



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LOUISVILLE**  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Dealing With Personal and Professional Stress

*Recent studies show that as a nation, Americans are stressed out.*

The 2013 Work Stress Survey found that eight in ten Americans feel anxious about their jobs. The latest studies on stress from the American Psychological Association show that 69 percent of the U.S. adults surveyed reported experiencing physical symptoms of stress during the previous year. Additionally, increased stress in the workplace is contributing to rising healthcare costs for employers. According to a study by Harvard Business School Professor Joel Goh, workplace stress is responsible for up to \$190 billion in annual U.S. healthcare costs.

**69%** of U.S. adults  
experience physical  
symptoms of stress

## How can we foster a culture of less stress at work and at home?

Fortunately, conversations about work-life balance are becoming more commonplace at work as employees are becoming more vocal about the struggle to meet the demands of their personal and professional lives.

"It's really about work-life fulfillment – balance doesn't exist. Some days are going to be harder than others. It's all about figuring out how we can manage that day and finding satisfaction in the different roles we play – as employees, parents, spouses, etc."

*—Maryanne Honeycutt Elliott*

*UofL Professional Development instructor and executive coach*

## Try these strategies for finding fulfillment and dealing with stress in your everyday life.

### Finding Fulfillment

- **Get crystal clear about your top priorities.**

Figure out what's most important. Be prepared to let some things go; "good enough" can be acceptable depending on your situation.

- **Start planning and "bundling."**

Complete repetitive tasks or like tasks at the same time. For example, prepare all of your meals for the week on a Sunday. Run all of your errands once a week instead of making several trips.

- **Decide what is an investment of your time versus an expense of your time.**

You may not think you have time for a vacation or the time to attend that exercise class that interests you, but consider the benefit. If you take a break will you be more focused on what you need to accomplish afterwards? Will you be in a better mental state? If so, consider it an investment instead of a worthless distraction.

- **Be more mindful.**

It's important to stop the chatter in our heads. When we live in our heads we are most often focused on the past or the future – we are not present in the moment. Find a way to be present in the moment. Being present in the moment lends itself to fulfillment. Meditation, exercise, gardening, creating something – these are all ways we can clear our heads.

- **Find out what your stress triggers are.**

What upsets you? What changes your mood from good to bad? By becoming more aware of what causes you anxiety, you can take responsibility of your feelings and respond in a more productive way.

### Staying Focused at Work

- **Communicate.**

Speak up for what you want. During times of stress, your tendency may be to withdraw. When you don't speak up, you increase the risk of blowing up.

- **Prioritize – and not by yourself.**

When you prioritize your workload it should be done with others. It should involve a conversation with your boss, stakeholders, your spouse, etc. – anyone necessary to help you set reasonable goals.

- **Manage proactively.**

Speak with your manager to clarify priorities and roles. Many stay silent during times of stress to preserve credibility, but consider the damage caused by missing deadlines or producing lackluster work.

- **Know yourself. Figure out what distracts you and fix it.**

Does the phone ringing or emails coming through to your inbox constantly cause you to lose focus? Turn off your ringer and other notifications. Check your email and voicemail at designated times throughout the day.

- **Work in time blocks.**

Once you've identified your distractions, determine how you can use interruption-free time in blocks. Work on a project or task for a designated time and then build in a specific break for yourself. Can you hold several meetings in a row rather than spreading those appointments throughout the week?

- **Set no more than one to three goals per day.**

Put these on your calendar and force yourself to estimate the time it will take you to accomplish them. You can't realistically block your calendar for an entire day or week, but you can anchor your week or day with priorities. Try setting aside 30 minutes for your highest priority each day.

### Looking for more tips on how to deal with stress?

UofL Professional Development offers a one-day seminar, How to Stay Focused in Stressful Times.

Visit [louisville.edu/professionaldevelopment](http://louisville.edu/professionaldevelopment) or call **502.852.4620** for additional information.