

# TIPS To Create A Stress-Free Work Environment

**ADD PERSONAL TOUCHES :** If your workspace stresses you out, it might help to add personal items to your desk, cubicle or office that have some special meaning to you, Burton Ways says. “These could be photographs, inspiring artwork, books, a special lamp or a decorative accessory in your favorite color.”

**KEEP YOUR WORKSPACE CLEAN AND ORGANIZED:** “A supervisor of mine from several years ago recently sent me a photo of me in my cubicle,” Foss says. “I was horrified by how messy and disorganized it looked. And I recall vividly how challenged I was by the mess. Mess equals stress.”

For many people, it’s difficult to focus when their desk is filled with papers, phone messages, business cards, magazines and newsletters, especially when the layers are inches high. Burton Ways suggests you get an organization system in place for your office. “A complete filing system and storage space can help you to organize your office in such a way where everything is in place and in reach for work.”

**LEARN TO HANDLE OR IGNORE INTERRUPTIONS:** Maybe you have a colleague who constantly stops by your desk to chat. Or you sit near the noisy elevator. Or your office has large windows. If you make an effort to learn how to properly handle these interruptions or ignore distractions in the workplace, you could significantly decrease your level of stress, Kousek says.

**ADAPT TO CHANGES:** Does change make you anxious? If your workplace sees a lot of turnover, physical changes (office layout), or new software or technology (printers, computers, etc.), you’ll have to learn to adapt quickly.

**ADD PLANTS TO YOUR DESK, OFFICE OR CUBICLE:** “Integrating plants in the work environment not only beautifies the environment but has been proven to reduce absenteeism, reduce stress, lower blood pressure, increase positive feelings, lower noise levels, decrease room temperature and lower humidity,” says Burton Ways.

**BE A GOOD COMMUNICATOR:** Poor communication often causes confusion (and therefore, stress) in the office. If those around you aren’t communicating well, ask questions, make suggestions and do whatever else you can to improve the situation. If you’re stressed out by a co-worker who talks on the phone too loudly or a boss who’s always looking over your shoulder, figure out a way to effectively communicate your frustration or concerns. If they know their actions are causing you stress, they might be willing to make changes.

**INCORPORATE RELAXATION EXERCISES INTO YOUR WORK DAY:** If you’re allowed and it doesn’t distract anyone around you, play soft music, stretch occasionally or go for a walk. You won’t be able to get rid of everything that contributes to your stress in the workplace—but you *can* implement relaxation exercises when you’re feeling tense.

**CHANGE THE LAYOUT OF YOUR OFFICE:** “Using the ancient Chinese art of placement, place your desk area in the command position so that you can see all who enter,” says Burton Ways. “If you cannot do that and you are in a cubicle position, place a small mirror where you can see the entrance to your space behind you. If you perform a number of tasks, an L-shaped desk or table works best, as well as swivel chair.”

**REDECORATE :** You might not realize that things like lighting, colors and décor are causing you stress—but it’s very possible. Try changing the wall color in your office, if possible. “Neutral tones tend to be calming,” says Burton Ways. “Yellows promote intellectual activity while blues and greens are more restful. Earth tone colors encourage warmth.” Kill the fluorescent lighting in favor of softer, more ambient lighting, Foss adds. A stressful work environment can mean a lot of different things, Foss concludes. And sometimes, a worker has little control over de-stressing the environment. “I am a proponent of implementing and championing improvements whenever you can, yet I also encourage people to know when to extract themselves from a toxic environment. If you aren’t realistically able to improve a continuously stressful environment, it’s probably time to explore new opportunities.”