

HOW TO COMBAT STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE



Summary: *Stress can affect everyone at some point in their career. First it is important to recognize it and then try to fix or manage it.*

One-quarter of employees say their job is the **number one stressor in their life**, not family or finances. Workplace stress is a harmful response both physically and emotionally that happens when an employee is not able to meet their job demands because of a lack of capabilities, resources, or needs. High amounts of stress are not only bad for a person's health but it causes a higher turnover in the workplace.

There are four main physiological responses to stress.

1. The reticular activating system, an area near the brain stem, goes into overdrive to cause a state of keen alertness and a sharpening of vision and hearing.
2. Immune and digestive systems shut down temporarily.
3. Blood is directed away from the extremities, skin, and organs that aren't currently serving the body to the brain and large muscle groups.
4. Energy-providing compounds of glucose and fatty acids get released into the bloodstream.

The **causes of stress** can be:

- Unrealistically high workloads with unattainable deadlines making the employee feel rushed, overwhelmed, and under pressure.
- Insufficient workloads that leave employees feeling underused.
- A lack of control over work activities and tasks.
- Harassment and bullying.
- A lack of support and/or poor working relationships that leave the employee feeling isolated.
- Being asked to perform a job that they lack experience of training for.
- A bad working environment due to excessive temperatures or noise, bad lighting, uncomfortable seating, broken equipment, etc.

Signs of stress can be tiredness and irritability, physical illness like headaches or nausea, increased time off, poor sleep, reduced quality of work, indecisiveness, loss of sense of humor, changes in work hours, and jumpy or ill-at-ease.

The way to treat stress at work is by determining what the stress is being caused by. If overwork is the problem, take a vacation or break and do not take any work home with you. If the stress of being laid-off is getting to you, do what you can to be prepared in case it does happen. If you just hate the job then **consider a career change**. If you are having trouble getting along with a boss or co-worker, try to find a way to work it out. In the end, if stress is still causing you serious problems, seek professional help.

Photo: womendisease.com