

Stress in the Workplace



When people are suffering from stress, they are more likely to:

- Become momentarily but dangerously distracted
- Feel withdrawn or isolated from others
- Have emotional outbursts
- Neglect responsibilities
- Make errors in judgment
- Put their bodies under physical stress, increasing the potential for strains and sprains
- React poorly in normal activities that require hand-eye or foot-eye coordination

If stress on the job is interfering with your work performance, health, or personal life, it is time to take action. No matter what you do for a living, or how stressful your job is, there are things you can do to reduce your overall stress levels and regain a sense of control at work.

Stress can hit anyone at any level of the business and recent research shows that work-related stress is widespread and is not confined to particular sectors, jobs or industries.

Work-related stress is an adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work. Work-related stress may lead to a loss of focus, which is a common cause for workplace incidents.

Stress is not always bad. A little bit of stress can help you stay focused, energetic, and able to meet new challenges in the workplace. It keeps you on your toes during a presentation or alert to prevent accidents or costly mistakes. But in today’s hectic world, the workplace too often seems like an emotional roller coaster. Long hours, tight deadlines, and ever-increasing demands can leave you feeling worried, drained, and overwhelmed.

When stress exceeds your ability to cope, it stops being helpful and starts causing damage to your mind and body. Increased levels of work stress have been associated with increased rates of heart attack, hypertension and other disorders.

When you feel overwhelmed at work, you lose confidence and may become angry, irritable, or withdrawn. Other signs and symptoms of excessive stress at work include:

- Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed
- Apathy, loss of interest in work
- Fatigue or problems sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Stomach problems
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

When stress is mounting at work, take a quick break and move away from the stressful situation. Take a stroll outside the workplace if possible. Physical movement can help you regain your balance. Sometimes the best stress-reducer is simply sharing your stress with someone close to you.

Tips on managing stress at work:

- Manage your stress response
- Set realistic expectations
- Plan ahead
- Set priorities and limits
- Create manageable to do list
- Maintain healthy habits
- Acknowledge your feelings

Most importantly, ask for help. Your safety at work is paramount, you do not have to handle the stress alone. Report any feeling of stress to your supervisor or HR. If none of these steps relieve your feelings of work stress, consult a mental health provider, either on your own or through an Employee Assistance Program.