



Issue #10: Mental Wellness At Work



Even if you absolutely love what you do, at times the pace of work can become overwhelming and exhausting.

Many aspects of work can be stressful: co-worker issues, a demanding boss, an unhappy customer, a looming deadline, too much paperwork, and so on.

It is important to take time during our busy workdays to replenish and re-energize. Taking time to relax in the workplace is important, and it doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. Sometimes even a small investment of time for relaxation can have a big payoff. In fact, the following exercises can free up more time than they use because, when you refresh yourself, you are more productive and efficient.

You can use the following relaxation exercises at work to help you manage your stress, maximize your energy, and maintain a healthy and positive attitude at work. In just a few minutes you will feel more relaxed.

Exercise # 1 -Deep Breathing:

This Deep Breathing exercise is a simple but very effective method of relaxation. Here's how you do it:

1. Take a long, slow, deep breath. Inhale through your nose, allowing your diaphragm to fill with air and letting your chest expand.
2. Exhale through your mouth. As you exhale, dig deep and allow any stress, anxiety, or tension to be released along with that breath.
3. Try, as best you can, to empty your head of all thoughts, plans, and worries: right now all you need to do is relax. Allow yourself to exhale negative thoughts along with your breath.
4. Continue steps 1-3 for at least 10 seconds. When you feel more relaxed, allow your breath to return to normal.

This exercise can be done anywhere and takes only seconds out of your day.



So why does it help?

Studies show the area of the brain that signals the stress response also signals the relaxation response. By breathing deeply for at least 10 seconds you signal your brain to switch from stress mode to relaxation mode, giving your body and mind a break.

Do you ever run out of steam half way through the day?

This breathing exercise can help with the afternoon blues. Breathing deeply allows oxygen to reach your brain, which makes you more alert and re-energized. So instead of grabbing another cup of coffee, eating a chocolate bar, or taking an aspirin to fend off a headache, take a few seconds and **B-R-E-A-T-H-E**.

Exercise # 2: Meditation

This next exercise is simple but very effective. For some of us, meditation sounds intimidating because we equate it with sitting for long periods of time, disciplining the mind, or having some sort of religious or spiritual experience. While it can be all of the above, it can also be much more basic. Meditation is simply a way to quiet the mind and take a break from the millions of thoughts that pop in and out of your head every day. Here's how to do it:

1. Choose a quiet, comfortable place and close your eyes.
2. Think of a mantra - a positive, inspiring word or phrase. For example, "Life is Beautiful!"
3. Clear your mind and begin to breathe deeply. With each complete breath repeat your mantra, creating a rhythm or pattern.

4. Continue for at least three minutes. If you are distracted by a thought or physical sensation, simply return your attention to your mantra and your breath. You may have to do this many times. Don't worry – this is normal. Our mind can have a tendency to "chatter" and it takes practice for it to become quiet.

Research has scientifically proven that meditation is a safe and simple way to balance your physical, emotional, and mental state. Its countless values have been known and practiced for thousands of years in every country and culture.

We experience stress in different ways and are often unaware of how much stress we are holding onto. One of the most important benefits of the exercises above is that they release stress from our bodies. Practiced regularly, they will lead you to a deeper level of relaxation, they will enhance your energy, increase your ability to concentrate, and create an overall feeling of well-being.

Relaxation in the workplace is achievable. Keep in mind that taking some time out for yourself during your lunch or break does not have to be complicated or take away from productivity and accomplishment. In fact, the reverse is generally true. You'll find, when you get back to work, what seemed overwhelming or unmanageable suddenly seems possible to accomplish. What you may have thought of as an indulgent break may in fact be an excellent boost to your productivity, good for both you and your employer!

 Send us your questions, comments, and suggestions — lifelines@homewoodhealth.com

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