

WORK tips

Ways to make your work-life just a bit easier

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Here's a quick tip for those of you who use email at work:
Avoid email for the first hour of your workday! That's right, don't even look at it until you've had a chance to plan for your day and spend some time strategizing about what's important and what you want to do to further your work goals.

This simple bit of advice will "transform your life" according to time management expert Julie Morgenstern. At her presentation, "Making Work, Work" at the SHRM Annual Conference in June, she added, "Email is really nothing more than a bunch of interruptions and other people's problems."



Although technology helps us be more efficient and email is great tool for getting things done, the trick is to not let it control us. Morgenstern breaks work into two categories: staccato and legato. Staccato is reactive and consists of calls, emails, approvals and crises. Legato is more strategic and innovative and involves writing, strategy, analysis and design. You don't want the Staccato type work to dominate your work-day. Create some time for the Legato.

Other "tips" she offered include:

1. Embrace your work/life balance.
2. Choose the most important tasks.
3. Create the time to get things done.
4. Control the time "nibblers" (perfectionism, procrastination, interruptions and meetings).
5. Organize at the speed of change.
6. Develop an entrepreneurial mind-set.
7. Master delegation.
8. Work well with others.
9. Leverage your value.

The Top Ten Causes of Burnout

According to one source, it was estimated that about 20% of US workers were in the advanced stages of burnout. With burnout being so common, what can you do to prevent it? Regardless of the type of career or work environment you are in, there are certain common underlying causes to watch for and avoid.



1. Losing sight of one's values/priorities.

When you are engaged in activities that aren't in the line with those you find fulfilling and meaningful, the work drains your energy rather than keeping you fueled with a full supply.

2. Allowing others' expectations to determine how you spend your time.

Review your daily schedule. For each task, ask yourself whose needs are being met. Be sure to make time each day for the top one or two things that are most important to you.

3. Allowing issues to become bigger than they really are.

When caught in the middle of a crisis, meeting a deadline, or correcting a mistake, it is easy to become exhausted and disillusioned. However, if you find yourself

feeling overwhelmed, ask yourself if the issue that is plaguing you is as catastrophic as it seems. Will anyone remember the issue a year from now?

4. Overlooking the importance of the 3 R's

Rest, relaxation and rejuvenation. Renewal, recreation and respite. Now matter what words you use, you need it on a regular basis.

5. Failing to care for yourself

What does the foundation of your life look like? What do you eat? How often? How much water do you drink on a daily basis? How often do you get 30 minutes of exercise? How often do you get up from your workplace to stretch? What is your environment like? Is it cluttered or soothing? Are your relationships supportive? How do you manage the stress in your life?

6. Adding to your 'to do' list without deleting.

Too many things weighing on one's mind can lead to burnout. You must be willing to give-up something from your to-do list if you want to add something. Or just focus on your "A" priority list and add items only when you delete one. Keep less important to-do's on your "B" list.

7. Forgetting to express gratitude.

It is a slippery slope toward burnout if you focus on how bad things are. Take a few minutes to look at the positive things in life. Focus on finding gratitude and appreciation instead of fault and blame.

8. Overlooking the importance of humor.

Surrounding yourself with positive people who can share the humor of various situations will give you a boost of energy. Laughing is an effective way to discharge stress.

9. Getting stuck in a rut.

Find a way to challenge yourself. Find ways to improve each step to enhance your overall performance. Look at your work from a different perspective: a new employee, an alien or a valued customer.

10. Forgetting to go back to the beginning.

Why did you choose your career? Can't remember? Spend a few minutes to get in touch with the passions that motivated you at one point. Maybe your passions have changed and your career or hobby is no longer fulfilling. Talk to someone who can support you in finding where your passions lie at present.

Source: Copyright 2000-2004 Coachville, LLC, modified from a piece submitted by Lori James, RN, MNA, Personal Success Coach



Tips to Relieve Burnout, Tension and Improve Your Worklife

1. **Stop** what you're doing when you realize you're feeling stressed. Pay attention to what's going on in your body. **Breathe deeply** into your belly for two minutes, or until you feel calmer and more centered. Then you'll be able to manage whatever needs your attention more effectively.

2. Ask yourself what you're **feeling**. Angry, sad, lonely, scared, disappointed, apprehensive? Find a safe person in whom you can confide your feelings.

3. Do something **physical** every day - walk, swim, stretch, yoga, work out, dance, play tennis or some other sport. Just get out of your head and into your body.

4. Plan each day to include at least **3 bright spots!** No exceptions - if the

day looks like a really demanding one, you'll need even more. Design your own, nobody else's will do. Don't leave this to chance - it has to be built in!

5. **Finish It** - Having unfinished business in your life could be causing you more stress than you realize.

Maybe you have a tendency to start projects and not finish them. Take the time to tie up those loose ends in your life. When you are working with a clean slate, you will feel more focused.

6. **Pardon Me** - Everyone does things they regret. You may have lashed out angrily at a co-worker or friend when they really did not deserve that reaction. Now every time you think about the confrontation, your stress level and feelings of guilt double. The best way to take care of this guilt is to face up to your error and apologize. You will immediately feel peace once you attempt to resolve the situation that has left you frustrated.

7. **Discuss Problems** - You may prefer to avoid conflicts. Yet sometimes openly discussing a situation is the best way to get rid of tension. It's better and easier to address little annoyances before they build up into big resentments.

8. **Work on Your People Skills** - We could all use some improvement in this area. Researchers found that people overwhelmingly prefer to work with likeable, less-skilled co-workers.

9. **Be a Team Player** - Show that you're a team player by making your team look good. Make decisions that demonstrate you have the best interests of your team and the organization in mind.
10. **Be Discreet** - Be careful what you say, where you say it and to whom. Don't tell off-color jokes, reveal company secrets, gossip about co-workers or espouse your views on race, religion or your boss' personality. Remember, anything that can be perceived as sexual or violent can get you in hot water in today's workplace.

Source: 1 through 4 are from a workshop given by Barbara Bailey Reinhold based on her book, *Toxic Work: How to Overcome Stress, Overload & Burnout and Revitalize Your Career*



Quick Relaxation Techniques on the Job

The Quieting Reflex

- *Breathe in deep (from the diaphragm)*
- *Say to self "Alert amused mind"*
- *Breathe out through the mouth*
- *Say to self "calm body"*
- *As you exhale, release the tension in your jaw*
- *Let your stress flow out your arms*
- *During the process, smile inwardly to yourself*

(Source: Q.R. The Quieting Reflex by Charles Stroebel, M.D., Berkley Books)

Two Minute Body Stress Scan

1. *Interrupt your thoughts and switch your focus to your breathing. Take 2 abdominal breaths, and exhale slowly.*
2. *Scan Yourself for tense or uncomfortable spots. Attempt to loosen these areas up. Allow your muscles to feel heavy and warm.*
3. *Attempt to warm your hands momentarily.*
4. *Slowly do the following exercises:*
 - ▶ *Head Rotation - rotate your head from side to side a few times*
 - ▶ *Shoulder Roll - Roll your shoulders forward and backward a few times*
5. *Recall a pleasant thought, image, memory or feeling. Hold it for a few seconds.*
6. *Take another deep breath and return to your activities.*

Quick Relaxation & Imaging

1. *Close your eyes and take three deep breathes and as you exhale, let go of surface body tension.*
2. *Relax your way down your body from your forehead, eyes, nose, chin, neck, shoulders and all the way down.*
3. *When you reach your toes, picture a very relaxing scene: the beach, a lawn on a warm spring day, or maybe a hot bath.*
4. *Visualize every detail: the blanket, the water, the sky, the heat of the sand, how warm you feel. Imagine this scene for several minutes.*

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