

Stress in the Workplace

Part 1

Have you ever heard the phrase:

“I don’t get paid enough to do this?”

“Take this job and shove it...”

“I’m out of here...”

Both employees and management are concerned about workplace stress.

Stress:

- Increases absenteeism
- Employee turnover
- Medical and insurance costs
- Higher workmen’s compensation rates
- Reduces productivity
- Lowers profits causing increased costs

Causes of Stress in the workplace:

- Relationship issues at work:
 - How often have you experienced seeing:
 - Someone rolling their eyes about another person
 - Someone loudly hanging up the phone
 - Someone giving a shaming look
 - Someone using silent treatment towards others
 - Someone pretending not to hear what’s being said
 - Someone rudely walking away from a conversation
 - Someone sending negative emotionally charged e-mails
 - Someone using hand gestures that indicate “stop” or “shut up”

- Long working hours
- Feelings of being treated unfairly
- No acknowledgement or reward for a job well done
- Increased responsibility
 - No increase in :
 - - control or decision making
 - - compensation
- Lack of job security
 - Downsizing
 - Hostile takeovers and mergers
- Office politics
- Competition for promotions
- Discrimination because of race, gender, religion or age
- No outlet for legitimate complaints
- Fear of reprisals if one does complain
- Personal problems brought from home
 - Kids
 - Partners
 - Family
- Health issues
- Financial problems (debt, relatives asking for money, live too big)
- Not having the resources to do what you are expected to do
- Bullying
- Being shifted around in your organization and having to learn a new job
- Too many hours
- Problems with your supervisor or co-workers

What CAUSES or MAKES YOU stressed in the workplace?

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Part 2 **Workplace Stress causes:**

- 4 Main **physiological** consequences of stress:
 - Blood is shunted to the brain and large muscle groups and away from extremities, skin, and organs that are not currently serving the body:
 - Fight or flight response
 - An area near the brain stem, known as the reticular activating system, goes to work, causing a state of keen alertness as well as sharpening of the hearing and vision.
 - Energy producing compounds of glucose and fatty acids are released into the blood stream.
 - The immune and digestive systems are temporarily shut down.
- Hypertension
- Burnout
- Irritability
- Frustration
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Lack of energy
- Lack of motivation
- Reduced sense of humor
- Reduced satisfaction
- Reduced self-confidence
- Reduced ability to concentrate.
- Somatic problems:
 - Indigestion
 - Upset stomach
 - Lack of appetite
 - Headache
 - Sleep problems
 - Out of work relationship problems
 - Increased problems with BP, Diabetes, Arthritis, etc.

What do you think has happened to YOU as a result of workplace stress?

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How to deal with Workplace Stress:

- Be careful not to place unreasonable expectations on yourself with regard to your ability to accomplish things – just because you might have some time available.
- Take care of yourself outside of the workplace:
 - Special care with your relationships
 - Good nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Positive and fun leisure activities
 - Hobbies
 - Prepare in a positive manner for going to work
 - A few minutes meditation
 - Calms the heart
 - Recall your objectives for this new day of work
 - Decompress on your way home:
 - Process your day
 - Itemize for yourself your daily
 - Successes
 - Problem areas
 - Set reasonable goals or objectives for the next day's work

What can YOU do to reduce your workplace stress?

- Inform your supervisor of what you can and cannot do – be honest
- Look for opportunities to demonstrate positive attitude and cooperation
- Find out exactly what your role and responsibility is
- When given opportunity give your opinion on how to do things better
- Improve your communication with supervisor and co-workers
- Look at your work schedule and try to “fit” in what you are asked to do and:
 - o Your skills
 - o Time available
- Don't let yourself get involved in gossip or politics:
 - o No matter how “juicy “ it is
- Never, never, never use alcohol or drugs to help you cope with work

Steps you can take to manage your own stress:

- Take responsibility for improving your physical and emotional well-being
- Avoid pitfalls by identifying knee jerk habits and negative attitudes that add to the stress you experience at work (or home)
- Learn better communication skills to ease and improve your relationships with supervisors and peers

Part 3 TIPS for Managing Work Stress:

1. Recognize the warning signs of excessive stress at work.

2. Reduce job stress by taking care of yourself.

- Pay attention to your physical and emotional health
- Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy, and make you feel like you're back in the driver's seat:
 - Get moving!
 - Exercise (30 minutes/day) – actively raises your heart rate and makes you sweat
 - Great way to increase your mood
- Make better food choices:
 - Low blood sugar can make you feel anxious and irritable
 - Eating too much can make you lethargic, lazy
 - Small but frequent meals throughout the day
 - This helps your body maintain an even level of blood sugar and avoid mood swings.
 - Avoid all alcohol and nicotine
 - Alcohol temporarily reduces worry and anxiety
 - Too much etoh can cause increased anxiety as it wears off
 - Drinking to relieve stress may also eventually leads to abuse and dependence.
 - Get enough sleep:
 - Stress can cause insomnia
 - Lack of sleep can cause you to be more vulnerable to stress
 - When you're well-rested, it's easier to keep your emotional balance.

3. Prioritize and Organize

- Take control over yourself and your situation:
 - Steps to take to regain control over yourself and the situation:

- Create a balanced schedule:
 - Analyze your schedule, responsibilities and daily tasks.
 - All work and no play is a recipe for burnout
 - Try to find a balance between
 - work and family life,
 - social activities,
 - solitary pursuits,
 - Daily responsibilities and down time

- Don't over commit yourself:
 - Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or fit too much into one day.
 - Be careful about underestimating how long something will really take.
 - If you've got too much on your plate – distinguish between the “should” and the “musts”
 - If you have something unpleasant to do, do it first! And get it over with.
 - Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

- Try to leave earlier in the morning
 - Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing and having time to ease into your day.
 - Don't add to your stress levels by running late

- Plan regular breaks:
 - Short breaks throughout the day to take a walk or sit back and clear you mind.
 - Try to get away from your task for lunch

- Step away from work to briefly relax and recharge
- Prioritize tasks
- Break projects into small steps:
 - Make a step-by-step plan.
 - Focus on one manageable step at a time.
 - Work on the tree – don't get overwhelmed by the mountain!
- Delegate responsibility
 - You don't have to do everything yourself!
 - Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step.
 - If others can help you – LET THEM!
- Be willing to compromise:
 - Be willing to be flexible about what you expect of yourself and others
 - Find a middle ground in resolving a problem.

Part 4 Emotional Intelligence at Work

4. Improve Emotional Intelligence:

- Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways.
- Emotional intelligence matters just as much as “smarts” or skills!
- Emotional intelligence is about:
 - Communicating with others in ways that:
 - draw people to you- not drive them away
 - I.e. Respect vs. Disrespect
 - Overcome differences
 - Repair wounded feelings
 - Defuse tension and stress for everyone involved
- **Emotional Intelligence has 4 parts:**
 - 1. Self-Awareness:
 - The ability to recognize your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.
 - 2. Self-Management:
 - The ability to control your emotions and behavior and adapt to changing circumstances.
 - 3. Social Awareness:
 - The ability to sense, understand, and react to other’s emotions and feel comfortable socially.
 - 4. Relationship management:
 - The ability to inspire, influence, and connect to others and manage conflict in a positive manner.
- **5 KEY SKILLS in emotional intelligence:**
 - **1. Realize when you are stressed:**
 - Recognize your particular stress response

- Become familiar with the sensual (body) cues that can rapidly calm and energize you.
 - The best way to reduce stress quickly is through the senses:
 - Sight
 - Sound
 - Smell
 - Taste,
 - Touch
 - What works for you?
 - What is “soothing” to you?
- **2. Stay connected to your internal emotional experience:**
 - Your moment-to-moment emotions influence your thoughts and actions.
 - Pay attention to your feelings and factor them into your decision making
 - What you decide to do, say, act, etc. or NOT do.
 - If you ignore your emotions, you won’t be able to fully understand your own motivations and need or communicate effectively with others.
 - “I don’t know why I did what I did...that was dumb”
 - **3. Recognize and effectively use the nonverbal cues that make up 95-98% of all communication.**
 - What we say is less importance than how we say it
 - Verbally or behaviorally (how we act)
 - Eye contact
 - Facial expressions
 - Tone of voice

- Posture
- Gesture
- Touch
- Your nonverbal messages can either produce a sense of interest, trust, and desire for connection – or they can generate confusion, distrust, and stress.
- You need to be able to accurately READ and respond to the nonverbal cues that other people send you as well.

4. Develop the capacity to meet challenges with a sense of humor:

- There is no better stress buster than a good laugh
- Nothing reduces stress quicker than mutually shared humor.
 - Make sure the laugh is not at someone else's expense.
 - You may end up with more rather than less stress!
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5. Resolve conflict positively:

- Stay focused on the present
 - - don't get into the old hurts and resentments.
- Connect with YOUR emotions and hear both the words and the nonverbal cues being used.
- Don't get into going round and round with an argument.
 - End it.

5. Reduce Job stress by breaking bad habits:

- **Eliminate self-defeating behaviors:**

- We often make work stress worse with negative thoughts and behaviors.
 - **Resist perfectionism:**
 - Nothing is EVER perfect, to don't add stress to your life by INSISTING on perfection!
 - Be sure your goals are realistic - not too much or too little
 - Aim to do your best, no one can ask for more than that!
- **Clean Up YOUR act:**
 - If you're always running late, set your clocks and watch fast and give yourself extra time.
 - If your desk is a mess, file and throw away the clutter
 - Just knowing where everything is saves time and cuts stress.
 - Make to-do lists and cross off items as you accomplish them.
 - Plan your day and stick to the schedule – you'll feel less overwhelmed.

Flip your negative thinking:

- If you see the downside of every situation and interaction, you'll find yourself drained of energy and motivation
- Try to think positively about your work,
- Avoid negative-thinking co-workers
- Pat yourself on the back about small accomplishments – even if no one else does!
- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable:**
 - Many things at work are beyond our control – particularly the behavior of other people.
 - Rather than stressing out over others, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

Another 5 Ways to take away Stress:

1. Take time away

- Try to take a quick break and move away from the stressful situation
- Step back to regain your balance:
 - Take a walk
 - Take a few minutes to meditate (listen quietly to music, etc.)

2. Talk it over with someone

- Sharing thoughts and feelings with someone you trust really helps!
- Talk with someone who is supportive and empathic

3. Connect with others at work

- Develop friendships with co-workers
- Listen to co-workers and offer them support when they need it too!

4. Look for humor in the situation

- Humor is a great way to reduce stress
- When things start getting too serious, find a way to lighten the mood
 - Joke or funny story

Handout: Part 1

Stress in the Workplace

Have you ever heard the phrase:

“I don’t get paid enough to do this?”

“Take this job and shove it.....”

“I’m out of here...”

Stress Causes:

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Reasons for Stress in the Workplace:

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What causes or MAKES YOU stressed in the workplace?

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Handout: Part 2 Workplace Stress CAUSES:

4 Main Physiological Consequences of stress:

1. Blood is shunted from non-essential organs to the brain and large muscles. This is called **flight or fight** response.
2. Reticular activating system kick starts and a state of keen sensual alertness occurs.
3. Energy producing chemicals of glucose and fatty acids are released into the blood stream.
4. Immune and digestive systems are temporarily shut down.

More Consequences of Stress:

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What do you experience as a result of workplace stress?

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How to Deal with workplace Stress:

1. Have reasonable expectations of yourself.
2. Take care of yourself outside of the workplace:
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Relationships
 - Fun activities
 - Decompress
 - Meditation
 - Hobbies

Steps you can take to manage your own stress:

1. Take responsibility...
2. Avoid negative attitudes....
3. Learn better communication skills...

Handout Part 3 Tips for Managing work Stress:

1. Recognize the warning signs...

2. Reduce job stress by taking care of yourself...

3. Prioritize and organize...
 - a. Balanced schedule

 - b. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout...

 - c. Don't over commit...

 - d. Get to work a bit early...

 - e. Regular breaks...

 - f. Prioritize – What has to be done first?...

 - g. Small steps...

 - h. Delegate responsibility...

 - i. Compromise...

Handout Part 4 Emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence-

- Ability to manage and use your emotions in positive ways...
- Sometimes emotional intelligence is more important than being smart!
- Emotional intelligence is about:
 - Communication with others in ways that:
 - Draw people toward you...
 - Respect vs. Disrespect
 - Overcome differences
 - Repair wounded feelings
 - Defuse tension and stress

4 Parts to Emotional Intelligence:

1. Self Awareness:
2. Self Management:
3. Social Awareness:
4. Relationship Management:

10 Key Skills in emotional intelligence:

1. Realize you ARE stressed...
2. Stay connected to your internal emotional experience – pay attention to yourself!
3. Recognize and effectively use nonverbal cues (95-98% of all communication)
4. Develop the capacity to meet challenges with a sense of humor.
5. Break your OWN bad habits.
6. Flip negative thinking!
7. Take time away
8. Talk it over with someone – this is different from “whining”
9. Connect with others at work...
10. Look for humor....

TICKET 1

Welcomed Rehab Skill Development group today. After brief check in proceeded to introduce topic of positive management of stress in the workplace. Discussed how both management and employees are concerned about unmanaged stress. Talked about the negative results of stress such as increased absenteeism, turnover, medical problems injuries, reduced productivity and loss of profits. Then proceeded to talk about the causes of stress in the workplace beginning with relationship problems among peers, long hours, feelings of being treated unfairly, lack of positive acknowledgement, lack of job security, office politics, discrimination, lack of voice, home problems, poor health, financial problems inadequate resources, etc. Group members offered their personal experiences to illustrate these. Large group then broke up into smaller groups to identify personal stressors which stress them out.

Individual Note:

Client actively participated. Willing to share in small group with peers, and also in large groups. Becoming less shy in sharing. Defensiveness low.

Plan:

- Ongoing work in developing positive management skills in the workplace.
- Next session will explore the physiological changes which occur with stress.

TICKET 2

Welcomed Skill training work group today. After brief check in and announcements continued on to review understanding of impact of stress in the workplace. Reviewed the physiological manifestations of stress and again discussed how chronic stress contributes to lower immune system, increased physical problems and illness, and how chronic health problems such as hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis are exacerbated with stress. Continue on then to look at areas where one can positively manage stress:

- Use of meditation to calm and compose the self
- Good nutrition
- Enjoyable hobbies
- Enjoyable recreation outlets

Discussed the importance of taking personal responsibility in managing stress.

Individual Note:

Client participated actively in large group and was able to give personal examples of workplace stress and how they managed it in a positive way. Open to group suggestions.

Plan:

- Continue working on positive work skills and positive management of conflict.
- Continue exploring ways of managing stress.

Ticket Part 3 Tips for Managing Work Stress

Welcomed Working to Wellness group this morning. After brief check in and announcements proceeded to talk about some stress management tips for use both at home and work. Discussed:

- Recognition of the warning signs of excessive stress (physical, mental, emotional)
- Taking care of the self (exercise, nutrition, sleep, leisure activities)
- Prioritize and organize (one thing at a time – avoid too much multitasking)

Good group discussion of these major areas with good examples brought forth by group. Group seems to have good understanding of active ways of managing stress both at home and in the work place.

Individual Note:

Client actively participated. Seemed interested in group discussion and topic. Offered good insight into stress related problems and how they personally have managed them.

Plan:

- Continue discussion and presentations on managing personal and work related stress.
- Present concept of ‘emotional intelligence’ and how important this is in managing life stressors.