

# Top Tips for Managing Work Stress

## Develop an Action Plan

If you're feeling overwhelmed by your workload make a list of the tasks you have to do and look at which tasks absolutely have to get done today, which can wait until later in the week, and which don't have to be done until next week or the week after. Once you've done this only focus on the tasks you have to do today – just make sure you classify things correctly and are strict about the difference between tasks that *have* to get done today and tasks you'd *like* to get done today.

## Change Your Approach

You might prefer to do everything yourself, but in service of reducing your work stress look at whether some of your tasks (or even just parts of tasks) can be delegated to others. In terms of the work you need to complete yourself, think about whether you can alter your approach to meet deadlines. Can you complete tasks to 80% of your usual standard to get jobs done and out of the way?

## Aim for Balance

Many of us put off leisure time to meet deadlines, but a busy work life with little downtime can increase your stress and anxiety and lead to burnout. Try to leave work at work and if your workload doesn't allow all of this consider what you need to put in place to make it possible. Do you need to speak to your boss about your workload? Can you delegate some of your responsibilities to others? Do you need to stop saying yes to helping others when you're already overwhelmed?

## Modify Your Thoughts

How you think affects how you feel. When we're stressed we tend to catastrophise about the future and think about worst case scenarios which only makes our stress worse. Try to look at your thoughts objectively. Ask yourself: Am I being realistic or am I focusing on the negatives? What's the worst thing that could happen and can I cope with this? Will this deadline matter to me next month? Can I physically do any more than what I'm already doing? Could anyone else in my situation do a better job or are the job expectations unrealistic?

## Take Care of Yourself

Taking care of yourself will build your resilience against stress. Make time for regular exercise, it's a great way to manage stress, improve your mood, and boost your immune system. Eat regularly and eat a balanced diet. Skipping meals causes low blood sugar, which can make you feel anxious and irritable. Not getting enough sleep also increases your vulnerability to stress and illness, so prioritise sleep. If you're having trouble sleeping, make sure you have time to wind down before bed and avoid caffeine after 2pm.

# think TOP TIPS

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## WORK STRESS

**Workplace stress is a huge problem in Australia. In the current economic climate businesses are under-resourced and under-staffed, and employees are working longer hours and taking on heavier workloads. The result? Increased rates of work stress and burnout.**

**It's normal to feel stressed at work every now and then, but when work stress is ongoing it can lead to other issues like anxiety and depression. Common signs and symptoms of problem work stress are:**

- Not being able to 'switch off'
- Poor work/life balance
- Feeling overwhelmed + unable to cope
- Taking sick days to manage stress
- Sleep problems
- Feeling tense and on edge
- Withdrawing from usual activities
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Feeling tired and lethargic
- Trouble concentrating
- Indecisiveness
- Increased alcohol consumption

**This tips sheet covers basic strategies for managing work stress. If your difficulties continue speak to your GP about a referral to a clinical psychologist.**