

10

SIMPLE WAYS to Manage Stress at Work

for Health Professionals

Breathe

Practice belly breathing. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Take even, deep breaths, making sure your belly moves out when you inhale and comes in when you exhale.

Do 4-7-8. Inhale to the count of four, hold your breath for the count of seven, and then exhale through your mouth slowly to the count of eight. Repeat three times.

Invoke the relaxation response. Taking deep breaths, repeat a soothing word in your mind (such as “one,” “peace,” or “calm”) with each slow exhale.

Talk to Someone

If you're feeling stressed, don't let your worries consume you—talk to a friend or trusted colleague. Simply describing your feelings can often lessen the burden they impose, and by sharing you're likely to learn that you're not alone.

Be Grateful

In the middle of a tough day, take a moment to focus your mind on something you feel grateful for, no matter how small. Go an extra step further and write down your blessings in a journal or an app on your phone, or share them aloud with a colleague.

Take 5 for Self-Compassion

Speak to yourself like you would speak to a friend. Psychologist Kristin Neff says, “Practicing self-compassion is honoring and accepting your humanness. Things won't always go the way you want them to. There will be losses and frustrations. You will bump up against your limitations, fall short of your ideals. This is the human condition, a reality shared by all of us. Acknowledge your own difficulties and stressful situations as you would for a friend, with kindness and compassion.”

Walk Mindfully

Anytime you're walking down the hall, you can take a break. Rather than thinking about the place you're heading to, let your attention focus on the journey there—the sensations and sounds of your shoes on the floor, the firmness of the floor beneath you, the air on your arms or face.

Live Your Values

Chances are that if you work in healthcare, you value compassion, integrity, and wellbeing. Reconnecting to those values during the workday can help mitigate the stress of working in a demanding field. Take a few moments to recall your core values and actively integrate them into your work—one easy suggestion is to silently wish your patients well whenever you see their names.

Connect With Nature

If you can, take a walk outside for a few minutes in the fresh air. Can't get outside? No problem. You can take a nature break indoors by watering a workplace plant, gazing out a window or at nature photography, or watching a 2-minute Wellscapes nature video on your phone.

Inhale Calm

Tuck an essential oil inhaler in your pocket so you can breathe in a relaxing scent when you're feeling overwhelmed. Lavender, rosemary, and citrus are particularly healing during stressful times.

Stretch

Get your blood moving and endorphins pumping by bending over to touch your toes slowly, stretching your arms above your head, and rolling your ankles in small circles. Stretch out tense neck muscles by gently dropping your chin to your chest and rolling your head from side to side.

Laugh

A sense of humor can boost resilience and get you through the really tough days. When appropriate, find ways to laugh with a colleague, watch a funny video on your phone, or recall the last time you had a deep belly laugh.



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