

Workplace Stress



What is Workplace Stress

- Our emotions in the workplace are affected by social, occupational, environmental and psychological factors that, whether we're aware of it or not, we perceive as threats
- This stimuli can cause physical reactions we perceive as stress



Statistics

- Nearly 1 in 5 adults live with a mental illness
- Workplace stress has been reported to cause 120,000 deaths per year
- Approximately 65% of US workers surveyed have characterized work as being a very significant or somewhat significant source of stress in each year from 2019 to 2021
- For every \$1 spent on ordinary mental health concerns, employers see a \$4 return in productivity gains
- 83% of US workers suffer from work related stress
 - 54% of workers report that work stress affects their home life

(OSHA Workplace Stress Statistics)



Many Factors Can Affect Stress

- Management often sees stress as an individual problem and employees tend to see stress as a institutional problem (poor work environments, unrealistic expectations, harsh retributions for mistakes)
- However it is defined, stress can have serious negative impacts on employees and can result in days away from work and even physical issues



Workplace Stress and Workload

- The relation between job demands and the workers ability to meet those demands influence workplace stress and can affect everyone differently
- Workplace stress can be felt differently by people in similar situations



What Causes Workplace Stress?

1. Physical working conditions
2. Work overload
3. Role ambiguity
4. Lack of feedback
5. Personal issues
6. Role conflict
7. Employee to employee relations



Human Reactions to Workplace Stress

- Subjective (emotional)
 - Anxiety, aggression or guilt
- Behavioral
 - Accident proneness, trembling
- Cognitive
 - Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Physiological
 - Increased heart rate, gastrointestinal issues or high blood pressure
- Organizational
 - Absenteeism and poor productivity



Human Stress Response

1. Alarm

- When the stress is sensed and prepares the body for whatever is necessary to deal with the issue

2. Resistance

- When stress is maintained and the body initiates a greater physical response such as anxiety and will adapt to the stress (this is a limited reaction)

3. Exhaustion

- At the end of resistance, when stress is maintained, your body is not able to adapt to the stress any longer and begins to exhibit physical symptoms such as ulcers, tremors, rashes and emotional or mental breaks



Shift Work, Stress and Safety

Changes in work schedule can cause a lot of stress and fatigue
It can impact the circadian rhythm (the natural sleep and wake cycles that are governed by hormones)

It is important to understand these factors going into a different shift as our judgement might be impaired and reaction times slowed



Programs and Actions

- Employers can implement programs and take actions to reduce employee stress
 - Mental health and employee assistance programs provided
 - Recognize that areas of work can increase stress and take steps to reduce it
 - Workers have accurate, current and clear job descriptions
 - Management frequently checks in with employees to gauge mental stress before it becomes a problem
 - Child care is available
 - Workers have the resources they need to do their job
 - Workers are free to talk with one another during work
 - Employees are encouraged to put up personal items in their work area
 - Management appreciates humor in the workplace
 - Breaks are frequent and encouraged



Stress and Your Workplace

- You can take action in reducing the stress in your workplace too
 - Meditation
 - Walking
 - Taking your breaks
 - Getting enough sleep

If you are experiencing stress, talk to your supervisor or manager. Let them know the specifics about what is stressing you out and see if you can come to an agreement



Violence in the Workplace

- Violence in the workplace is a significant cause of stress
- It is important that workplace violence is dealt with quickly by management and there is training for the employees



What is Workplace Violence?

- Violent acts, behavior, or threats that occur in the workplace or are related to it. Such acts are harmful or potentially harmful to people, property, or organizational capabilities
- It can be a act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation or threatening or disruptive behavior



Do's for Supervisors

- Do remember that chemical dependence and emotional problems tend to be progressive. Left untreated, they get worse, not better.
- Do refer problem employees to the employee assistance program or to other mental health service providers.
- Do make it clear to employees that job performance is the key. They are expected to do what is necessary to maintain and improve their performance.
- Do make it clear that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.



Don'ts for Supervisors

- Don't try to diagnose the personal, emotional, or psychological problems of employees.
- Don't preach to employees. Counsel employees about attendance, tardiness, and job performance, not about how they should live their lives.
- Don't cover up for employees or make excuses for inappropriate behavior. Misguided kindness may allow problems to escalate and get out of hand.
- Don't create jobs to get problem employees out of the way. Stockpiling an employee simply gives them more time to brood and to allow resentment to build.
- Don't ignore the warning signs. The problems that they represent will not simply go away. Sooner or later, they will have to be handled. Sooner is better.



Employee Responsibilities

- Know the organizations workplace violence policy and comply with the standards
- If you are experiencing workplace violence or harassment, be sure to document interactions and incidents
- Learn the warning signs of inappropriate behavior for yourself and your fellow workers
- Follow the procedures in the workplace violence prevention program



Your Employer Should...

- Provide training for all personnel (this includes managers and supervisors)
- Establish a culture of safety
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy to workplace violence
- Encourage reporting of violent behaviors
- Develop a workplace violence prevention program and mission statement

End of Show