

# OnTrack to Wellness

Brought to You by the NYC Transit HR Benefits Wellness Team

February 2019

Helping You Be Your Best.

02.2019

## Manage Job Stress for a **Healthy Heart**

**Job stress can negatively affect your heart health**, particularly if you try to cope with it by indulging in bad habits. A study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* showed that people who had high-stress jobs who also smoked, drank alcohol, were inactive and were obese developed heart disease at twice the rate as those who faced job stress, but who led a healthy lifestyle.

Relying on negative habits won't generally relieve the stress; they often aggravate stress. Plus, habits such as smoking, overeating and alcohol abuse can raise your risk of elevated cholesterol levels, high blood pressure and heart disease.

**Instead, manage stress in healthy ways:** Get regular aerobic exercise, and eat well. Years of research have shown that this approach improves your lifestyle by helping you feel better mentally and physically. Exercise for at least 150 minutes a week — a brisk walk will do the trick. If you want to improve your eating habits, visit [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) to get individualized guidance you can use for lifelong change.

### **Need more tips? Try these:**

- ❖ Take a short walk during your breaks at work.
- ❖ Walk away from stressful situations instead of getting angry. Count to 10, take some deep breaths and find healthy ways to blow off steam.
- ❖ Indulge in healthy comforts, such as laughing with friends, engaging in a hobby, joining a club or spending time with friends.



**During American Heart Month, let go of pressure and high expectations. Your heart will love you for it.**

## **TIPS** for Effective Meetings



**Meetings claim an enormous amount of time at many workplaces.** They require plenty of energy and behind-the-scenes preparation. With that much investment it makes sense to make the most of your meetings. Here's how to keep them on track and productive:

- ✓ **Identify and verify** the specific purpose of each meeting.
- ✓ **Set an agenda, and stick to it.** Meetings that veer off course waste time.
- ✓ **Set a time limit.** Block out a short time slot, and start and end the meeting as planned.
- ✓ **Minimize distractions.** Save mobile devices, laptops, non-meeting paperwork and other distractions for outside the meeting.
- ✓ **Mix it up.** Varying the meeting format can make them more productive. Consider standing up or walking as you meet (as long as your employer is OK with it and it's practical to do so).
- ✓ **Be thorough.** Leave the meeting with documented deadlines and assigned responsibilities.
- ✓ **Follow up.** Write and distribute meeting minutes as soon as possible and note action steps with deadlines.

## Why Do You Procrastinate?

**Imagine you are walking or jogging along a smooth path,** but you keep throwing rocks and other obstacles ahead of you to make the way more difficult. It sounds silly, but that's what happens when you procrastinate. Discover the reasons behind your procrastination, and take the first step toward clearing your path.

- 1 You don't estimate time well.** You tend to cram too many tasks into a day. Then, you either can't get started because your to-do list is too daunting, or you spend too much time on 1 task and never get to the rest.
- 2 You don't like what you are doing.** It's tempting to put off activities you don't enjoy.
- 3 You tell yourself you work best under pressure.** You might get a thrill out of waiting until the last minute and then pulling off the job in record time.
- 4 You're afraid you'll fail.** You put off starting a task because you fear you won't be able to do it successfully.

Procrastination can lead to chronic stress, substandard work and lack of confidence. Create a distraction-free workspace, set realistic goals and visualize yourself successfully completing tasks to get back on track.



## Healthy Trade-offs

**Thinking about giving up bad habits** or making healthy lifestyle changes can be intimidating. Take it 1 step at a time and try small, healthy trade-offs — swapping one unhealthy habit or behavior for a better one — to become healthier 1 step at a time. Try these ideas:

**Replace the habit with something you enjoy.** For example, if you're trying to quit smoking, chew sugarless gum or eat a carrot stick every time you feel the urge. If you're trying to give up soft drinks, replace them with water or herbal tea.

**Focus on what you *can* have, instead of what you can't.** For example, if you're trying to change your diet, the American Heart Association suggests listing the high-fat or high-sugar foods you don't want to give up. Then, decide on what you must do to still enjoy those foods while improving your eating habits. For example, if you choose ice cream, you might decide to eat a smaller portion less often or cut back on calories at another meal to allow for it.

**Create a ritual.** An engrossing activity you do every day can rechannel your energy and thoughts. For example, take up running, walking or gardening — anything that takes your mind off your old, unhealthy activity is worth the effort.

## What comes between you and your productivity at work?

According to a Harris Interactive poll, office workers cited these common detractors:

- ✓ Wasteful meetings.
- ✓ Excessive email.
- ✓ Unclear priorities.
- ✓ Unexpected phone calls.
- ✓ Lack of teamwork.



**Despite these issues,** 70% of workers polled said they felt empowered at work. Today's busy workplace has people juggling varied tasks, priorities and interruptions, but a well-organized, engaged employee can take them in stride.



**Home life affects mental health at work** as much as workplace conditions do, according to a study published in the journal *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*. Researchers found that people who lived with a partner, had young children and who had a strong social network experienced fewer mental health problems than those who lacked support outside the workplace. Seeking support and building a fulfilling personal life may help offset job stress.

## Ways to Feel More Accomplished

**True accomplishment is more than the number of items crossed off on your to-do list.** It's a feeling of competency that comes from the knowledge that you've truly achieved something today.

**That feeling can be elusive, especially if your motivation flags.** Too often we end our days with more things left undone than finished, and that can leave you feeling like you have accomplished nothing.

**Turn your attitude around,** and cultivate feelings of accomplishment not dependent on checkmarks on a list. A few tips:

**Choose a task you can finish in 10 minutes or less, and do it.** Clean off your desk or clean out your email inbox. Return a phone call or reply to an email that's been waiting. Pay a bill, or file those reports from last week.

**List everything you completed today,** instead of what you have left to do. When you focus on what you have done, even if it was just a small part of a larger project, you may feel more productive in the long run.

**Set a goal.** Choose 1 realistic objective to attain today. By not trying to complete many tasks at once, you can lessen your frustration and have an achievement to celebrate.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7, is at [personalbest.com/extras/19V2tools](http://personalbest.com/extras/19V2tools).

02.2019