

5 Daily Rituals to Manage Work Stress

Employee Brain on Stress Can Quash Creativity And Competitive Edge

1. MORNING INTENTION & REFLECTION : Try to get up a few minutes earlier than the rest of the household. Upon awakening, take a few deep breaths before beginning your day. Before the Tv goes on, or you hit the e-mail, listen to some relaxing music or read an inspirational passage to start your day on a positive note. If you have time to exercise or meditate, make this part of your morning routine. Set a simple intention today without any pressure to accomplish any huge task. It might simply be to stay focused during an important meeting, to connect on a personal level with a colleague, or to focus on improving your attitude about a work issue, without personal judgment.

2. WORKDAY TRIAGE & CHECK-IN : Upon arriving at work take a few quiet minutes for yourself to get grounded. Be present enough to stop the outside distractions and take a few deep breaths before tackling the wave of information that comes your way. Then begin your workday triage. You will likely have a list from the day before of what didn't happen and what you need to make happen. Review the list and then add any additional items that need attention. Before you grab a pen and prioritize, think about the one item on your list that you have been avoiding. Do that first if you can, and get it out of the way. Try to schedule a half hour of white space in your calendar twice a week. You don't have to have an agenda, just getting quiet can allow innovation to emerge. Or the time might be needed for another project.

3. LUNCHTIME RELEASE & REFUEL : You might have limited time to take a break, so make use of it with a conscious approach. First, notice how you feel physically and emotionally. If you are sore from sitting all day long at a computer, move around a bit. Stretch, do some shoulder and neck rolls if you don't have any physical conditions that would impede that. Get away from your desk and get your blood flowing, it has a positive impact on the immune system. Do some sort of physical exercises, yoga or breath work (if you don't have a heavy meal). This will energize you. As you exercise, come up with a nice releasing mantra or affirmation. For example, "I am releasing what I don't need. I am cleansing my body and mind of what gets in the way of my progress." Be aware of what you are eating. A heavy lunch, processed foods or too much sugar can be an energy killer. But if you eat the right foods for your body, you'll feel refueled. Try to limit your e-mail and technology access at this time.

4. MID-DAY STRESS-BUSTER : The last third of the workday can drag on, and can thwart motivation. The end is in sight, but the tasks to be done seem too daunting. That creates stress and then has you either working like a hamster on a wheel, or just staring into your computer screen. If you're going to stare for a bit, make sure it's worth looking at. Take a music break or what I call a YouTube break. Just switching things up a bit and taking your mind off work can get your creative juices flowing. There are great meditation or screen savers that have a calming effect. A workplace toy or totem is a great daily distraction and can take you down a notch, giving your mind a quick breather from the daily workplace chaos. Stop for a moment and just take a few deep breaths. If you hit a brick wall on an idea or project, try mind-mapping, read an inspirational passage, grab an affirmation or mantra and repeat it a few times.

5. COMPLETION : Before you leave work, head back to that to-do list. Being responsible and in integrity is important. Most likely you did a good job hitting a few of the important items. Assess the situation but don't be so hard on yourself. There is always tomorrow and likely, no one is gonna die if you have to put something off for the next day. For the brave at heart and at work, try grabbing one last task that you really don't want to do. You don't have to do it, just look at it. Can you make it happen a little easier tomorrow? Finish your day in silence. It's hard to manage the work-life merge, but you have to take control of your own process. As for taking work home with you, that has to be your call. You can navigate that last minute call from work on your way home.