

## Generations



# Tips to de-stress your workplace

By Peg DeMarco, Special to the News Herald

The May edition of Reader's Digest had an article that immediately caught my eye about destressing an office environment. Since I work from home, I wasn't sure any of it would apply to me, but I was surprised when I realized even simple suggestions can help lessen the stress of a particularly tough day.

I loved the first suggestion: "Schedule worry time." I wish it was easy to turn off the brain for a bit and tell it to relax and not fret about a deadline that's impossible to meet without cloning oneself, but the article said to start with closing the office door. It's funny, but my walls are paper thin until I close the office door. Once that door is closed, usually when I'm editing a twelve-page, single spaced, legal-sized document in lawyer talk, and my husband has "Dog the Bounty Hunter" blasting from the living room, I'm suddenly thrust into a world of peace and quiet where concentration flourishes and I'm able to figure out if the right adjective is at peace with the needy noun.

Another tip was to rub a drop of lavender oil on your inner wrist because the aroma of lavender is supposed to be a known relaxant, which I didn't know until I read the article. Next, close your eyes, hold your wrist up to your nose, and sniff deeply. There are a couple of oils in my house – olive, canola and vegetable – but no lavender, so once my order comes in via my quick as a bunny Prime Amazon membership, I'll give this tip a try and see if I'm carried off into a dreamy place or still in my small office smelling like a lavender bush.

The next tip made me laugh: "Take control of your e-mail." I admit that my e-mail has roped and tied me to the computer, but it comes with the job that enables me to feed the family and keep them in a cool house when the outside thermometer is pushing 100 degrees and the electric company is threatening to go broke unless it gets my monthly \$200. The article goes on to say, "If you've gone back and forth three times on a topic with a coworker (via e-mail) and you're still confused or have questions, pick up the phone."

So, to Debbie, my coworker down in Valdosta, GA, once I've closed the office door and exhausted the lavender tip, I promise to pick up the phone and call you rather than send the tenth e-mail about the same subject.

"Read a poem out loud" was another tip, but the only poem I can recall easily is Joyce Kilmer's, "I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree," and it just doesn't do anything for me but remind me that I need to rake the dead blades off the pampas bushes lining the driveway.

Another suggestion was to stand against a wall, slide halfway down as if sitting in a chair, remain in that position without looking down for as long as you can, breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth, focus on one peaceful thought, press your feet into the floor as you hold the position, and feel the stress ooze out of your body. You are then supposed to stand up, shake your arms and legs, and return to work refreshed.

Unfortunately, it didn't work for me because when I slid down the wall, my brakes didn't stop me like they used to and I found myself flat on the floor and pleading with my husband to take a break from Dog the Bounty Hunter and help me get up.

Another tip was to take a few minutes to draw. That's right – stop the grind of work, grab your child's, grandchild's, or your own coloring book and crayons, and color a page. It's supposed to provide a peaceful outlet for a few minutes and also forces you to use the creative part of your brain to relax. The only coloring book in my house is Winnie the Pooh left over from my granddaughter's toddler years, but if it helps lessen stress, I'll color a page of Eeyore and see if it works.

And the last tip was my ultimate favorite in the entire article – "Eat peppermint chocolate." The chocolate itself is stress relieving, especially dark chocolate which is my favorite, the peppermint provides a burst of minty energy, and the tiny sugar rush might be just enough to get you over the hump.

Over the hump? It's enough to make me do my happy dance and forget about the looming work deadline – or at least until the sugar rush wears off.

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