

LIVING

Stop losing sleep because of stress and overwork

By Vicki Salemi

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Feeling frazzled and sleepless in the city that never sleeps? You're not alone. According to a new study reported on BMJ Journals' website, 97 percent of participants reported nonrestorative sleep and 23 percent indicated high levels of job strain.

Researchers concluded that burnout soars when poor sleep mixes with insurmountable stress, so here are several ways to kick it to the curb in an effort to feel rejuvenated and relaxed, instead of harried and downright exhausted.

Learn to say 'no' (even to your boss)

Laura Stack, productivity speaker and author of ["The Exhaustion Cure: Up Your Energy From Low to Go in 21 Days,"](#) recommends figuring out what you have time to accomplish, and then tactfully push back.

"When your boss is overloading you, say, 'I'll be glad to handle that for you. However, I can't get to it until I finish the XYZ project. That will be . . .'"

Or ask about the priorities for each deliverable and negotiate deadlines. “That’s a reasonable way to call the existing workload to your boss’ attention,” Stack says.

Provide alternative solutions

If it’s difficult saying “no,” offer some options. Stack recommends stating, “I can’t meet today because I’m leaving at noon, but I can meet with you tomorrow or the next day. Which is best for you?”

This is particularly effective, she points out, because it diffuses a confrontation over pushing back and opens the door for a discussion about which “yes” solution works best for the other person.

Schedule monthly mental-health days

Rather than waiting for burnout to strike, schedule downtime, guilt-free. Even if you have a hard time tearing yourself away from your desk, when you attempt to function on an empty tank, everyone loses — including your employer.

“You need it and deserve it if you want to be at your productive best,” Stack says. Her advice? Schedule one vacation day per month for a day of pampering, when you can “do only what you love to do!”

Unplug technology

Janet K. Kennedy, a clinical psychologist and founder of NYC Sleep Doctor, a resource for sleep solutions based in the Flatiron area, indicates that burnout surges when you’re not fully unplugged.

“Laptops, tablets and phones emit light at wavelengths that suppress the brain’s release of melatonin, effectively signaling the body to delay sleep,” she explains.

Even playing games on devices keeps us connected to stressors from the day.

The remedy: Set a specific time to hit the off button and stick to it daily to reclaim part of your evening.

Plus, don’t put your phone in the bedroom overnight. She emphasizes: “Do not use your phone as your alarm clock. Leave your phone outside the bedroom so you’re not tempted to check it in the night or first thing in the morning.”

Resist procrastination — create daily goals instead

Allyson Lewis, a time-management expert and author of “The 7 Minute Solution,” says, “Every time you say, ‘I will do it tomorrow,’ you are adding one more unfinished task to your overflowing to-do list.”

She recommends taking seven minutes every morning and seven minutes every evening to think about what you need to do. “The key is to create a written daily plan of action,” Lewis says.

By writing down the five highest-value activities to accomplish prior to 11 p.m., it has a compounding effect on your productivity and attitude.

“Procrastination leads to burnout,” Lewis says. “Activity leads to re-engaging in life.”

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