



# *Work Smart Live Smart*

## **Increase Productivity And Reduce Stress**

By  
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**Question: My employees and I have so much to do in a day and sometimes we don't get it all done. How can we improve our productivity and reduce our stress?**

The key to optimal health and success in a fast-paced workplace is to know what your values are, to work towards realistic goals and to find ways to maintain a healthy rhythm. Unfortunately, many leaders and teams do not work consistently with their values and specific goals in mind and they often neglect their personal needs. This leads to increased symptoms of stress and decreased productivity and satisfaction.

Optimal health should bring a sense of strength and joy, even amidst the day-to-day stresses of life. This sounds simple enough, but when we look at the 'sadistics' around stress, we see that 1/3 of working Canadians feel that they are constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than they can handle, that 50% of Canadian workers ages 25-44 worry that they do not spend enough time with friends and family and are lacking balance, and that 2% of Canadian workers reported that they were on the verge of a breakdown.

### **First – Understand What We Mean When We Talk About “Stress”**

Stress is your response to the world around you - like a situation, an event or the environment. While stress can be related to good or bad events - such as the stress of a promotion or the stress of bankruptcy - our body's response can be the same.

Like a race car at a starting line, the body gears-up to meet the challenge of the stressful situation. In the first stage of your stress response, your body begins to mobilize energy. If you remove the stress-inducing event or situation, your body will return to a normal or relaxed state of functioning. This ancient response was especially helpful to our ancestors who may have had to fight with or for their supper.

In the second stage, your body consumes more energy. You may feel pressured and tired, but also driven. You may start to rely on substance to get you through the day; you may smoke more, turn to alcohol or drink more coffee. Your body starts to weaken; you may catch more

colds or the flu and you may also begin to experience anxiety, confusion and lack of patience all leading to decreased productivity and satisfaction.

In the third stage, the body drains its energy stores. If you cannot remedy your stress problems, the body's need for energy will outstrip its ability to produce it, putting your body into a deficit situation. More severe physical illness can occur such as ulcers and heart disease. You may experience chronic insomnia, personality changes and even Depression.

## **Next – Find Effective Strategies To Cope with Stress To Maintain Productivity and Satisfaction**

Maintaining your optimal health and productivity can be as simple as S-O-S. *Situation – Our Self – Support* in order to “Save Our Self”.

1. **Situation** - identify and solve problems. What about this “busyness” that is causing you stress? Are insignificant problems masking more significant ones? Are you working with or against your personal values? Have you set realistic or unrealistic goals for yourself and others? Once you have identified the problem you can start to think about solutions. Do you need more staff? Do you need to learn how to communicate your needs and goals more clearly? Do you need to get more organized? These approaches can help impact your stress by dealing directly with the stressors.
2. **Ourself** - Our bodies. How do you relax it, exercise it, feed it, rest it, stimulate it and/or abuse it? Maintain a healthy rhythm. Physical activity can be a very effective stress reducer as it teaches the body to use energy efficiently and can rid the body of pent-up energy. Stretching helps to release the pressure in our muscles that builds up from prolonged sitting or standing and increases mobility in the joints. Tense muscles cause blood to be squeezed out of the tissue, resulting in oxygen and nutrient depletion. Stretching loosens and relaxes the body, which has a calming and relaxing effect on the mind. Learn some other relaxation techniques – deep breathing, napping, visualization, or going for a walk are useful ways to give the mind and body a break from the stressful situations and effects of stress. Ensure that you have a satisfying life outside of your workplace. This can help to bolster you in stressful times while at work.
3. **Support** – Whom do you talk to, rely on, vent to, ask for help from, socialize with, get information from, and believe in? Building up our supports goes a long way to buffer you against the effects of stress. Try talking with your team and learn to rely on them Share your concerns with friends or family. They can help you put your stress in perspective and offer you solutions. Look to your peers for resources, as they can be valuable in gathering support and information.

In order to be more productive and successful we need to take stock of our stress level, learn to be realistic and manage the fast-paced workplace, do something positive for our health and gather support from those around you.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com) for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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