

News Reduce Workplace Stress

By Susan Gayle (formerly Susan Neri-Friewald), CHT, Founder, New Behavior Institute

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has declared stress a hazard of the workplace. Managers must deal not only with their own particular stress, but those of the people under them as well. Stress reduction results in increased productivity, health and better collaboration.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, people who must take time off work because of stress, anxiety, or a related disorder will be off the job for about 20 days. Some other interesting statistics:

- * 43 percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress
- * 75-90 percent of all physician office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints
- * Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide.

(American Institute for Preventive Medicine: National Academy of Sciences)

Stress affects us both negatively and positively. On the positive side, stress motivates us to move forward and get more done – as in working toward a deadline. On the negative side, stress causes us to feel overwhelmed and procrastinate. Too much stress depresses our immune system and can cause us to get sick.

We are always moving toward our dominant thought. Being a happier, more relaxed person doesn't mean becoming a Pollyanna and it doesn't mean hiding your head in the sand. What it means is focusing on thoughts that make you feel good, or in bad times, thoughts that make you feel better. That's a trait happy people have: the ability to bounce back.

The ability to stay focused on things you can do something about is another important trait. Looking at solutions – focusing on what actions you can take to improve the situation – rather than focusing over and over on the problems is key, as well as developing a sense of calm and trust that things will work out.

How many times did you worry yourself sick over something, only to have it work out fine in the end? Focusing on the positive outcomes, and remembering how good they felt, during times of stress will help you physically remember to stay relaxed and to trust the outcome. The more you practice this, the easier and more automatic it becomes.

How else can you accomplish that? Refresh yourself. It helps to get a new perspective. Keep a sense of humor. Schedule time every day – 10 minutes is all that might be needed – to do something which relaxes and empowers you. Other tips:

- * Exercise – a wonderful releaser of stress and its chemical reactions
- * Eat well – plenty of vegetables and fruit, as well as protein and complex carbohydrates (whole grains)
- * Learn relaxation tools such as self-hypnosis, meditation, soothing music, 15-minute naps
- * Spend time with family and friends
- * Laugh

Releasing stress each day is a small change that will create big results. Try this self-hypnosis exercise.

Susan Gayle (formerly Susan Neri-Friedwald) is founder of the New Behavior Institute in New York City and an expert in stress management for individuals and corporations. She is also the author of numerous relaxation CDs designed to help people reduce stress and make positive changes. For more information visit www.NewBehaviorInstitute.net or email to SNF@NewBehaviorKey.com or call 888-82EMPOWER for more information. [PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION]

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