



Keep calm and work on

You're facing a tough week at work. You have tight deadlines, your workload is massive, a co-worker is getting on your nerves and your boss has just asked you to make a big presentation to senior management – tomorrow! Your stomach is in knots, your heart is pounding and you can't concentrate. You're feeling tense, nervous, irritable and worried about everything. You are experiencing anxiety.

A normal reaction

We all experience anxiety from time to time. It's a normal physiological reaction to stressful situations. In the workplace, anxiety can affect our productivity, performance and relationships with clients and colleagues. It's important that we develop strategies to stay calm and work on. Try the following:

- **Take breaks.** A few minutes spent walking around the block or quietly drinking a cup of tea can help clear your head and calm your body.
- **Set boundaries.** Try not to bring work home with you or check your work email or voice mail after hours.
- **Set realistic expectations.** Being upfront about deadlines and working at a manageable pace can save you hours of anxiety.
- **Know your triggers.** Pay attention to situations that cause you anxiety. Whether it's speaking in meetings, noisy surroundings or last minute requests, when you know what is likely to make you uneasy, you can better anticipate your reactions and find effective coping strategies.
- **Take care of yourself.** Your body is better able to cope with stressful situations when you are eating healthy foods, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and engaging in social activities outside of work. During stressful periods it's also wise to limit caffeine, sugar and alcohol intake.

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- **Share your anxieties.** Talk to trusted friends, family members and colleagues. People who care about you can provide perspective, support, and sound advice.
- **Ignore negativity and gossip.** Gossiping and venting with coworkers may provide temporary relief but over time increases everyone's stress and anxiety and creates a toxic environment.
- **Breathe.** When we start to feel anxious, we tend to **breathe** shallowly. This makes our **anxiety** worse. Try to take a few moments to breathe deeply and slowly.
- **Take advantage of employer resources and benefits.** Find out what your employer offers – from assistance programs, discounts to gyms or skill-building courses.

Lastly, if anxiety becomes part of your everyday life, seek professional help. Contact your family doctor or assistance program for resources and support.

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Steps to keep your exercise routine on track

Though an active lifestyle is essential to good physical and mental health, many of us find it hard to fit regular exercise into our hectic schedules. But it doesn't have to be difficult. Staying active begins with a simple shift in attitude. Instead of thinking we HAVE to exercise or how we HATE working out, we should think about having fun. For example:

- Playing more golf (ditch the cart)
- Going for bike rides with the kids
- Joining a hobby sports team
- Getting friends together for a belly dancing class

Staying motivated

Getting started is easy. Staying motivated is the tough part. Here are some tips to keeping focused and on track.

- **Have a plan.** Think of exercise as an important appointment. Planning short, 10-minute snippets of exercise during the day, such as taking a brisk walk at lunch or taking the stairs instead of the elevator, helps break exercise goals down into manageable chunks.
- **Set small, realistic goals.** Throwing yourself into a new, vigorous activity will only make you sore and discouraged. Take things slowly. Begin by walking a bit further every day, playing tennis a little longer each game or mastering a new yoga pose.
- **Reward yourself.** If you hit all your objectives for the week, give yourself a small reward.
- **Don't beat yourself up.** Realize that there will be times when you're simply too busy or too tired to exercise. Simply get back on track as soon as you can.
- **Have an exercise buddy.** Knowing someone is expecting you at a fitness class or a morning walk keeps you accountable and motivated.
- **Involve family and friends.** By encouraging your family and friends to be more active, you'll stay on track. You'll also have people supporting you when things get tough.
- **Try new things.** It's hard to stay motivated when you're doing the same activities week after week. Try something new. Learn how to curl. Take dance classes. Sign up for paddleboard lessons.
- **Use technology.** For gaming enthusiasts, there are many fun fitness apps that let you run from zombies or save the world. Not your thing? Try downloading an audio book to make a solitary walk interesting or stream your favourite TV show on the treadmill.

For more ideas on making activity part of your everyday life, contact your assistance program for resources and support.

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