

Managing Stress in the Workplace

Helping Other Deal with Stress



Objectives

- Define stress
- Understand the causes of stress
- Learn managerial strategies for minimizing the effects of stress in the workplace
- Identify tips for recognizing your own stress signals and taking care of yourself

What is stress?

Stress:

- Your body's reaction to an event that stimulates you
- Stress isn't always a bad thing

What causes stress?

- **External Stressors** — Environmental factors or events
- **Internal Stressors** — Specific behaviors, ways of thinking, traits or lifestyle choices

How Stress Affects Us

- Work performance decreases
- Relationships suffer
- Lifestyle becomes unbalanced
- Physical symptoms appear
- Health problems arise or worsen
- Feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety become apparent and even overwhelming

Causes of Stress in the Workplace

- Change
- Conflicting priorities
- Time management issues
- Conflict among staff
- Disruptions/distractions
- Problems at home
- Ineffective communication

Change

- Recognize that change—good or bad—causes stress
- Stay one step ahead
- Be sensitive to employees' concerns
- Remind employees that they have control
- Be flexible
- Maintain a positive attitude

Time Management Issues

- Plan ahead
- Make lists
- Delegate effectively
- Use calendars and planners
- Avoid information overload
- Keep meetings to a minimum and on track

Conflicting Priorities

- Make chain of command clear
- Define goals
- Avoid vague directives

Conflict Among Staff

- Address conflicts before they escalate
- Practice good listening skills
- Respect differences
- Avoid judging
- Focus on the outcome, not the problem
- Emphasize teamwork
- Consider a mediator

Disruptions/Distractions

- Accept that disruptions happen
- Turn them to your advantage
- Be flexible
- Schedule uninterrupted time
- Pick certain times each day to return messages and e-mails

Problems at Home

- Child care
- Adult care
- Finances
- Health
- Relationships
- Offer help

Communication

- Keep the lines of communication open
- Give your support
- Ask for feedback
- Keep a sense of humor
- Be a good communicator

Avoiding Burnout

- Offer positive feedback and constructive criticism
- Provide recognition
- Give ample direction
- Set goals
- Limit overtime
- Be flexible
- Emphasize downtime
- Make time for fun

More Proactive Strategies

- Empathy
- Selection and placement of manpower
- Job analysis and design
- Counseling and training
- Resources available

Recognizing Dangerous Stress Levels

- Changes in work performance
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Withdrawal
- Talk of suicide
- Poor concentration
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns or behavior
- Giving away possessions, or discussion of will and funeral arrangements
- Other abnormal behaviors or changes

Recognizing Your Stress Signals

- Do I often feel out of control?
- Do I feel constant pressure to achieve?
- Do I have difficulty concentrating?
- Do I have feelings of depression, anxiety, helplessness or panic?
- Do I have difficulty falling asleep or do I wake frequently during the night?
- Do I suffer from frequent headaches?
- Have I experienced a significant loss of or increase in appetite?

Recognizing Your Stress Signals (cont.)

- Do I feel unusually tired?
- Do I cry (or feel the desire to cry) often?
- Do I feel faint or dizzy for no apparent reason?
- Do I experience frequent nausea?
- Do I experience shortness of breath or feel tightness in my chest without exertion?
- Do I regularly feel the need to smoke or have a drink to relax?

Taking Care of Yourself

- Set aside time for yourself every day
- Take an occasional “mental health” day
- Eat a balanced diet
- Take a multi-vitamin
- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise regularly
- Schedule regular physicals
- Get enough sleep
- Make a date with yourself

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