

Exercise Your Job Stress Away

Simon Cairns, General Manager of Law Stress is the “wear and tear” our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment. The physical and emotional effects that stress can have on us can be either positive or negative. As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to take actions that can result in a new awareness or an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, excessive stress can cause us to develop feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems.

One form of stress that many of us experience is job stress. Job stress comes in many different forms and affects your body in various ways. Minor sources of job stress may include equipment that won't work or phones that won't quit ringing. Major job stress comes from having too much work, not having enough work, doing work that is unfulfilling, or maybe even not getting along with your boss.

It is usually the major sources of job stress that lead to burnout, causing people to become unhappy and less productive in their work. This can affect your health and even your home life. Yet job stress does not have to be this destructive. You can reduce the effects of stress in your life and enhance your health at the same time by channeling stress into healthy activities.

In today's world we are often overwhelmed with obligations—planned or unanticipated—that lead to undesirable levels of stress. When this happens, the body will respond with a host of

physiological reactions that can damage it. These reactions are part of our human fight-or-flight instinct response. This flight-or-flight response is built into our DNA and is designed to physically protect us. For example, with every stressful situation, we evaluate it and make a decision to “fight” back against the situation or to flee it. Although stressful situations at work probably do not encompass a physical threat, our brains and bodies do not know the difference and the chemical response still occurs. When our brains perceive a stressful situation, our bodies release adrenaline to give us enough energy and strength to either win the fight or to run away and protect ourselves.

Although each of us reacts differently to various situations, it's safe to say that we will all experience stress at some point in our lives. As we encounter stressful situations, our bodies will over time begin to break down, which will eventually result in illness. Learning to neutralize these effects can greatly enhance our health. That's where exercise plays a huge role. While exercising, we simulate the fight-or-flight response to a certain degree, allowing our bodies to become stronger through conditioning.

Exercise has many great advantages. Even though exercising is probably the last thing on your mind, especially if you don't normally work out, there is no better time than now to begin to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. By exercising, you can change your day by changing your energy.

People who are more physically fit tend to have fewer stress-related health problems. When people exercise regularly, they are likely to have fewer symptoms of depression, such as trouble sleeping at night, sleeping too much during the day, overeating, or not eating enough. A combination of low fitness and high stress can leave your body vulnerable and increase its susceptibility to illness. Improved fitness and lower stress can help improve both physical and mental health. It is believed that fitness activities, especially aerobic-type exercises, are helpful in improving cardiopulmonary fitness and in reducing anxiety.

Exactly how exercise helps in relaxation and stress management is not clear. The benefits of exercise can come from many factors: the decision to take up exercise, the symbolic meaning of the activity, the distraction from worries, the acquisition of mastery over a sport, the effects on self-image, and the biochemical and physiological changes that accompany the activity.

There are a couple of popular activities that are great at relieving stress. For starters,

there are the mind and body exercises like yoga and karate, which focus on the balance between the mind and body. And if your mind and body are in sync and working together, well, it is pretty hard for stress to rear its ugly, unwelcome head. Other great activities are Tae Bo and kick boxing. Kickboxing especially can be great way to get out your job related frustration - you already know who you would picture as you practice your hook, jab, and cross!

No time for a class? Then try weight lifting or maybe even some form of cardio. Running on a treadmill or maybe even just taking a nice long walk can be great ways to clear your mind.

The main point is that you must enjoy what you pick or you will not feel motivated to do it. Exercise should not be a punishment; it should be a privilege. Exercise can be something special that you look forward to and do to nurture yourself. And, it can be a way to get the stress you experience at your job working for you rather than against you.