

Our surroundings directly affect our health and wellness: consider that the average American spends 40 or more hours on the job weekly. For those of us in the Non-Profit World the lines of work, mission and vision may become blurred and take over most of our lives and time as passion for our cause drives us to deliver what we set out to accomplish. Creating an inspiring environment for wellbeing in our working space is crucial to living a long and meaningful life.

The concept of an inspiring work space environment is important to help us remain emotionally and intellectually balanced but is not always an easy or deliverable task to accomplish. Regardless of the physical or aesthetic work place we find ourselves in, it is not possible to eliminate stress completely. Beautiful inspiring place or aesthetically challenged, here are some things we can do to reduce the impact of mission and work related stress it.

Here are effective ways to reduce stress in your day.

1. Slow down and be in the present. It is natural to believe that the harder you work, the more you will get done. However, though it may seem paradoxical, if you work at a slow and steady pace with full awareness, you will most likely turn out better work with fewer mistakes - and feel better while doing it!

2. Set boundaries. Are you the go-to person for every favor and question that is needed in your workplace or organization ? Learn to respectfully set your boundaries and say no. Also, take a look at your calendar and make sure you are not over-scheduling yourself after work hours. Write in one night a week for yourself, and treat yourself to a tai chi or meditation class, a bath, or just an evening curled up with a good book every now and then.

3. Remember to breathe deeply all day. Most people who are under a lot of stress or tension breathe shallowly, up in the throat area. When you breathe deeply into your lungs, you are naturally bringing in more oxygen and activating energy in your body. In fact consciously taking just a few long deep breaths several times a day will re-energize you just as much as an 8 oz cup of caffeine each time !

Try this to remember to breathe: set your intention to take 10 deep breaths once every hour. (If necessary, set a timer to help you remember.) It will only take a minute, but the rewards will be tenfold.

4. Bring nature inside. As much as possible, let natural light and fresh air permeate your workspace. Surround yourself with the inspiring colors of beautiful flowers, which have a powerful influence on a person's mind-set. A beautiful bouquet can lift a less-than-lovely mood and even eliminate stress. In fact, one study showed that people who sat next to an arrangement of colorful flowers were able to relax more during a five-minute typing assignment than those who sat near foliage-only plants.

5. Give yourself a time-out. Take the breaks that are given to you and if you are the "group leader" set the example. In this high-paced world, people often work through their breaks, claiming they have too much work to do - this will lead to serious repercussions in the future. Remember that you are a human, not a machine. Even a machine needs downtime for maintenance! Try taking a 15-minute powernap on your lunch break or mid afternoon. If you only have five minutes to spare, just close your eyes. Even this brief rest can reduce stress and help you relax.

6. Meditation brings relaxation. Meditation gives your body a rest and produces slower brain waves that are similar to sleep, effectively combating tension. Regular practice of meditation, tai chi, or yoga can help you slow down and bring peace, not only in your job, but also in your life. To learn more about how to use meditation to decrease stress attend any of the free workshops or seminars available in most communities from time to time. It will transform your life !

7. Perk up naturally!

Skip the second latte or coffee, which stimulates your central nervous system, makes your mind race, and adds to your stress. Instead, try these simple and natural pick-me-ups:

- Take a tea break. Instead of coffee, go for teas that gently boost your energy, such as ginseng, eucalyptus, or ginger. My favorite is an orange ginger blend my father loved.
- Find ways to keep moving all day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Drink a glass of water from the water cooler every hour. Park your car a few blocks away from where you're going. Get up have a real stretch, extend your arms over your head and reach to the ceiling, turn side to side, reach down to your feet as far as you can without hurting yourself. Not only will this perk up your energy, it will also improve your mood.

