The growing problem of stress

We all experience some stress. Some more than others, and some more acutely than others. The role of managers and employers

Shocked staff often attribute poor performance and high levels of absence or sickness to difficult workloads, high work demands or bullying, harassment, discrimination and so on. Helping staff to identify and deal with high levels of stress can be an effective way of boosting productivity, engagement and morale.

AND OFFER SUPPORT

Assess the stress

Listens

Encourage open communication

Recognise achievement/value contribution

Telling signs

Performance wanes – ask staff what they think and feel.

Consistently late for work?

Irritable and restless?

Low mood?

Drinking too much and not eating properly?

Tips for employers – staying ALERT

Talk

Our chances of you sharing your experiences and feelings depend on your manager adopting a mode of communication that you regard as safe, open and supportive.

Avoid unhealthy habits

It is easier to detect informal signals of stress only when you see a change in someone’s lifestyle or their manner of working, but taking a fresh look at their working habits can be a very revealing

Keep active

Simple things like walking, cycling or leaving the car at home more often can help with stress levels. Exercise releases endorphins, our body's natural way of relieving stress.

Eat well-balanced meals

Eating well-balanced meals will help you to keep healthy and maintain your energy for busy days at work.

5 signs to look out for

Are you feeling overwhelmed and out of control?

Difficulties making decisions.

Mood changes (e.g. impatience, irrationality, irritability).

Worrying and feeling anxious.

For more information on managing/coping with the ever-increasing problem of stress in the workplace, take a look at the blogs and guides on the Fit for Work website (www.fitforwork.org) or call the free advice line on 0800 032 6235.

Short-term symptoms of stress

Physical/behavioural effects

Nervousness

Dry mouth or hoarse voice

Fatigue

Shortness of breath

Muscle spasms

Tightening of muscles and a tense feeling

Confusion

Memory problems

Insomnia

Irregular breathing

Physical and emotional exhaustion

Symptoms of longer-term stress

Physical/behavioural effects

Fatigue

Decreased concentration

Loss of appetite

Change in appetite

Feeling of tiredness and fatigue

Subjective insomnia

Increased bowel or stomach problems

Symptoms of longer-term stress

Mental/emotional effects

Anxiety

Feelings of helplessness

Mood changes

Feeling overwhelmed and out of control

Difficulty making decisions

Impatience

Increased dependence on alcohol, cigarettes, etc.

Irritability

Difficulty sleeping

Irrationality

Increased frequency of social/sexual difficulties

Withdrawal from family and friends

Increased frequency of social/sexual difficulties

Sleep problems

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Other effects of stress

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Advice | Referral | Support