The Ultimate Self-Help Checklist for Startup Employees

Calmerry

Introduction

When you work at a startup, it can feel exhilarating. There is a great buzz among colleagues, every employee has the chance to directly influence the success of the company, and, if the business triumphs, the professional and financial rewards can be incredibly sweet.

However, at times you may feel stressed and work long, grueling hours, with fewer benefits and reduced income. It's therefore no surprise that those who work at startups can feel stressed, anxious, or exhausted. Our self-help checklist will help you support and protect your mental wellbeing so that you can excel at work.

The challenges of startups

Being part of a startup organization isn't all soy lattes and cool workspaces. Instead, taking on an entrepreneurial role can mean a steep learning curve, difficult business decisions, and sleepless nights. Without clear boundaries for your working day, you may be constantly hurrying to meet targets and failing to find a work-life balance.

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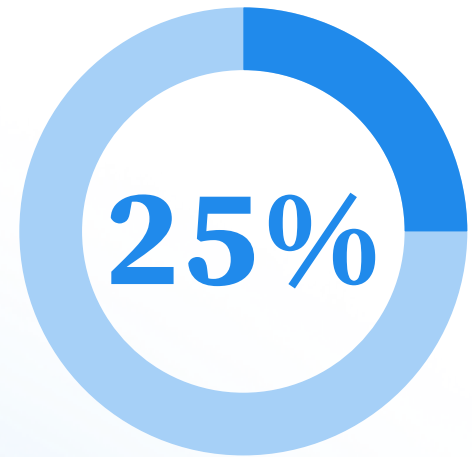
of entrepreneurs feel moderately burned outs

If you feel the challenges of working at a startup have started to chip away at your mental health, you are not alone. In fact, research has shown that 25% of entrepreneurs feel moderately burned out, and a further 3% feel strongly burned out.

In 2016, academics found that the stress felt by those working in startups included emotional exhaustion. Being exhausted makes it difficult to find solutions to problems and reduces creativity, productivity and output. This in turn increases stress levels and negatively impacts leadership skills, further insulting one's mental health. Thankfully, there are ways you can mitigate the complexities of working at a startup.

Strategies to build a healthy work-life balance

If the high-pressure reality is at odds with the expectations you had, there is no need to feel guilty for putting strategies in place to support a healthy work-life balance. Doing so will likely enhance your productivity and creativity.

01.

Get Organized

Getting a business off the ground is extremely hard work, and with hundreds of potential avenues to explore, you will need to significantly narrow your focus down to avoid distractions. List your key priorities for the day, week and month ahead, and focus on these.

Once you have your priorities in place, list them in order of importance and begin working through them in turn. This will help to avoid feelings of chaos.

You will not be able to get every business function up and running in year one. Pay attention to your current capacity, and only take on new projects when you are sure you can implement them without risking burnout.

Multi-tasking is often wrongly assumed to increase productivity. In reality, our brains cannot perform more than one task simultaneously, and attempting to do so reduces performance. Focusing on one task at a time, without distractions such as email alerts, will lead to improved outcomes.

02.

Take a Break

Startups can be incredibly demanding, and entrepreneurs may find it very hard to take time off. This unhealthy pressure can be filtered down to employees, too. Working flat out will lead to stress and burnout, so you must factor in days off. Taking a break has also been [shown](#) to boost creativity, so scheduling a vacation is a must.

03.

Pay Attention to Wellbeing

One of the most important factors for building a healthy work-life balance is to recognize when the scales are tipping harmfully towards work. If you notice you are feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed, or are worried about your mental or physical health in any way, it is time to take a break and access counseling to discuss your feelings.

In a startup, there will be highs and lows. Not every project will lead to success, so when things don't go so well, try to see it as a learning opportunity rather than a failure.

To avoid burnout, having support around you is vital. Surround yourself with friends, family, and mentors, and turn to them when needed. If you are a founder, you must also make sure your staff are adequately supported at work.

Self-help techniques

The above strategies will help you to avoid burnout at work, but there are also techniques that you can implement at home to give your mental wellbeing a boost.

Build in 'me-time'. We all need time to switch off from work and unwind. This might include reading a novel, exercising, writing in a journal, playing with your children, going out for dinner with your partner or friends, or having a long soak in the bath. Giving your brain a break from thinking about work will help you return feeling refreshed and with renewed creativity.

Nourish your body. Skipping meals and relying on sugary snacks can cause fluctuating blood sugar levels and irritability, as well as impacting energy levels and your weight. Be sure to eat regular, healthy meals each day.

Hydrate. Keep a bottle of water on your desk to stay well-hydrated. This will support concentration and keep your digestive system healthy.

Practice relaxation techniques. Research has shown that techniques such as box breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery are beneficial therapeutic tools for coping with stress. Building yoga, mindfulness, or guided meditation into your daily routine could also support your overall wellbeing.

Prioritize sleep. Adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night to stay healthy. Being well-rested will increase your ability to focus on work. To make it easier to fall asleep, limit caffeine and alcohol each day, avoid screens before bed, and set a regular bedtime.

Seek support. If working at a startup is impacting your wellbeing, you may benefit from a course of counseling. Talking to a professional about how you feel can help you understand exactly what you are struggling with. A counselor may also be able to assist you in determining which strategies could help with your personal workplace experience.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, it is common for startup employees to feel stressed, burned out or under great pressure at work. Putting strategies in place to build a healthy work-life balance can help you to protect your mental wellbeing from the demands of work. By ring fencing time for self-care, rest and counseling, you can also take steps to manage any stress or anxiety you may be facing.

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A professional counselor, as a part of your support network, can equip you with knowledge and skills to make you more resilient.

Match with a counselor