 20 Strategies to Reduce Stress During the EHDI Workday

**Beginning your day:**

1. While still in bed, take a moment to think of one thing you are grateful for. Take a few deep breathe while really holding that sense of gratitude in mind.

2. Take 5-30 minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate – sit or lie down and be with yourself… gaze out the window, listen to the sounds of nature or take a slow quiet walk. Mindfully eat breakfast.

3. Set a self-care goal for the day and share it with someone (partner, friend, kid). Normalize that it takes intention to value yourself. Ask for accountability.

**On the commute:**

3. While driving, biking, carpooling, or otherwise in transit, perform a body scan. Take stock of your body in that moment. Where are you soft? Where are you tense? (e.g. hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel, shoulders raised, stomach tight, etc.) Consciously work at releasing, dissolving that tension… Does being tense help you to drive better? What does it feel like to relax and drive?

4. Place a mindful moment reminder sticker on your steering wheel. When you notice it drop into your body and take three deep, intentional breaths. Focus on the exhale. Exercise choice. (e.g. I am deciding not to play the radio and be with myself. I am deciding to listen to THIS song. I am deciding to not rush) Notice power and influence in small moments.

5. On the interstate, experiment with riding in the right lane, going 5 miles below the speed limit. What about 1 mile below? Or just AT the speed limit? How does it feel to intentionally SLOW down?

6. When stopped at a red light, pay attention to your breathing and to the sky, trees, and/or quality of your mind.

**When you are at work:**

7. Take a moment to orient yourself to your workday once you park your car at the work place. Use the walk across the parking lot to step into your work life. To know where you are and where you are going. Ponder what is motivating you today. What is your purpose in this moment in time?

8. While sitting at your desk, keyboard, etc., pay attention to bodily sensations, again consciously attempting to relax and rid yourself of excess tension.

9. Use your breaks to truly relax rather than simply “pausing.” For instance, instead of having coffee, a cigarette or attending to more emails, try taking a short walk – or sitting at your desk and renewing yourself.

10. At lunch, changing your environment can be helpful. Incorporate movement into your lunch routine. Walk and talk with a colleague/friend. Try choosing topics that feed positivity, gratitude, connection.

11. Check in with your goal for the day. Share about it with someone new or connect with your accountability buddy (See number 3 above).

11. Try closing your door (if you have one) and take some time to consciously relax. Close your eyes. Perhaps try a guided meditation. (e.g. Imagine a landscape and place yourself there. Are you in the mountains? Near a body of water? Engage all of your senses. What is the temperature? What does it smell like? How does it feel on your skin?) Try taking a stretch break to honor your body’s needs.

12. Decide to “STOP” for 1-3 minutes every hour during the workday. Become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations, allowing the mind to settle in as a time to regroup and recoup.

13. Use the consistent or predictable cues in your workday (e.g. the driving between home visits, telephone ringing, walking up to a families’ home, ringing a doorbell) as reminders to “center” yourself. For example, EVERY time you walk out to the waiting room, take a long deep inhale and exhale before calling a patient’s name. Centering/grounding yourself will become habitual.

15. Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence. Use this as a time to eat slowly. Pay attention to each of your senses as you eat. Sink into the flavor. Inhale the scent. Notice the texture. Does it change over time? How? Allow lots of curiosity in each bite.

**At the end of the workday:**

16. At the end of each workday, take five minutes to write in a reflective journal. Retrace today’s activities. Acknowledge any areas that need repair or that you would like to improve next time. Let go of judgement and simply make a statement (i.e. *Tell Gina that I wish I would have phrased the information about ASL differently. May I please try that again?* instead of *I feel terrible. I totally messed up today and gave biased information to a family. I am such an idiot!*) End by noting and congratulating yourself for what went well today or what you accomplished. You did enough! You are enough! Close the journal and practice leaving work at work.

17. Pay attention to the short walk to your car – breathing the crisp or warm air. Feel the temperature of your body. What might happen if you opened to and accepted these environmental conditions and bodily sensations rather than resisting them? Listen to the sounds outside your workplace. Notice the colors, light/shadow…Can you walk with intention feeling the sensation of each footfall? How does it feel to let go of the workday a little with each step?

18. At the end of the workday, while your car is warming-up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home – take a moment to simply be – enjoy it for a moment. Like most of us, you’re heading into your next full-time job – home!

19. When you arrive outside your home, take a minute to orient yourself to being with your family members or to entering your home. State out loud one thing you are grateful for or what brings you joy about life at home.

20. Try changing out of work clothes when you get home. This simple act might help you to make a smoother transition into your next “role” – much of the time you can probably “spare” 5 minutes to do this. Say hello to each family member or to the people/animals you live with. Take a moment to look in their eyes. If possible, make the time to take 5-10 minutes to be quiet and still. If you live alone, feel what it is like to enter the quietness of your home, the feeling of entering your own environment.