

MINDFULNESS AT WORK

hints and suggestions for reducing work stress

Take a few minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate – sit or lie down and be with yourself. Look out of the window, listen to the sounds or nature or take a slow, quiet walk.

If you walk to the bus or train, be aware of your body walking, standing and waiting, riding and getting off. Walk into work mindfully. Breathe. Try smiling inwardly.

But if driving, take a moment or two to come to your breathing while the car is warming up. While driving, become aware of body tension, eg hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel, shoulders raised, stomach tight etc. Consciously work at releasing, dissolving that tension. Does being tense help you drive better? What does it feel like to relax and drive?

Some days at least try driving without the radio on. Just drive and be with yourself, moment by moment. After parking your car near to where you work, take a moment to orient yourself to your day at work.

While at work, whether standing or sitting at a desk, monitor bodily sensations and tension levels and consciously attempt to let go of excess tension.

Decide to “stop” for one to three minutes every hour during the working day. Become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations. Use it as a time to regroup and recoup.

Take breaks, and spend breaks and lunchtime with people you feel comfortable with. Otherwise, maybe it would be better for you to be alone. Changing your environment at lunch can be helpful. Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence, mindfully. Make sure you eat elsewhere from where you usually work.

Exercise every day if you can, or a few days a week, even if just a little. Exercise is a great way of reducing stress.

Use the everyday cues in your environment as reminders to centre yourself, eg the phone ringing, downtime at your computer, waiting for someone else to

finish something before you can start. Instead of relaxing by spacing out, relax by tuning in – let that phone ring longer!

At the end of the working day, retrace your activities of the day in your mind, acknowledging and congratulating yourself for work you have accomplished, make a list for the next day and leave it at work.

Leaving, bring your awareness to walking and breathing again. Be aware of the transition that is “leaving work”. Monitor your body. Are you tired? Exhausted? Are you standing erect or bent over? What is the expression on your face?

If you’ll be taking the bus or train, bring your attention to your walking, standing and sitting. Notice if you are rushing. Can you slow down a little and own those moment between work and home as much as any of the other moments of life?

If you’re driving, take a moment or two once again to sit in your car while it is warming up, and drive home mindfully.

Arriving home, before you walk in the door, realise that you are about to do so. Be aware of the transition we call “coming home”. Try to greet people mindfully and make eye contact rather than shouting to announce your arrival.

Get out of your work clothes and take off your shoes soon as you can. Changing into other clothes can complete the transition from work to home and allow you to integrate more quickly and consciously into your non-work roles.

If you can make the time, take five minutes or so to be quiet and still before you do anything else, even cooking or eating dinner.

Decide not to watch television for an evening. If you are someone who has to know what’s on the “news”, let it wait until the following morning, and then experience the difference of listening to the news on National Radio rather than watching it on television.



These are offered as hints and suggestions, not as a daily programme – ultimately, the challenge is yours to decide what might best help you to reduce your work stress. You might like to pin a copy of this on a noticeboard at work for others to read.