

# Ten Tips to Stress Less

Easy ways you and your people can mitigate chronic stress and reduce burnout

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**Not all stress is bad** —short-term stress due to excitement can help motivate, inspire, or increase focus. But when your people are under constant pressure for days, weeks, or months, chronic stress can take a drastic toll on their physical and mental well-being.

Right now, Americans are more stressed than ever before. We're seeing it across vast populations—employees, caregivers, adolescents, and more. No one is exempt from stress. 47% of American adults have felt nervous, anxious, or on edge for at least several days over a two-week period and 22% live in this stressful state more than half of the time<sup>1</sup>. Chronic stress can have major physical and mental repercussions—with an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, substance use, and more.<sup>2,3</sup>



## A Costly Problem

Employee stress can lead to both healthcare expenses and lost productivity for your organization. Recognizing chronic stress is key to beginning the mitigation process for employee burnout prevention.



# 90%

The percent of the United States' \$4.1 trillion in healthcare expenditures that are related to chronic disease or mental health conditions<sup>4</sup>—many of which are related to or exacerbated by stress.

# \$500

BILLION

The amount that American companies lose per year to health costs, absenteeism, and poor performance due to job stress.<sup>5</sup>

# 3X

HIGHER

The likelihood of an employee seeking another job, if they're experiencing burnout.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the cost of turnover to an organization is estimated at about 1.5-2× an employee's annual earnings.<sup>7</sup>

While there are many factors that contribute to and compound stress, these ten strategies can help you—and your people—calm down in the heat of a stressful moment, slow the physical stress reaction, and help you better manage stress.

# 1

### Trade “fight or flight” with “rest and digest” using deep breathing.

Take a series of deep breaths to create a pause and re-center yourself in a stressful time. It takes about 10 breaths to bring down your stress response. Start with three or four breaths each morning upon waking. Add on gradually, work up to 10. Doing this on a daily basis is a healthy practice even when we're not experiencing stressful situations.

# 2

### Practice progressive muscle relaxation.

We hold a lot of tension in our bodies. One way to get in touch with that is to alternate tightening and releasing muscles.

Working from top to bottom, deliberately tighten and then release different parts of your body. Start with your eyebrows, move to your jaw, your shoulders, your arms and hands, legs, and finally, your feet. This is a great way to relax at bedtime and make it easier to go to sleep.

# 3

### Take a mini vacation with visual imagery.

Close your eyes and take a few moments to imagine your “happy place.” It may be the beach, the mountains, or even your own backyard. Use your imagination—breathe in the smell of the ocean or woods; the sound of the waves crashing or birds singing; feel the warm sand and sticky pine needles against your feet. Savor the sense of peace and relaxation you get from visiting that imaginary place in your mind. This gives your brain a chance to rest and reset.

4

**Take a mindful walk.** With each step, notice how your feet contact the ground. Feel your leg muscles lengthen. Notice the rhythm of your arms swinging and the softness of your gaze as you look forward. Take in the sights, sounds, and smells of your surroundings. Breathe in how relaxing it feels to move your body through space while creating space for clearer thinking and wiser choices.

5

**Tap into your senses with 5-4-3-2-1.** In a stressful moment, stop, close your eyes and ground yourself with three deep breaths. Then, open your eyes and name out loud examples of:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

In just a few moments, you can turn down the inner tension and restore some calm.

6

**Take it outside.** Practice 5-4-3-2-1 or mindful movement outdoors in nature. Whether it's taking a walk or simply sitting in your backyard, patio, or local park, as little as 10 minutes outside can lessen the effects of both physical and mental stress.<sup>8</sup>

7

**Bring the outside in.** Place a green plant, succulent, or even a cut flower on your desk or kitchen counter. In just a minute or two, you can give yourself some visual relief as you breathe in the beauty of the planet and re-center yourself amid a hectic day.

8

**Enjoy some aromatherapy.** Choose a soothing scent like lavender or an energizing one like citrus or peppermint—depending on what you need in the moment. Keep a candle, diffuser, scented soap, etc., close by so you have multiple opportunities to take a pause and destress during your day.

9

**Guard your sleep routine.** Aim for seven to eight hours a night—at a minimum—to rest and restore both your brain and body. A good night's rest enables you to take on daily stressors with more energy and focus. Besides setting a wake-up alarm try setting a bedtime alarm as a reminder to turn in for the night.

10

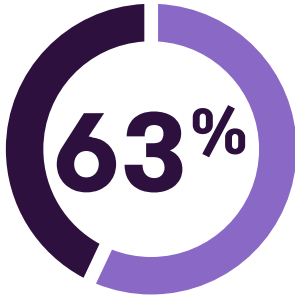
**Practice mindfulness.** You can begin by looking for ways to be more present in your life. Trade automatic routines like eating, bathing, and washing the dishes for more purposeful choices. A good place to start is mindful eating. Before eating, check in with your hunger. Appreciate the beauty of the food. Bring in its aroma. Chew slowly to savor the flavor and texture, stopping when you are comfortably full.



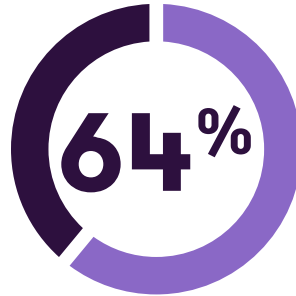
## Mind-body behavior change in action

Managing stress is a constant work-in-progress, but simple steps can lead to big results—and appreciation from your population. In fact, 87% of employees think action from their employer would help their mental health.<sup>6</sup> The good news is, you're not in it alone. With Wondr Health™ as your partner, you'll be equipped to offer your people personalized and practical ways to help their body and mind. The proof is in our results.

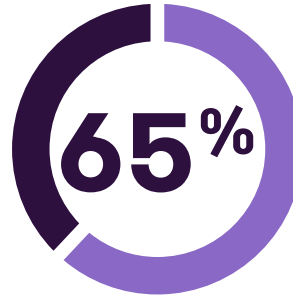
Using the Wondr program:<sup>9</sup>



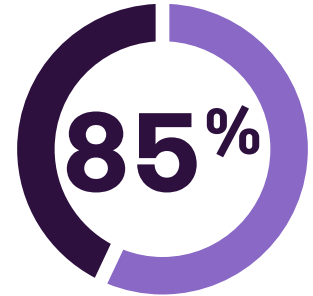
reported  
improvements in  
their mood



felt more  
energetic



improved self  
confidence



reported  
improvements in  
their mood

Learn more at [wondrhealth.com/employers](https://wondrhealth.com/employers)

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Week 38.

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-symptoms-effects\\_of-stress-on-the-body#2](https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-symptoms-effects_of-stress-on-the-body#2)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7937927/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup><https://hbr.org/2019/12/burnout-is-about-your-workplace-not-your-people>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-well-being/compounding-pressure-2021>

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost\\_b\\_587fbaf9e4b0474ad4874fb7](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost_b_587fbaf9e4b0474ad4874fb7)

<sup>8</sup><https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02942/full>

<sup>9</sup>Höchsmann et al. BMC Public Health (2022) 22:451 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12835-4>

