

Getting Un-Stuck Transcript

Our bodies were made to move, but an office environment makes it easy to get stuck in one position for many hours. Even the best designed workstation can create problems if someone stays in the same position for hours at a time.

Maintaining the same posture or performing highly repetitive tasks for extended periods can lead to problems in different areas of the body. For example, using a mouse for a few minutes is not a problem for most people, but performing the same task with the mouse over and over for several uninterrupted hours can cause wear, tear, and injury to small muscles and tendons in your hand. Similarly, maintaining a static posture, such as looking at a computer monitor, for hours without a break can fatigue the muscles of the neck, shoulders, and even your eyes.

Avoid getting “stuck” in the same position or getting stuck doing the same repetitive motions with the tips outlined in this section.

Tip number 1 is to switch it up. If you are physically capable, perform some of your tasks standing such as computing, reading, talking on the phone, and informal meetings.

If you have an adjustable workstation, use it frequently throughout your day to change your working postures.

Substitute keystrokes for mousing tasks, such as Ctrl C to copy and Ctrl V to paste. Especially if your job is highly mouse intensive.

Alternate and vary tasks whenever possible, mixing non-computer-related tasks into your workday. This encourages body movement and the use of different muscle groups.

Tip number 2 is to add some deskercise. The term deskercise, refers to exercises and stretches that can be performed from your desk throughout your workday. Take micro breaks and rest pauses to stretch, stand, and move around. This provides rest to your muscles and allows them time to recover.

Let's try these two simple deskercises shown on your screen.

The first stretch is a chest opener, which counteracts the tendency that we all have to hunch over our computer while working. Clasp your hands behind your back. Push your chest outward, and raise your chin to the sky. Hold the pose for 10 to 30 seconds, breathing deeply throughout the stretch. Release the stretch and take another deep breath.

Next, let's do some shrugs to release any tension that's in our shoulders. Raise both of your shoulders at once up towards your ears. Then drop them slowly and controlled. Raise them again towards your ears and let them drop, slowly and controlled. Repeat these shoulder shrugs 5 to 10 times.

For more ideas for desk stretching and exercises, see the Getting Un-Stuck resources linked at the end of this section.

Tip number 3 is to give your eyes a break. Focusing on your computer screen for extended periods of time can result in eye strain and lead to difficulty focusing. It can also cause headaches, eye discomfort, and blurred vision. Just like the body was not made to sit in one spot all day, the human eyes were not designed to look at a computer screen for hours at a time.

To allow the eyes to relax and recover, take regular breaks from looking at your computer screen. Eye doctors recommend the 20/20/20 rule, which is to look away from your computer screen every 20 minutes at an object about 20 feet away for about 20 seconds.

Other strategies for getting your eyes unstuck include blinking more often and performing specific eye stretches to help keep the muscles of the eyes active.

One way to stretch your eyes is to close them and slowly and gently move them from the ceiling, towards the floor, repeating this 3 times. Then with your eyes still closed, slowly and gently move them from left to right 3 times. Perform this entire series periodically throughout your day to give your eyes a break from your computer screen and reduce fatigue.

For additional eye stretches and exercises, see the Getting Un-Stuck resources linked at the end of this section.

Let's recap... You can avoid getting stuck in one position all day by switching up your tasks to encourage more movement, adding in deskercises, which are exercises that can be done at your desk, and giving your eyes a break by blinking, stretching, and using the 20/20/20 rule.