

Managing On-the-Job Stress

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Anyone who works in a call center environment knows just how stressful it is. In fact, the U.S. Department of Statistics, an agency that categorizes jobs, notes that customer service representatives have the eighth most stressful job. They are right up there with policemen and firemen. The challenge that reps have is how to do their job without getting burned out. Post the following tips near your computer and phone to remind you to take care of yourself.

- 1. Have the right attitude.** Accept that part of your job is dealing with angry callers. When callers are angry, it's not because of you. It's because the product or service doesn't meet expectations. Do not take outbursts personally. Stay positive and focus on resolving issues as quickly as possible. Be sure to take a short break after each call. You will need it.
- 2. Take deep cleansing breaths.** If you are upset, the quickest way to calm down is by deep cleansing breaths from the diaphragm. Inhale for a count of five, hold it for a count of three, and exhale slowly for a count of five through an open mouth.
- 3. Do self affirmations.** Begin each day by telling yourself just how good you are at what you do. Before you take the first call in the morning, remind yourself of the gifts you bring to the job. Perhaps, it's your product knowledge, perhaps, it's your can-do attitude. Do not allow negative self-messages. Remember the old adage, "garbage in, garbage out."
- 4. Pay attention to nutrition.** To do your job day in and day out, you need your body to run at peak performance. Do not skip meals or eat fast foods. Do not snack on fatty foods, such as chips or candy. It will result in mood swings as the body comes down from a sugar high.
- 5. Get plenty of exercise.** People with stressful jobs need to get rid of stress, or else they will start to internalize it. Ultimately, it will affect their health. Exercising for 20-30 minutes each day can make a huge difference, not only in how you feel personally, but in how well you treat your customers. Look for ways to exercise on the job. Periodically, get up and stretch. Move around. Do isometric exercises at your desk. Tense and relax various muscle groups. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Join a health club or company sponsored teams, such as softball or bowling teams.
- 6. Laugh.** Children laugh out loud about 70 times a day. Most adults take life way too seriously. They laugh out loud only seven times a week. Look for ways to amuse yourself. See movies, watch television shows, or read books that make you laugh. Instead of rushing your kids to bed, get down on the floor and enjoy their antics.
- 7. Surround yourself with uplifting people.** Seek out friends at work that are positive about the organization and their job. Do not keep company with people who pull you down rather than up.
- 8. Get involved with your company.** There are always things at every company that people do not like. Volunteer to be on committees or to chair committees that will bring about needed changes. Be proactive and your attitude toward your company will change.
- 9. Ask for help.** If you are uncomfortable with any aspect of your job, seek help from your manager or a colleague. Enroll in classes. If you feel you don't know your company's vast

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array of products, read marketing pieces and talk to salespeople. Force yourself to learn one new product each week.

10. Do something just for yourself each week.

So often we spend our off times mowing the lawn, house cleaning or taking our kids to sport activities. We rarely do anything that we love. Make a commitment with yourself to explore a hobby, visit friends, go shopping, meditate or get a massage each weekend. Doing what you love will pick up your spirits and make you say, "Today was so terrific." It will fortify you for the week to come.

Stress is inevitable when working in a call center, but it is controllable. Be aware of early signs of stress on your job and actively work at managing them.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. To reach us, phone (847) 438-4480 or contact our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.