

# 10 Tips for Stress-Free Work

According to Michael Mercer, an industrial psychologist

**1 Get along with people.** “Low-stress employees invariably have smooth working relationships with practically everyone,” Mercer said. To achieve this, find things you have in common with others and act friendly with “absolutely everybody”—from the president down to those who clean the office.

**2 Always be diplomatic and tactful.** Avoid acting angrily or impatiently even when you’re frustrated. “Expressing anger in the workplace usually results in direct or indirect retaliation, which surely increases stress,” Mercer said.

**3 Learn what is expected of you.** Find out your boss’s expectations of you and the expectations of your boss’s boss. “These people will make or break your career and greatly affect your stress levels,” Mercer said. “By meeting their expectations you simultaneously can get ahead plus decrease a possible cause of stress.”

**4 Be a team player with your boss and co-workers.** “Team players are appreciative and receive much less grief than employees who act rebelliously or act like loners,” he said.

**5 Give three compliments a day at work.** “People love receiving compliments and will try to make your life easier since you made them feel good with a compliment,” Mercer said. “They’ll remember the compliment when you ask for a favor.”

**6 Set goals for yourself—personal and work-related.** High-stress people rarely do things to accomplish their goals. Low-stress people, on the other hand, spend more than half their time doing things that help them achieve

their short-term or long-term goals.

To determine how much time you devote to achieve goals, write down everything you did in the past seven days. On a separate paper, list three short-term goals (to achieve in the next three months) and three long-term goals (to achieve in three years). Then go back to your seven-day list and note anything that helped you accomplish short-term or long-term goals.

“Typically people spend less than five percent of their time doing activities that will achieve their goals,” Mercer said. “People feel more frustrated when they don’t accomplish their goals.”

**7 Prepare a daily “to-do” list.** “Every day before leaving work, write a list of what you need to do the next work day,” Mercer said. That little bit of organization can help prevent you from being overwhelmed by tasks that need to be done.

**8 Keep a neat desk or work space.** We’re not talking obsessive neatness here. Mercer said his desk is nine by four feet—all of which is covered with paper except for a 2-by-2-foot space in front of him. He reserves that space for things he is working on at that moment.

**9 Exercise at least a little every day.** Even a 10-minute walk will help. “People bottle up emotional tension or stress in their muscles,” Mercer said. By exercising a little, you can release emotional and physical stress—and be more clear-headed when deciding how to tackle a stressful situation.

**10 Consider changing jobs.** “If the above nine tips don’t help you, then it may be time to find a new job,” Mercer said. If all else fails, Mercer cites an often-used quote: “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

No matter how much pressure you feel at work, if you could find ways to relax for at least five minutes every hour, you’d be more productive. Most stress we bring on ourselves through bad habits and bad attitudes. Take a pencil and paper and write down everything in your day that produces stress, checking the aggravations that create the greatest stress. Analyze all the ways you might change these situations. If you talked with a co-worker, would it ease the stress? If you got up half an hour earlier, could you stop running and take time to walk, or even stroll? Do you exercise at least twenty minutes a day? If you don’t, you should, because it will relieve stress and allow you to work and sleep better.—*Dr. Joyce Brothers*

Physiologists have shown that one reason people are touchy, easily insulted or grieved, is that they go through life with jaws set, faces strained and muscles tense. This causes them to jump at the slightest noise, or the slightest insult to their egos. They say their nerves are on edge, but it is mainly their muscles, from eyelids to toes, that are jumping. When all your muscles are relaxed and at ease, your nerves and ego will also be at ease.—*Albert Edward Wiggam*

(UPI) Worker stress in the U.S. has tripled since 1995 and is a major factor in those workdays that are missed, we are told in CCH’s ninth annual “Unscheduled Absence Survey” published in September of 1999. Stress is responsible for nearly a fifth of all no-shows, the survey reports, up 316 percent from 1995. The survey, which queried 305 human resources executives across the U.S., estimates absenteeism costs employers an average \$603 per employee per year. For some large companies that can total as much as \$3.4 million annually.