

Reduce job stress by improving emotional intelligence.

Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways. When it comes to satisfaction and success at work, emotional intelligence matters just as much as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence is about communicating with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings, and defuse tension and stress.

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Emotional intelligence in the workplace has four major components:

- **Self-awareness** The ability to recognize your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.
- **Self-management** The ability to control your emotions and behavior and adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Social awareness** The ability to sense, understand, and react to others' emotions and feel comfortable socially.
- **Relationship management** The ability to inspire, influence, and connect to others and manage conflict.

The Five Key Skills of Emotional Intelligence

There are five key skills that you need to master in order to raise your emotional intelligence and manage stress at work.

- **Realize when you're stressed**, recognize your particular stress response, and become familiar with sensual cues that can rapidly calm and energize you. The best way to reduce stress quickly is through the senses—through sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—but each person responds differently to sensory input, so you need to find things that are soothing to you.
- **Stay connected to your internal emotional experience** so you can appropriately manage your own emotions. Your moment-to-moment emotions influence your thoughts and actions, so pay attention to your feelings and factor them into your decision-making at work. If you ignore your emotions, you won't be able to fully understand your own motivations and needs, or to communicate effectively with others.
- **Recognize and effectively use nonverbal cues and body language.** In many cases, what you say is less important than how you say it or the other nonverbal signals you send out, such as eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gesture, and touch. Your nonverbal messages can produce a sense of interest, trust, and desire for connection, or they can generate confusion, distrust, and stress. You also need to be able to accurately read and respond to the nonverbal cues that other people send you at work.
- **Develop the capacity to meet challenges with humor.** There is no better stress buster than a hearty laugh, and nothing reduces stress quicker in the workplace than mutually shared humor. But if the laugh is at someone else's expense, you may end up with more, rather than less stress.
- **Resolve conflict positively.** Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways can strengthen trust between people and relieve workplace stress and tension. When handling emotionally charged situations, stay focused in the present by disregarding old hurts and resentments, connect with your emotions, and hear both the words and the nonverbal cues being used. If a conflict can't be resolved, choose to end the argument, even if you still disagree.

Your Employee Assistance Program

800.413.8008 #2 or 314.729.4600 #2

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Resources: Segal, J., Smith, M., Robinson, L., & Segal, R. (Updated 2013, August). Stress at work: Tips to reduce and manage job and workplace stress. Retrieved August 17, 2016, from <http://www.helpguide.org/>