



Workplace Stress: Quick Tips for Relaxing During the Workday

by award-winning author and stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

For many, juggling responsibilities at home and work in an ever-accelerating world, challenges the well-being of even the most self-aware among us. Excessive demands and economic pressures, a hectic pace, yet sedentary lifestyle, poor nutrition and long hours compromise the overall well-being of individuals and their organizations. Interestingly, busy people who schedule time to relax tend to experience enhanced clarity, memory and inner calm, and express greater pleasure in their jobs. For some, one half-hour of relaxation can actually provide 2-3 more productive, focused hours to achieve their goals and objectives. But how to do that when you are already on "overload"?

Susie Mantell's Desk-Side Brain-Vacation: Round-Trip In 5-Minutes Flat!

First, turn off the phone and hang "Do Not Disturb" on your door (Mean it!). Closing your eyes, allow them to settle on a far-off horizon as you notice muscles around your eyes already beginning to let go. Inhaling deep into the belly, exhale through the shoulders...noticing that as you do, they drop a little, as your neck and jaw, cheeks, scalp all begin to soften. See yourself exactly where you would like to be today. Bermuda? A mountain cabin? Your grandmother's kitchen? Imagine it in great detail, complete with body sensations, the sounds you would hear...the smells...textures. Luxuriate in a dream vacation. When the timer rings, travel back slowly, to gently resume your day.

Take 2-3 Minute Breaks: Do this once per hour throughout your workday, and commit yourself to doing a minimum of one fun thing every single day, without exception.

"Belly Breathing" and Mini-Meditations: Practice slow, mindful breathing, and create soothing mental imagery while downloading files, waiting at a red light, on line at the bank, etc. Rediscover simple pleasures amid those demanding days.

Do Something Nice for Someone Else, just 'because'. It just may release some endorphins, yours *and* theirs!

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Try a "1-Minute-Speed-Whine" (No, really. *Try* it.) Here's a great stress-buster when you just don't have time for anything more complicated: (Especially effective on those evenings when you walk into the house longing to talk about your miserable day, only to find that someone *else* has been waiting all day to do the same! (Also fun with a buddy at work, to break up a crazy-busy day.)

- Decide who goes first.
- Set a timer for one minute.
- Person #1 now gets to *whine*--- about as many issues as you can fit in a minute!
- Whine fast! Use your hands, shoulders, exaggerated facial expressions. Complain...nag...moan.
- Okay, now whine a little louder...faster... Really get into it!
- Ding! When the timer rings, switch places and let the other person do the same.
- Chances are, if you whine fast enough.... you'll probably both end up laughing----the best stress-buster of all!
- This exercise has multiple benefits:
 - Each of you gets to blow off a little pent-up steam until you can sit and really talk.
 - You also each get a glimmer of insight into what the other is dealing with.
 - On days like this, breaking the tension with a laugh never hurts.
 - The exercise buys you both some time until you can calmly sit down and talk over what you need to, so each can give and receive the support needed.

Go Outdoors and Play! No days off on the horizon? Remember when your mom told you to go play outdoors? Mother was right. Leave the buzz and bustle, sounds and smells of the workplace and get outdoors to clear your head. Take a walk to lunch. Feed the ducks. (Ducks need lunch too!) No kidding--Sometimes it's that simple.

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