

Workplace Stress-Busters

By Kathleen Barton, MBA

Have you ever had one of those days? You're working against a deadline on an important project and the system crashes. An irate customer chews you out because he received the wrong order. You've planned an important meeting and the speaker doesn't show up. How do you react to such situations? Do you get stressed out and irritable? Do you snap at your assistant and then go home and kick the dog? Or... do you take a deep breath, center yourself, and look on the positive side? How can you get back on track and continue to be productive throughout the day? Here are a few stress-busters to help you have a good day!

- **Remain calm.** Don't over-react. Pause and assess the situation. Andrea Young of Innovative Events suggests that "what often looks like a fire is only a spark, and some of us tend to over-react before really looking at the problem and what the remedy may be".
- **Breathe deeply.** After an especially stressful situation, take a few minutes to breathe deeply. Inhale and count to five and then exhale slowly. As you exhale imagine all your tension leaving your body.
- **Tense and relax your muscles.** Most people carry their tension in their neck and shoulders. Tense up those muscles, and then relax them. Repeat this a few times.
- **Take a short walk.** Get outside to get some fresh air or just walk the halls to stretch your legs. The exercise, however short, will do you good.
- **Use positive self-talk.** Look at stress as a challenge rather than a problem. Use self-talk to help maintain a positive attitude toward stress. For example, tell yourself, "I know I can overcome this challenge." Focus on what you can learn from the experience rather than how difficult it is.
- **Keep things in perspective.** Although your current stressor can be frustrating, rather than focus on it, keep the big picture in mind. For example, if you turn in your project late, your boss won't like it, but you won't be fired. Ask yourself, "How important will this be ten years from now?" It will likely be inconsequential.
- **Talk to a colleague or friend.** It helps to have someone you can talk to; someone who will listen and acknowledge your frustration. Oftentimes by talking through an issue with a trusted colleague or friend, you can come up with creative solutions.
- **Visualize yourself in a peaceful, relaxing setting.** By using visualization you can take a little vacation in your mind for a few minutes. Imagine yourself on a warm, sandy beach soaking up the sun as you hear the waves crashing.

By using these stress-busters, you'll combat a stressful work situation. So the next time something goes awry, you'll be able to calm yourself and get focused again, so that you can be more productive and effective in the long run.

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