Dear Alice,

How can I reduce stress at work?

? Losing it

Answer

Dear Losing it,

Work, school, relationships, and daily hassles can often serve as sources of stress, known as stressors. Before you think about stress reduction, it may be most useful to start by identifying the particular stressors in your work. What, specifically, is it about your work situation that makes you feel anxious, angry, frustrated, burned out, depressed, moody, and so on? When you come up with your list of answers, you can think about how to address them one at a time. Managing stress is a slow and measured process, like eating a pie one slice at a time, rather than trying to shove it all in your mouth at once.

Stress commonly manifests itself as difficulty sleeping and concentrating, muscle tension, headaches, migraines, ulcers, sexual dysfunction, and irritability, among many others symptoms. Job-related stress often stems from deadline pressures and conflicts with colleagues. For these dilemmas, time management and effective communication skills might work to your advantage. However, no matter what the causes of your tension on and off the job may be, inoculating strategies like aerobic exercise, yoga, and meditation help protect against the ill-effects of stress. Social support from family, friends, and colleagues is another way to work out stress-induced emotions, instead of holding them inside where they put wear and tear on your organs and immune system.

Here are several tips for managing stress in your work environment:

- Try asking your Human Resources department at your workplace for stress coping resources.
- Reconsider the expectations that you and your supervisor have for yourself at work. Are they realistic?
- Discuss your concerns, workload, or expectations with your supervisor.
- Try involving a friend in your attempts to generate positive options for thinking and behaving differently in your work environment.
Foremost, it is almost always more beneficial (and stress reducing!) to change your own outlook and actions, rather than trying to change others who we may deem the causes of our stress. You might also want to check with your school or workplace to see what they offer for support. For further reading, try Coping with Everyday Problems [2] from Mental Health America [3].

For even more information on stress in general, check out the Go Ask Alice! Stress and Anxiety [4] category in the Emotional Health [5] archive. Although it may seem difficult to ask for help, stress is quite common and it is better to address workplace woes, and other sources of stress, sooner rather than later.

Best of luck,

Alice!

Category:
Emotional Health [6]
Stress & Anxiety [7]

Related questions
Stress, anxiety, and learning to cope [8]
Smoking for stress relief [9]
I want a better job! [10]
Stress balls [11]
Cart Pushing: How to prevent muscle aches [12]

Resources
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [13]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [14]
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