

WHAT GETS YOU THROUGH THE WORKDAY?



Distractions are everywhere in the workplace, and there are many reasons why they happen. Maybe you have been sitting at your computer all afternoon trying to finish an important report and just need a few minutes to rest your eyes. Maybe it is the end of a very long day and you haven't even seen if that afternoon rain ever came. Maybe it seems you are the only one trying to work while everyone else is doing their best to keep you from doing so. Rachel Permut-Levin, Ph.D., is the Senior Director of Human Capital Research and Outcomes at the blog "ToLive." She says it is best to look at distractions in two different lights. Distractions are sometimes necessary as they allow a break from the stressors of the workplace. However, at the same time, it is important that the work environment is conducive to work and productivity. According to Permut-Levin, there are both harmful distractions and pleasant distractions. Noise, clutter, and doing more than one task at a time can lead to negative consequences such as decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and safety issues. Pleasant distractions such as getting a cup of coffee or chatting with a coworker around the water cooler can recharge our work batteries and help us be more productive with less strain on our health. GSN digital is the interactive division of the Game Show Network. They recently conducted a survey that showed nearly 80 percent of workers who play online games when taking a break in the workday come back to the table with more focus. These workers feel that game playing gives them a necessary mental rest and increases their attention to detail and productivity when they return to work. Most workers only play online games for less than 30 minutes, but report that even just those few minutes helps them refocus their attention and calms them during stressful situations. Other ways to get through the workday include listening to music as you work. In offices where there is an open floor plan concept, white noise can be a real lifesaver. One worker commented, "White noise on my iPod has become my new best friend in the workplace." Oftentimes, personal space is limited and even the quietest conversation can be overheard. Finding a way to limit or quiet such distractions in a way that works for you can definitely make the workday pass more smoothly. Another way to get through the day is to complete paperwork as you go. Letting paperwork collect throughout the day and saving it for the end of your day can make you feel very unproductive. According to Len Saunders, a public education teacher, "The feeling of completion is important to me, and I actually feel it improves my overall attitude and effectiveness. When work piles up, I feel more stressed and very time sensitive."

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