

# Stress in the workplace ... women get double duty (Part II)

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**LAST MONTH'S COLUMN** revealed that men and women undeniably share the unpleasant trait of stress in the workplace. It also mentioned the great debate surrounding who is responsible for stress-related illnesses; that research shows a majority of work-related stress comes from attrition and the demand for employees to do more in less time; and that our own culture of speed, convenience and instant gratification also drives our stress reactions. This column shares tips on how to reduce workplace stress.

First, recognize that stress is a killer, not to be taken lightly. Stress-related illnesses are the leading cause of death and disability in women today. In fact, the immune cells of women under extreme mental stress age faster than those in women not facing such pressure, a new study reports. The report found that cells of women under stress had undergone the equivalent of 10 years of additional aging, compared to women living more normal lives.

Another smart tip is to take real breaks from work. Studies show that small breaks actually increase efficiency, making breaks affordable. Also, are there things in the work environment that are tolerated but contribute to ongoing stress? Cluttered space. Equipment that needs repairing. Lack of organization. Tasks that need to be delegated. Noise level. Ergonomically unhealthy workplaces. All are worth the effort to resolve.

Communicating cleanly and assertively is a huge way to reduce stress by addressing boundaries, expectations and needs in the workplace. Women can, at times, communicate on an emotional level and the real message is lost in the feeling vs. the doing.

Caffeine, by its very nature, causes a physiological stress response. Take steps to reduce or cut out caffeine and increase your water intake.

Remember the sage advice to eat a good breakfast? Studies show that eating breakfast is one of the healthiest habits we can adopt. In addition, workplace ideas for stress reduction include using a tennis ball to roll back and forth under the ball of your foot, and massaging an acupuncture calm point in the area of the hand between the index finger and thumb.

Self-care outside the workplace is of paramount importance for women, and adequate sleep and exercise are arguably the best stress reducers. Learn meaningful ways to relax. Time taken for pleasure will pay off in the long run in work efficiency.

Last but not least, do not stress about reducing stress and make it another stress.

These stress-reducing ideas, contributed by Jennifer Wright, are solid avenues to getting appointments with prospects and adding a new venue for talking to current clients. Sharing this information and giving a stress-reducing gift will have your clients sending you great referrals and more of your prospects signing on the dotted line.

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