

Stress Management in the Workplace

WASBO Master Facilities Conference
Fall 2023



Objectives

- Participants will have the opportunity to consider common barriers to self-care and stress management in the field of facilities management
- Participants will additionally have the opportunity to collaborate with counterparts on tools for stress management
- Participants will have the opportunity to learn additional strategies for implementation during the workday

It's 7:00 AM and you receive a call about an HVAC system that isn't working in one of the buildings in your district. It is winter time, and students are about to arrive shortly. At a second building, there is a salting issue that needs to be managed so that drop-off can operate safely, and two of your team members are out sick today.

What do you do?

Effects of Prolonged Stress

- Increased muscle tension (and tension headaches)
- Lower-back/upper extremity muscle pain
- Shortness of breath or rapid breathing (which can negatively impact persons with other respiratory conditions)
- Ongoing strain on the heart/blood vessels with increased heart rate
- Increased risk for hypertension, heart attack, or stroke
- Increased cortisol exposure
- Gastrointestinal symptoms



Key Points

- We experience short-term (or acute) stress regularly; our bodies are equipped to manage short bursts of stress
- When we are exposed to prolonged (or chronic) stress, our bodies are not as equipped to manage - and there is the potential for negative health outcomes
- Having a stress management plan is critical to self care

On your own...

Think about the following questions; you will not be asked to share out unless you are comfortable doing so!

- What are some current elements of your role that bring about stress?
- What does your current stress management plan look like? Do you have one?
- What are some barriers you foresee to implementing a stress management plan during the workday?

A Model for Stress Management

1. Identify common stressors in your workday
2. Develop a plan to support stress management during the workday
3. Develop a plan to support stress management outside of the workday
4. Implement your plan and reflect - is it working?
5. Adjust as needed, repeat!

Step 1

Identifying challenges/getting ready for the day...

At your space, either electronically or using a paper/pencil copy, complete Section 1 of the **Stress Management Plan**.



Strategy Options

Strategies that can be implemented at work look different than those that can be implemented at home/in your personal space.

However, there are a few that are quick and easy to implement anywhere; the strategies at right have been shown to reduce stress and (for some) to have positive health benefits.

- **Breathing Exercises** (helps regulate breathing/heart rate)
 - [Lazy 8 Breathing](#)
 - [Box Breathing](#)
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation** (reduces muscle tension)
 - [Example Script](#)
- **Visualization** (helps regulate breathing/heart rate)
- **Sensation Options** (generally bring stress levels down overall)
 - Using a preferred “fidget”
 - Listening to a song for a few minutes
 - Having a bite of favorite food
 - Smelling a preferred scent
 - Taking a 5 minute movement break (i.e., walking, taking a flight of stairs)
- **1-Minute Exercises** (generally bring stress levels down overall)
 - [Example 1-Minute Exercise](#)

Step 2

Establishing your plan...

At your space, either electronically or using a paper/pencil copy, complete Sections 2 & 3 of the **Stress Management Plan**.



Next Steps

- Let your person know they are your person
- Keep this plan somewhere handy/easily accessible
- Try to commit to one strategy per day (set an alarm on your phone to help!)
- Fill in the “at home” portion of the plan

References

American Psychological Association (2023). *Stress effects on the body.*

<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/body#:~:text=This%20long%2Dterm%20ongoing%20stress,tie%20stress%20to%20heart%20attack.>