single item on this list!



GO OUTSIDE



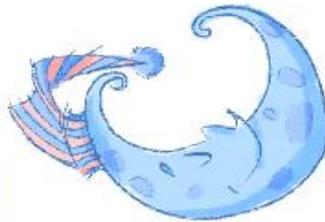
SCHEDULE FREE TIME



LIST PRIORITIES



FLY A KITE



GET ENOUGH SLEEP



BE STILL



HAVE MEANINGFUL PRAYER



ASK FOR HELP



EXERCISE



CLEAN YOUR ROOM



MAKE YOUR FAMILY SMILE



TAKE A SEC AWAY FROM TECH



HELP OTHERS



STUDY THE GOSPEL



AVOID "FOMO" (FEAR OF MISSING OUT)



### PUT GOD FIRST

"When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives."

President Eric Tolt-Burton (1899-1994). "The Great Commandment—Love the Lord." Ensign, May 1982, 4.

ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA WATSON