



Initiatives for Stress Management

Stress is a leading contributor to many health problems, and the workplace can often be a major source of stress. Lowering stress can lower the risk of medical conditions and can help employees feel better on a day-to-day basis. You can implement various activities to help reduce employee stress, which can improve health and morale—and productivity.

Managing Workplace Stress

As an employer, you can take several steps to ensure that the workplace is not contributing unduly to employees' stress levels.

- Make sure that workloads are appropriate.
- Have managers meet regularly with employees to facilitate communication.
- Address negative and illegal actions in the workplace immediately—do not tolerate bullying, discrimination or any other similar behaviors.
- Recognize and celebrate employees' successes. This contributes to morale and decreases stress levels.

Activities to Relieve Employee Stress

Aside from addressing job-related issues, you can implement a variety of activities and initiatives to help reduce stress. Some suggestions include the following:

- Corporate chair massages once per week, bi-weekly or monthly. It is quite common for massage therapists to travel to local businesses, offering 15-minute (or shorter) chair massages for a reduced rate to employees. Typically, the massage therapist sets up a chair in a quiet area and the employees pay for the massage out of their own pockets—usually costing around \$15. A short massage can equate to a whopping 85 percent reduction in stress, according to studies, and this is often at no cost to the employer.
- Provide a designated space where employees can sit quietly and use meditation or prayer to alleviate their stress.
- Offer exercise classes—exercise is a great way to relieve and even prevent stress. Offer a variety of class times (before and after work, during lunch, etc.), as well as various types of classes—such as yoga and kickboxing.
- Provide employees with the education and tools to manage time and tasks, to cope with daily stressors and to prevent stress from damaging their health. You can present a stress management class or provide educational materials.
- Host a comedy day—you cannot worry and laugh at the same time! Bring in a stand-up comedian, show old black-and-white comedies or hold a contest for the funniest home videos or jokes.
- Print your company logo or a funny joke on stress-relieving squeeze balls and give them to employees, or use them as inexpensive prizes for wellness contest winners and participants.
- Increase the number of paid vacation or personal days that you give to employees, and encourage employees to take the vacation days available to them each year.

Stress can originate at home or in the workplace. Avoid adding to employee stress with inefficient and frustrating policies or overwhelming workloads, and use the above suggestions to cultivate a positive and supportive workplace culture.

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