Stress in the Workplace: How to spot hidden stress at work

Stress in the workplace can make you feel overloaded and under supported. However, sometimes you don't even know what is causing your workplace stress. Something's not right, but you can't quite pinpoint it. Stress in the workplace is usually caused by an inability to draw healthy boundaries. Take a moment to really think about this and then look at your work day and see if any of these situations feel familiar.

Constant Interruptions

Stress in the workplace can be caused by interruptions. Is someone always stopping by your desk with a question? No wonder you can't get your work done. You spend all day putting out other people's fires! You might assume that you have little or no control over your time when you're on the clock, but this just isn't true. You can stop an interruption before it completely derails your day, if you are proactive. You simply have to be the one to say, "I'm sorry but I can't help you right now. I really need to get this finished. Can you come back this afternoon?"

Taking On Too Much

Another self-induced cause of stress in the workplace comes from being a "yes-man" and jumping in too quickly to offer your services whenever anyone asks for help. There is nothing wrong with assisting a colleague, but you need to get your priorities straight. Your work comes first and when you don't even have time to stay on top of that, you don't have time to volunteer. It is entirely acceptable to tell a co-worker (and even a boss) "no" – just explain that you need to finish the project you're working on and that you would be more than happy to pitch in at that time. Again, you have to draw the line because no one else will draw it for you.

Staying Glued To Your Desk

Americans are notorious for thinking that more is better and this is certainly true in terms of work hours. Are you one of the many millions who work through lunch, stay late trying to catch up, and maybe even sacrifice weekends or vacation days for your job? As the old saying goes, you can't fill anyone's glass when your pitcher is empty. Pushing yourself harder and harder without a break isn't going to help you be more productive. In fact, it's a primary cause of stress in the workplace and will cause you to burn out. Managing stress in the workplace is about learning how to work with a sense of balance. You need to obtain an understanding that you need time away as much as you need to focus while at your desk. Get out of the office for lunch, get up to stretch a few times during the day, take a walk and most of all keep your evenings and weekends for yourself. I promise that in the long run, you'll not only reduce your stress in the workplace – but you'll also find that you're even more effective at your job.

Hidden Clutter

Of course, it goes without saying that a cluttered office is a common cause of stress in the workplace. Loose items left sitting out are a distraction, having to search for a lost document wastes valuable time, and missed deadlines due to disorganization can throw you into a panic. This may not seem like a boundary issue at first, but it is. Most people accumulate piles and stacks on their desk not because they don't know how to organize them but because they don't take the time to organize. Once you've got your fabulous filing system set up with color-coded folders and easy-to-read labels, allow yourself the time to maintain that system. Set aside 15 minutes at the end of each day to put everything back where it belongs. A clean desk is a good first step toward a peaceful tomorrow morning. And take time at least once or twice a year to purge your files and clean the junk out of your desk – your stress level (and your boss) will thank you.

As you can see, stress in the workplace is a manageable issue if you simply set some boundaries. Take a little bit of time right now to organize, de-clutter and determine your boundaries to make stress in the workplace a much smaller

issue for you to deal with.

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