

Making the Most of a Bad Day at Work



Everyone experiences job-related setbacks and mistakes at work (“a bad day”). Our initial focus is usually how awful we feel or how unfair “it” all seemed. The challenge is moving past the negativity. Accomplish these strategies that add to your resilience. Here are six “T’s” to recapture a positive you: *Temporary*: Remind yourself that feeling bad is temporary; it will soon dissipate. *Teach*: What can the day teach you? What part of it will add to your skills and abilities? *Talk*: Talk and vent your experience with a friend to experience emotional release. *Twirl*: Move, exercise, or play—

engage in physical activity to influence a positive mood. *Transcribe*: Write down your feelings. *Thanks*: Focus on two to three things you are grateful for despite the setback, to help reenergize positivity.

Avoid Financial Health Denial

Are your money management habits leading to a financial crisis in the future? If you’re thinking, “maybe, but it will all work out later,” then you may be using financial health denial to avoid critical changes you need to make right now. See the EAP or get financial counseling if 1) credit card debt is growing, 2) you’re unable to save up a small emergency fund, or 3) money worries are zapping your energy, interfering with sleep, or undermining happiness.

Keeping Work Stress from Coming Home

Is work stress coming home with you, along with tension, irritability, and anxiety? Experiment with these environmental controls and behavioral tactics to see if they don’t steer your thoughts and reflexes away from work and worries. 1) Before leaving work, participate in a ritual that “completes your day.” For example, put things away, stack paper neatly, roll your chair under your desk, dust a couple of shelves, and empty the wastebasket. Take a good look at your office or work space, “feel the completion” of your day—and leave. These behaviors, practiced daily for just a week, will begin to compartmentalize work and home. 2) If bringing work home is unavoidable, don’t place it on the kitchen counter, dinette, or with house clutter as you walk through the door. Instead, create a special location in your home physically removed from areas where you engage with loved ones. 3) Create digital communication habits that reinforce boundaries. For example, on your voice mail, say that you are gladly available, but only if it is urgent, along with instructions for the caller for what to do next. Note that you can experience a 99% reduction in unnecessary phone calls if you simply allow the caller to decide if the concern is so urgent that it can’t wait. Most of the time, it really can. Compartmentalization, boundaries, and smartphone management—these are instruments of work-life balance. Make them work for you.

Is Past Trauma Still Affecting You?

Can past traumatic events affect your health today, even if you hardly ever think about them anymore? You may have “moved past” those memories of abuse or assault you experienced years ago, but if perceived as fearful enough—and you may not recall just how much—a type of invisible assault on the brain may have occurred involving stress responses of the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex. Effects can persist for years, contribute to nightmares, help explain your jumpiness, or perhaps why you’re easily startled, or struggle with vulnerability in relationships. Seven to eight percent of people will experience post-traumatic stress disorder at some point in their lives. The EAP can discuss symptoms, help you decide if PTSD affects you, and locate the right help.

Learn more: www.ptsd.va.gov

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