21 Ways to Reduce Stress During the Workday

By Saki Santorelli

1. Take five to thirty minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate, and/or lie down and be with yourself… gaze out the window, listen to the sounds of nature, or take a slow quiet walk.

2. While your car is warming up, try taking a minute to quietly pay attention to your breathing.

3. While driving, become aware of body tension, e.g., hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel, shoulders raised, stomach tight, etc., consciously working at releasing dissolving that tension… Does being tense help you drive better? What does it feel like to relax and drive?

4. Decide not to play the radio and be with your own sound.

5. On the interstate, experiment with riding in the right lane, going five miles below the speed limit.

6. Pay attention to your breathing and to the sky, trees, or quality of your mind, when stopped at a red light or toll plaza.

7. Take a moment to orient yourself to your workday once you park your car at the workplace. Use the walk across the parking lot to step in to your life. To know where you are and where you are going.

8. While sitting at your desk, keyboard, etc., pay attention to bodily sensations, again consciously attempting to relax and rid yourself of excess tension.

9. Use your breaks to truly relax rather than simply "pausing." For instance, instead of having coffee, a cigarette, or reading, try taking a short walk – or sitting at your desk and renewing yourself.

10. For lunch, trying changing your environment. This can be helpful…

11. Trying closing your door (if you have one) and take some time to consciously relax.

12. Decide to stop for one to three minutes every hour during the workday. Become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations, allowing the mind to settle in as a time to regroup and recoup.

13. Use the everyday cues in your environment as reminders to "center" yourself, e.g., the telephone ringing, sitting at the computer terminal, etc. 14. Take some time at lunch or other moments in the day to speak with close associates. Try choosing topics that are not necessarily worked related.

15. Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence. Use this as a time to eat slowly and be with yourself.

16. At the end of the workday, try retracing today's activities, acknowledging and congratulating yourself for what you've accomplished and then make a list for tomorrow. You've done enough for today!

17. Pay attention to the short walk to your car – breathing the crisp or warm air. Feel the cold or warmth of your body. What might happen if you open up to and accept these environmental conditions

and bodily sensations rather than resist them? Listen to the sounds outside your workplace. Can you walk without feeling rushed? What happens when you slow down?

18. At the end of the workday, while your car is warming up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home – take a moment to simply be – enjoy it for a moment. Like most of us, you're heading into your next full-time job – home!

19. While driving, notice if you are rushing. What does this feel like? What could you do about it? Remember, you've got more control than you might imagine.

20. When you pull into the driveway or park on the street, take a minute to orient yourself to being with your family members or to entering your home.

21. Try changing out of work clothes when you get home. This simple act might help you to make a smoother transition into your next "role" – much of the time you can probably "spare" five minutes to do this. Say hello to each of your family member or to the people you live with. Take a moment to look in their eyes. If possible, make the time to take five to ten minutes to be quiet and still. If you live alone, feel what it is like to enter the quietness of your come, the feeling of entering your own environment.

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