

Tips for Beating Workplace Stress

If you're like most American's these days, the economy and job fears create a tremendous amount of stress in your life. Many of us vow to find ways to reduce or eliminate stress, as we now know that stress causes many other chronic health conditions. If you haven't been able to beat stress on your own, the Employers Resource safety team offers the following tips to help you remain calm under stormy seas.

- 1. Telecommuting.** When work gets crazy, it often spills out into home life as well (and vice-versa). By allowing your employees to work from home occasionally, you offer them a sense of control that they will appreciate – and you will find that it actually results in increased productivity! Of course, it doesn't hurt that you are helping them save on gas, as well as reducing air pollution in your home town!
- 2. Take Time for Fun.** Lunch and other regularly scheduled breaks during the day can be fun times, and serve to reduce workplace stress and improve morale. If you have an on-site gym, use it! Otherwise, promote walking groups, yoga or book clubs.
- 3. Make Sure Employees know it's OK to Take Time Off.** Many workplace flexibility experts advise taking time off, such as a floating vacation day, to relieve stress. Highlight the importance of sleep, exercise, hobbies or other activities that help them get back on an even keel.
- 4. Stretch, Stretch, Stretch!** This is especially important for office workers, because the human body was simply not made to sit in front of a computer for 8-hours straight. There are a number of simple exercises that can be done to stretch sore necks, wrists and shoulders throughout the day, and they pay huge dividends in terms of stress reduction.
- 5. Try Flexible Scheduling.** Many workplaces allow employees to tailor their schedules in a way that meets their personal needs – *as long as a full workday is completed*. According to Patricia Kempthorne of the Twiga Foundation, companies invariably reduce workplace stress by allowing employees to take ownership of their own schedule. After all, if we, as employers, can do something this simple that results in happier and more effective employees, we're all better off in the long run.
- 6. Adopt Desktop Strategies.** According to Dr. Walter Smitson of the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, the demand placed on employees for "instant responses" by technology has created a whole new type of stress or employees. Smitson offers the following "desktop" strategies that companies can adopt which help employees cope:
 - ✚ *Music:* If the job allows, music is a great way to lift the spirits and slow the pulse rate.
 - ✚ *Pictures:* Allow employees to select a beautiful nature scene or family portrait as their computer backdrop. This allows them the opportunity to transport themselves to a serene place for a few seconds when the going gets rough.
 - ✚ *Breathing:* When we become stressed, we often forget to breathe. Smitson recommends inhaling to four counts, then exhaling to four counts as a way to calm a stressful situation.