

Deadlines Are Fallin' On My Head: Easing the Stress of Daily Work and Life

The "faster, cheaper, do more with nothing" approach has created a workplace in which workers are always in high gear. Ironically, this work style usually increases stress while reducing productivity. If you find yourself whizzing along out of control without any idea of how you're going to make it through the day, use these tips to gently apply the brakes.

1. **Determine the sources of your stress.** Identify and work to eliminate things that trigger stress reactions and drain your energy. For example, limit your time commitments, stop worrying, and avoid stressful, demanding relationships.
2. **Take personal responsibility for your own stress level.** Stop believing you have no control over your stress. Ultimately, you're responsible for how your life turns out. Refocus your attention on positive, proactive experiences, and open your thoughts to opportunities instead of problems.
3. **Control your stress and emotions by monitoring your self-talk.** By understanding how emotions are created, you can change the stressful feelings you don't want, instead of just telling yourself, "This shouldn't bother me."
4. **Think positively and maintain a great attitude.** Identify your negative thought patterns and root them out. Work through every situation that triggers your stress, and you can eventually become a more positive thinker and keep yourself from stressing out.
5. **Manage your stress well, so it doesn't affect your productivity at work.** Some stress is desirable, even necessary -- but you have to strike a happy medium with a moderate level of stress in order to stay on an even keel.
6. **Feel calm, cool, and collected, rather than hurried, rushed, or tense.** There's not enough time in the universe to do everything you want or need to do. But don't let that fact prod you to rush around like a maniac. Do what you can, and avoid "time sickness."
7. **Maintain a good sense of humor and take things lightly.** Laughter's good medicine in the workplace. Among other things, humor results in increased productivity, better communication, increased morale, and stronger teams.
8. **Refuse to let stressful situations or people bother you.** Realize that some things exist with or without you and will continue to exist once you're gone, and stop taking them so personally. Some jobs are just inherently stressful.

9. **Control your temper at work and don't demonstrate anger.** Do your part in maintaining low stress levels in your work environment. Watch your anger and find appropriate ways to blow off steam.
10. **Flourish in the face of constant changes in your life.** Change is a constant in all aspects of life. Don't get anxious because change is occurring at work; find a way to be "change hardy," so it doesn't impact you so dramatically.

If you want to get more done in the same amount of time, you'll need to cut your stress level and steer yourself off the fast track. It's not easy, but the alternative is engine burnout -- with you as the engine -- or a flaming wreck somewhere down the road. Start slow, keep working at it, and it'll happen. As the saying goes, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

© 2009 Laura Stack. Laura Stack is a personal productivity expert, author, and professional speaker who helps busy workers Leave the Office Earlier® with Maximum Results in Minimum Time®. She is the president of The Productivity Pro®, Inc., a time management training firm specializing in productivity improvement in high-stress organizations. Since 1992, Laura has presented keynotes and seminars on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in today's workplaces. She is the bestselling author of three works published by Broadway Books: *The Exhaustion Cure* (2008), *Find More Time* (2006) and *Leave the Office Earlier* (2004). Laura is a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, and Day-Timers®, Inc and has been featured on the CBS Early Show, CNN, and the New York Times. Her clients include Cisco Systems, Sunoco, KPMG, Nationwide, and 3M. To have Laura speak at your next event, call 303-471-7401. Visit www.TheProductivityPro.com to sign up for her free monthly productivity newsletter.