



Could your job kill you?

Heart-healthy tips to keep work woes from giving your health a pink slip

SELF

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Ticker trap: A pressure cooker job

Women with a demanding profession have up to a 56 percent higher risk for [heart disease](#) than those with less strain, a study from Harvard University reveals.

Get heart-smart: Every day, list three things you're grateful for, including one that's work-related. "When you're [stressed](#), your brain thinks it's under attack and looks for anything that's bad. Gratitude encourages you to focus on the good stuff," says Shawn Achor, positive-psychology expert and author of "The Happiness Advantage." This [sunnier mind-set](#) raises levels of the feel-good hormone dopamine and lowers stress hormones that tax the [heart](#). Save your gratitude list in a Word document and read it whenever you start to spiral into the stress-o-sphere.

Ticker trap: The boss from hell

A crummy superior (someone who doesn't support her employees or is unclear about her goals) can increase the risk for [heartdisease](#) by 64 percent in men, a study from Stockholm University finds. It's unknown if women suffer similarly, but chronic stress from a lousy leader keeps [adrenaline and cortisol](#) levels high, straining your system, says Carol Scott, M.D., author of "Optimal Stress."

Get heart-smart: Neutralize a bad encounter with your boss with music that makes you feel like a rock star. (Pink's "So What!" does it for us.) Listening to [personal theme song](#) after a run-in makes you feel empowered and

activates the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering your heart rate to healthier levels, Dr. Scott says.

That said, there are times when even Pink can't help a girl out: If your manager is a bully (she withholds resources or makes it hard to do [your job](#)), it may be time to send out your résumé, says Debbie Mandel, author of "Addicted to Stress."

Ticker trap: Skipping vacations

The fewer getaways women take, the more stress and depression (two big-time heart saboteurs) escalate, according to research from the Marshfield Clinic.

Get heart-smart: "Set aside a three-hour block on the weekends and call it a [vacation](#)," Achor suggests. Plot how you'll spend that time—maybe taking in an art show, catching a movie or people watching at a café. (Nobody said you had to purchase a plane ticket.) Focus on the planning: The biggest mood-boosting benefit

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occurs before a trip, which may be due to the anticipation it builds, Applied research in quality of Life reports. And don't let your true vacation days go to waste. "If you can't take off a whole week, consider five long weekends instead," suggests Catherine McCarty, Ph.D., an epidemiologist at the Marshfield Clinic.

Ticker trap: esk jockeying

Sitting for six or more hours a day can raise your risk of dying -- of anything -- but especially from heart disease by 34 percent, regardless of how much you exercise, a study in the American Journal of Epidemiology reveals.

Get heart-smart: Stand up for yourself! People who took the most breaks from their chair had a smaller waist, lower [body-mass index](#) and healthier triglyceride and blood-glucose levels—in other words, fewer heart disease risk factors—than those rooted like a redwood, a study in *Diabetes Care* notes. Every 90 minutes or so, take a 5-minute break to talk to a coworker or get some fresh air. You may even want to set an alarm as a reminder.

Ticker trap: Too much overtime

Logging 11-hour workdays like it's, er, your job? Your heart disease risk jumps 56 percent, European Heart Journal finds.

Get heart-smart: The more time you clock in your cube, the less you spend with friends, who provide a buffer against work angst, Achor says. Plus, feeling connected to others releases oxytocin, a hormone that washes away stress, protecting your heart. Schedule your social life (dinners, workout dates) like other can't-miss appointments. Knowing that pals are relying on you to show up will improve the odds you'll leave work on time, Mandel says. "And you'll be extra motivated if

you've already paid for tickets to a concert or baseball game." Work hard, play harder.

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