



City of Boston
Employee Assistance Program
FrontLine Employee
www.cityofboston.gov/EAP

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Your Resource for Solutions

Reducing Stress: Structure to the Rescue

Reduce stress and maximize productivity by structuring your day. Drifting mindlessly into work every day can create stress and increase risk of burnout. Start your day with a goal—personal or work-related. Inspire yourself to act on that goal by linking it to a larger overarching plan for your life. Select a couple of tasks matched to this daily goal. You'll notice a small stir of excitement. That's the feeling of being back in the driver's seat of your life! If you fall back into "the routine" days later (a natural occurrence), recall this strategy and begin again. Feel the mental boost again. This approach elevates your life to improve your attitude at work, reduce stress, and build a positive feedback loop as you accomplish things for yourself that link to your happiness.

Become a More Diligent Worker

Being a diligent worker is a fast way to impress management and leadership. Diligence means being careful and persistent in your work. Most employees want to be viewed as diligent. If you're one of them and believe in the long-term rewards of diligence, here's the secret: conscientiousness. Being conscientious is not a work style. It is an attitude that drives the diligent worker's behavior. Being conscientious means wanting to do what is right—well and thoroughly. Here's your motivation: Diligent workers are valued and easily stand out. If you exercise diligence, you can count on management talking behind your back—and it will be all good talk that builds your reputation.

Cure Kids' Summer Boredom Blues Cooperative Extension and 4-H

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (an agency within USDA) oversees a national program called "Cooperative Extension." The mission is huge, but for kids, it includes 4-H clubs and tons of opportunities for highly educational summer fun at more than 3,000 locations. Don't overlook this resource for keeping children occupied and enabling them to learn great stuff. The scope of programming is mind-boggling—from aeronautics to waterway sports, from ecology studies and leadership training to building birdhouses and even learning public speaking. Find out what's going on at a center near you. Learn more: 4-h.org ("Find Your Local 4-H")

Science of To-Do Lists

To-do lists improve productivity, but they can add stress if they multiply on Post-It notes, 3x5 cards, and paper scraps. Avoid flipping through this stuff. Instead, keep one master list. Update it, and transfer undone items to a clean sheet as needed. Supercharge a to-do list with five sections: job, family, friends, leisure, and personal/health. Fit everything into one of these categories. Prioritization will be easier, and you'll reduce time spent on trivial tasks. Anxiety will lessen as you get more done!

Making Better Use of Your Lunch Hour

Your lunch hour is “me” time, so enjoy it. But don’t fall for the notion that you can’t put it to good use “working” for yourself to reduce stress by taking care of small chores, errands, and to-dos that will free up time after work. If you tend to eat for 15 minutes and zone out for 15 to 45 more, see if any of these ideas whet your appetite for a different kind of lunch—a power lunch that buys free time so you have better days, more pleasant evenings, and fewer weekends bogged down with errands: 1) Plan a grocery list or evening meal. 2) Pay bills. 3) Plan your weekend. 4) Go for a walk. 5) Pick out birthday cards, do short errands, and grocery shop for all the non-refrigerated items to save time later. 6) Schedule personal/medical appointments. 7) Call family and friends to wish them a happy birthday. 8) Have lunch with a mentor. Before work begins or during a commute on public transportation, plan your to-dos for lunch breaks to supercharge your entire week. Save your list and be amazed at how much you accomplished.

Steps to Stop Being an Enabler

Most people understand “enabling” as a behavior that prevents another person (typically a loved one) from recognizing or experiencing the adverse consequences of a personal problem. This in turn contributes to the affected person’s lack of awareness of the need for treatment or refusal to accept such treatment, counseling, or care. It is not easy to stop being an enabler, but you can take certain steps toward that goal: 1) Recognize that you play an enabling role and that you struggle with stopping this behavior. 2) Motivate yourself to change by educating yourself about the loved one’s problem. This challenges false beliefs, dispels myths, and clears up misconceptions. A crisis typically produces great motivation to stop enabling, but waiting for such an event is ill-advised. 3) Clearing up all these misunderstandings begins to free you from the guilt and fear that keep you bound in the enabling role. 4) Empower and motivate yourself further with energy garnered from others by way of a support group that you either find or create. This helps prevent a return (relapse) to the enabling behaviors you swore you would give up.

Diversity: Welcoming Employees to Your Workplace

Welcoming new hires from other cultures or demographics different from your own is a vital step in making diversity a positive force and influence. All employees have a key role in this process. Speediness is important too, because first impressions are everything. Companies that don’t welcome and assimilate employees will suffer from lower productivity, morale issues, and higher turnover. They will also struggle to compete. So, adopt these two powerful ideas: 1) Not only see inclusiveness as the right thing to do, but also how being proactive helps guard your job protecting the company’s bottom line. 2) The most powerful way you can acknowledge and welcome any new employee is to ask with a smile, “So, how is it going in your first week?” and “Can I answer any questions or help you with anything?”

Remember Your Family Vacations!

Scrapbooking is a popular way to remember family vacations, but other fun strategies exist. Keep “retrievability” in mind with any system so you can revive memories often. Avoid storing photos only in places where years may pass without a look. Here are some ideas: 1) The Photo Book. This classic tool can be arranged with any online photo service or local photo shop. Collect photos and put them in a specially labeled album within easy reach. 2) The Memory Box Book: Place your best photos, CDs, and memory-jogging memorabilia in a large, book-shaped box. Decorate and label it (e.g., “Lake Sherando 2012”). Place the memory box on a shelf where it can easily be seen and reached. Collect these “vacation books” as the years pass, and you will keep your vacation memories fresh. Add the children’s written memories penned on the way home, and you’ll have a family treasure.