

## Coping with Stress

Recognize warning signs of excessive stress at work.

- Regularly monitor any signs and symptoms of stress—cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, and physiologically.

Proactively lead a balanced lifestyle.

- Exercise regularly. Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week, and strength training at least once a week.
- Eat healthy food that provides energy. Low blood sugar can make you feel anxious and irritable, and eating too much may make you feel lethargic. Eat small but frequent meals to maintain even blood sugar levels.
- Drink alcohol in moderation, and avoid nicotine. Drinking alcohol as a coping mechanism may lead to alcohol abuse and dependency. Smoking leads to higher levels of anxiety.
- Studies also indicate that deep, regular breathing, not smoking, produces a calming effect. Get adequate sleep each night. A lack of sleep prevents maximum performance and leaves you vulnerable to additional stress. Aim to sleep 7–8 hours each night.

Prioritize and organize your responsibilities.

- Create a planned, balanced schedule. Prioritize your most pressing responsibilities for the following day while maintaining work-life balance.
- Simplify large projects into a series of smaller tasks. Focus on one manageable step at a time rather than being overwhelmed by taking on everything at once.
- Do not overcommit. Distinguish between “should” and “must,” while eliminating any unnecessary tasks. Be mindful that saying “yes” to something results in saying “no” to something else.
- Begin each day calmly. Beginning your day even 10–15 minutes earlier may reduce any frantic or overwhelming feelings.
- Plan regular breaks in your day. Identify breaks that bring you energy; focus on the quality of the break, not the quantity.

Break bad habits.

- Resist perfectionism. Identify responsibilities that do not require perfectionism, and realize that nothing is ever perfect. Determine what will suffice for your responsibilities, and then deploy.
- Resist negative thinking. Focusing on the downside of every situation drains energy and produces stress. Be mindful of the many things going right, and develop an outlook of gratitude.
- Do not try to control the uncontrollable. Find peace in knowing that you do not have control over every situation. Focus instead on what you can control, such as your response to challenges.

## Action Plan

**Identifying Stressors:** What stressors have you experienced? What can you do to minimize these stressors?

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**Coping with Stress:** To what coping mechanisms can you commit? When will these techniques be implemented? How will you know they have been successful? How will you be held accountable?

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