

'Downshifting is the art of finding ways to relax in the middle of our increasingly stressful work world. Someone once said that "the time to relax is when you don't have time to" and there is a lot of truth in this statement. Taking time away from work is a necessity to continue to work and function at any high level.'

— Dr. Barrett Ross Ginsberg, ophthalmologist at Ginsberg Eye



Many businesses have fun days to allow employees to "de-stress." SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Stress affects us all, so it's how we react that's key

Kate Hampton Special to Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Jane Wagner said, "Reality is the leading cause of stress among those in touch with it."

Stress has touched us all at one time or another. Whether it's running behind on a deadline at work, trying to make sure your kids get to baseball practice on time, planning a wedding, or worrying about retirement, stress impacts everyone almost on a daily basis.

It's how we choose to react to this stress that makes all the difference in our health and well-being. Taking time to "downshift," even if it's just a five-minute break, can make a huge difference in your outlook. Some of us have to set reminders every hour to get up and walk around if we've been sitting at our office desk all day, others can make time for the things they love, like knitting or reading a book. Still others — the truly lucky ones — get help from their employer to take mindful breaks.

For examples, Artichoke & Co., the catering service based in Bonita Springs, offers employees a free yoga class once a week. Since September, the company has brought in a guest yoga instructor to lead 10 to 15 employees in a group class.

Elle Polite, marketing intern at Artichoke & Co. stated, "We have all bonded over our growth in our yoga practices. We laugh a lot more together and always stay around after to talk and catch up, which is nice when we can take time to detox from a crazy day at work and socialize a bit. I think it helps everyone unwind from the day and reduces the stress of our demanding industry."

Similar to yoga classes, New Horizons of SWFL encourages employees to take walking breaks throughout their day, either alone or in a group.

"Our walks are one of the highlights of my day. I love being able to connect with my coworkers, take a few deep breaths outdoors and come back to the office refreshed and ready to work," said Amanda Hampton, New Horizons communications director.



Employees learning to "de-stress" is crucial.

PBS Contractors takes their walking and "downshifting" to a new level by offering employees health insurance benefits by giving cash for steps walked. They can use the extra money to help cover the cost of their health plan or to spend however they wish. They also host an annual boat day for employees to enjoy one another socially and a staff beach cleanup day.

Even if your company doesn't necessarily offer "downshifting" opportunities, you can always take mini breaks throughout your day to stretch, go for a brief walk or have lunch with a friend. You'll find that after a break you're more likely to feel less stressed and awake, be more productive, and ready to tackle the rest of your day.