

Counseling and Wellness Center

MARCH 2024

Spring is in the air



Spring is time to bloom! Or does it bring more stress in your job?

Everyone who has ever held a job has, at some point, felt the pressure of work-related stress. Any job can have stressful elements, even if you love what you do. When work stress becomes chronic, it can be overwhelming—and harmful to both physical and emotional health.



Unfortunately, [APA's annual Stress in America survey](#) has consistently found that work is cited as a significant source of stress. You can't always avoid the tensions that occur on the job, but you can take steps to manage work-related stress.

A stressful work environment can contribute to problems such as headache, stomachache, sleep disturbances, short temper, and difficulty concentrating. Chronic stress can result in anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system. It can also contribute to health conditions such as depression, obesity, and heart disease. Compounding the problem, people who experience excessive stress often deal with it in unhealthy ways, such as overeating, eating unhealthy foods, smoking cigarettes, or abusing drugs and alcohol.

Taking steps to manage stress

- **Track your stressors.** Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings, and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved, the physical setting, and how you reacted. Did you raise your voice? Get a snack from the vending machine? Go for a walk? Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them.
- **Develop healthy responses.** Instead of attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do your best to make healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Yoga can be an excellent choice, but any form of physical activity is beneficial. Also make time for hobbies and favorite activities. Whether it's reading a novel, going to concerts, or playing games with your family, make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure. Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night.
- **Establish boundaries.** In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.
- **Take time to recharge.** To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires "switching off" from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That's why it's critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don't let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best. When you're not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your smartphone and focusing your attention on nonwork activities for a while.
- **Learn how to relax.** Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness (a state in which you actively observe present experiences and thoughts without judging them) can help melt away stress. Start by taking a few minutes each day to focus on a simple activity like breathing, walking, or enjoying a meal. The skill of being able to focus purposefully on a single activity without distraction will get stronger with practice and you'll find that you can apply it to many different aspects of your life.
- **Talk to your supervisor.** Employee health has been linked to productivity at work, so your boss has an incentive to create a work environment that promotes employee well-being. Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor. The purpose of this isn't to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with an effective plan for managing the stressors you've identified, so you can perform at your best on the job. While some parts of the plan may be

designed to help you improve your skills in areas such as time management, other elements might include identifying employer-sponsored wellness resources you can tap into, clarifying what's expected of you, getting necessary resources or support from colleagues, enriching your job to include more challenging or meaningful tasks, or making changes to your physical workspace to make it more comfortable and reduce strain.

- ***A little work done ahead of time can often alleviate much of the in-the-moment stress that comes up during the work week.***
As you build these habits and practices you'll prepare yourself to manage stressful situations before they become unmanageable.

Need a new hobby? Check out this list!



A Master List Of 140 Hobbies So You'll Never Be Bored Again

Whether you start gardening, join a club, or dig out your old knitting needles, keep up with your hobbies-your body and mind will thank you.

mindbodygreen.com

7 Stress Management Techniques to Get You Back on Track | Lifhack

STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES



4 Ways to Calm Your Mind in Stressful Times

The stress response is supposed to be short-lived because it wears down your body, your health, and your energy. Stress makes us narrowly focused, preventing us from seeing the bigger picture. When we're calmer, our attention becomes broader.



The question becomes, then, how do you wind down? Research suggests several practices that not only feel good but also put us into a calmer, more relaxed state—a state from which we can cope better with whatever life throws at us.

1. Practice Breathing Exercises

Our breathing is a powerful way for us to regulate our emotions, and it is something we take for granted. Through your breath, you can activate your parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)—the calming response in your body.

One of the most calming breathing exercises you can do is to breathe in (e.g., to a count of four), hold, and then breathe out for up to twice as long (e.g., to a count of six or eight). You can gently constrict your throat, making a sound like the ocean, which is used in deep relaxation breathing. As you're doing this, especially thanks to those long exhales, you're activating the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing your heart rate and blood pressure.

2. Adopt an Attitude of Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is the ability to be mindful of your emotions—aware of the emotions that are going on inside whenever you fail at something. It doesn't mean you identify with them; you can just observe and notice them, without feeding the fire. Self-compassion also involves understanding that everyone makes mistakes and that it's part of being human. And it is the ability to speak to yourself the way you would speak to a friend who just failed, warmly and kindly.

3. Foster Genuine Connection

How often are we actually present for another person 100 percent? When was the last time somebody was 100 percent present with you?

Our greatest human need, after food and shelter, is to connect with other people in a positive way. The good news is that by [taking care of yourself](#) and your own well-being with practices like breathing and self-compassion, you are able to turn more attention outward to feel more connected, as well.

4. Practice Having Compassion for Others

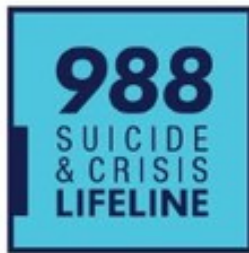
Imagine a day when things aren't going well for you—you spilled your coffee on yourself, and it's raining. And then a friend calls who's having a true emergency in their life, and you jump up and go help them immediately. What happens to your state of mind in that moment?

All of a sudden you have high energy; you're completely at their service. That is what practicing altruism, service, and compassion does to your life. It increases your well-being tremendously, as many of us have experienced when we perform little acts of kindness.

<https://www.mindful.org/how-to-manage-stress-with-mindfulness-and-meditation/>



Crisis Support Lines



COUNSELING AND WELLNESS CENTER IS OPEN!

Here is the link to our [Counseling and Wellness Center](#)... find resources, crisis links and numbers, and the button where students can schedule an appointment online for in-office and teletherapy session.

www.ntcc/mhcounseling

Here's how you can refer a student for counseling support...

Please keep in mind mental health counseling falls under **HIPPA** rights. Counseling sessions and all information concerning the student must remain confidential and be protected when making student referrals too!

If you have a student you want to refer to me, here is what you will do:

1. If you have no concerns that the student is in immediate danger, send me an email (or a text with your email) and I will email you a link to complete and submit to me online.
2. If you have no concerns the student is in immediate danger, you may come to the Counseling and Wellness Center and make the referral in person, or call me.
3. If you **DO** have concerns of their immediate safety and are able to walk them to my office, please do so and send me a text that you are coming over with a student.

OR....

Call me (903-434-8304) or (cell 903-285-0402) and I will come to your location.

Cindy Stansell, M.Ed., LPC-S



Email: cstansell@ntcc.edu

Website: <https://www.ntcc.edu/mhcounseling>

Location: [Northeast Texas Community College, Farm to Market Road 1735, Mount Pleasant, TX, USA](#)

Phone: [903-434-8304](tel:903-434-8304)

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