



How to create a HEALTHY Happy Workplace

Many of us work at a desk these days, whether in an office, or continuing to work from home after the pandemic. Of course, it would be ideal for us to spend less time at our desks, but this is easier said than done.

If we don't work, we don't eat! So how can you work around a desk-based job, to make your work and life feel healthier and happier. While eating healthily, sleeping well and exercising regularly will make us healthier, the working day can still feel long and tiring. Here are my 5 top tips for some little things which make a big difference:

1. Water, water everywhere!

We are 75% water and, if we don't drink enough, our bodies and minds become sluggish. When we think of dehydration, we tend to think of someone who has been on holiday in the sun, or had a heavy night out drinking and has landed up in hospital on a drip. However, chronic (long-term) dehydration can be a lot more subtle. Without enough water, our tissues become sticky, which makes us stiff,





achy and sluggish, physically and mentally. We can't concentrate, feel fuzzy and we're on a go-slow. Then we suddenly realise we haven't had a drink in ages. To work out how much you need to drink, multiply your body weight in kg by 0.035. If you are still thirsty, it's fine to drink more up to a maximum of 4l per day. This will also depend on your activity levels.

So how can we drink more when we're busy and distracted? Firstly, drink a big glass of water first thing in the morning. We sweat and become dehydrated overnight, so it's good to refuel. Secondly, line them up! If you know that you have a long Zoom meeting ahead, line up a hot drink, glass of water and perhaps also a bottle of water to top up your glass. Try to limit caffeinated drinks (tea, coffee and chocolate) to two daily, before 2 pm). Too much caffeine makes you pee more, so you can become dehydrated. It can also make you feel more anxious and mess up your sleep if taken too

late in the day. Herbal teas are a great alternative and there are many varieties. A herbal tea bag will usually make two decent mugs of tea. Some of these are also diuretic though (making you pee more), so intersperse with water. If you don't like plain water, try adding a slice of citrus fruit, a sprig of mint or cucumber. Sparkling water works too and definitely tastes better in a wine glass! Why not celebrate with a glass of healthy bubbly when you've met your targets for the morning, or successfully managed a tricky conversation?

2. Give yourself a break

Yes, this is something you need to give yourself; no-one else will do it for you! 45 mins sat at a desk at any one time is plenty. Aim to balance 45 mins' focused work with a 15-min break, to stretch your legs and rest your brain. If you're thinking, "I haven't got time for that", rest assured that you may even get more done overall, because you gave your mind a break. Make a cup of tea, do a few star jumps or stretches while waiting for the kettle to boil, take a walk in the fresh air and touch a plant.

3. Chew things over

Eating lunch at your desk is a definite no-no most of the time. If you must eat at your desk, make it the exception, not the rule. You won't taste and appreciate what you're eating and you won't digest it well if you are wolfing it down while feeling stressed. Eat outside when the weather is fine and in a different room if not. If you are feeling stressed or frazzled come lunchtime, take a few deep breaths before you start eating. Stress is a fight and flight response which suppresses good digestion, so take time to relax first and give those digestive juices a chance to flow. Digestion actually begins in your mouth while chewing and your stomach will thank you for giving it smaller, more manageable pieces to digest.

4. Motion is lotion

Movement keeps you loose and mobile. If we sit for too long, we soon stiffen up. During your regular breaks, get up and move: walk downstairs to make



a cup of tea; do a few star jumps while the kettle boils, do a couple of stretches or balances; put on a piece of your favourite dance music or an Irish jig and have a wiggle; music brightens your mood too! I actually have a play list for this purpose, called 'Wiggle and Jiggle'. Worried your office mates will think you're mad? Why not ask them to join you and be a bit mad together!

5. Respond to stress, don't react

Have you ever been told to reduce stress and thought, "Easier said than done"? when life throws unexpected curveballs at you, or perhaps you're simply juggling too many balls. We cannot always control what happens, but we can learn to respond, rather than reacting. This reduces our stress response and makes us more resilient. If you can feel your stress levels rising, take a deep breath in, breathe in again and then breathe out in a long, slow sigh. The double in-breath is something which animals do as a stress reset. The long outbreath encourages your nervous system to come out of fight and flight mode into rest and digest mode.

There are many different breathing techniques coming from yoga and similar practices, so try a few different ones, notice how they make you feel and use the ones which work for you.

Plan it, damn it!

Another great way to minimise stress is to work to a fairly strict schedule, even if you set arbitrary time slots for tasks. If something takes longer than you expect, you may need to plan another slot. If you plan the week ahead and allow some flexibility for the unexpected, this means that you prioritise your tasks and goals, rather than fire-fighting and reacting to other people's demands and their stress. If someone wants you to do something urgently, ask yourself whether their priorities and yours are the same. If not, make an active decision. Are you going to do it in your time or theirs? If you decide to change your priorities for the day or week, that's fine; make it a decision though, rather than a reaction.

In summary, you can feel healthier and happier at work by:

1. Keeping hydrated: you may need more water than you think.
2. Giving yourself regular breaks.
3. Taking time to eat.
4. Moving regularly
5. Responding well to stress: use breathing techniques and work to a schedule.

Dr. Sarah Bryan, Ph.D, has been working in the health industry for 20 years and has been helping people out of pain for over 11 years. She specialises in helping active, working women, who have had over five years' unresolved pain after injury or surgery. She helps them become pain-free for good and feel younger, so that they can step up for their loved ones and rediscover the fun in life. She lives with total sight loss and is used to overcoming major challenges!

Do you or someone in your life struggle with pain on a daily basis? Have the doctors done all they can? Contact Dr. Sarah today to find out how to become pain-free and transform your life!

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