



Ring in the New Year with Less Stress!

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The New Year is a time that many individuals implement new goals for their lives.....better known as resolutions. The resolutions can be for many different aspects of their life, such as goals for weight loss, a job change, destinations for travel, various improvements in their health, and so on. One resolution that could assist in making the transition into a New Year and into these resolutions is ringing in the New Year with a goal of making your life less stressful.

For many, work is the main consumer of time in a day and even within a week. Forty-hour work weeks are pretty much standard for many individuals, and in many instances additional overtime is required in order to complete the workload. Even with the forty-hour timeframe, many individuals feel there are “never enough hours in a day to get the work done.”

When individuals put less focus on their well-being, many experience emotions and discontent resulting in high levels of stress. Stress is a large component of many other risk factors that attribute to poor health. Some examples of these are high blood pressure, back problems, and depression; and the more stressed you are, the more prevalent you are to experiencing these risk factors.

Signs of job related stress include headaches, trouble sleeping, problems concentrating, short temper, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction, and low morale. Workplace associated stress comes in different forms, but ultimately it affects your mind and body. Stress is normal and although many would like to rid it for good, it is ok to have some stress. Stress is a bodily mechanism that occurs when hormones are released that speeds up your heart; causing a more rapid pace of breathing, and giving a burst of energy. This can be useful when one needs to focus to complete an important task or project. As mentioned, it is ok to have a little stress in your life, however too much can be overpowering and can severely impact your health, as mentioned above. Resulting in frequent illnesses, job burnout, and a slowly trickle into your home life.

Amidst all the feelings that a stressed individual experience, sometimes it's hard to pinpoint why they are stressed or even what has caused this stress. Some common examples are lack of control over work duties, an increase in work responsibility, job satisfaction and performance, uncertainty of work roles, miscommunication with peers and superiors, lack of support from peers and co-workers, and a negative work environment. The most important step will be identifying the stressor in your life, in order to better gage the most appropriate stress relief factor

Now that you have been made aware of some of the factors that can cause work related stress, let's work towards how you can take control of the situation and work towards ringing in the New Year with less stress!

Ring in the New Year with Less Stress! (Cont)

At the job:

- **Meet with your manager:** Schedule one-on-one sessions with your manager to touch base. This will help with keeping the lines of communication open. Don't wait until the scheduled meeting to let your manager know if you are feeling stressed or need more direction, rather use these opportunities as scheduled times to reconnect and regroup on what is important to you and to your manager in your work setting. This also allows for you to see how your superior is doing. Often times the ones who manage are feeling the same stress, if not more. A happy supervisor makes a happy employee!
- **Organize your workspace:** Although it may be another task to add to the list, this will allow for easier access to files, documents, and dissolve clutter. You may realize you have less work to do when you eliminate and consolidate stacks of work and it may even help you breath easier.
- **Refine or polish your time management skills:** With a running list of "to do's" where everything seems to be a priority, time management is essential in order to stick to project deadlines. In correlation with organizing your workspace, organize your tasks with a schedule planner, list daily tasks and priorities, and forthcoming deadlines. This will give you the overall picture of what to focus on a daily basis and help with assessing the order work need to be done, and if items need to be delegated to team members or coworkers. Along with this comes the difficult task of not procrastinating. Give yourself timeframes and goals and do your best to stick to them.
- **Focus on the task at hand:** Come to work to work! When working on a project or specific task, don't allow time for distraction. Stay on task and focus on your goals. Save the interruptions for break time.

Taking control of you:

- **Utilize your Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** The EAP has trained professionals available to help with managing stress. You may contact them 24/7 at 800-222-0364, TTY 888-262-7848. In addition, you may obtain helpful information to help with stress at www.FOH4you.com.
- **Breathing and relaxation:** Practice breathing and relaxation techniques. Do these in a quiet place at work or at home. The way you breathe affects your body. These types of exercises relax the body and reduce tension. Imagine that you are elsewhere, a place of relaxation, and let your muscles rest.
- **Listen to music:** For relaxation purposes, listen to classical or instrumental music or natural sounds, such as the ocean, rain, forest birdsong, etc. This can be done at home or at work. For a more upbeat atmosphere, listen to your favorite tunes. Remember, you set the mood for your own attitude!

Taking control of you: (Cont)

- **Take designated breaks:** Take a 5 minute break and take it away from your desk!
- **Stay active:** Take a walk with a coworker and discuss anything but work, do some low-impact stretching or walk the stairs.
- **Leave it all at the door:** When you leave work for the day, leave any negativity you may still have, at work. Don't carry your anger or stress into other activities or into your home. This will just increase your stress levels and could potentially stress out others who you come in contact with.
- **Show your pearly whites:** Although you may not be in the mood to, inspire a smile from others by smiling at them. This sends a message to your brain and turns it into grinning mode. You will feel happier and more relaxed.

For your next New Year's resolution, try reducing your stress levels at work and within the home. Take control of you and everything else will fall into place!
