

Work-related stress

Reason	Stress is the adverse reaction people have to too much pressure or other demands placed upon them. It is not an illness in itself, but it can lead to individuals not being able to perform at work and can have an impact on their health and wellbeing.
Outline	This talk covers the signs and symptoms of stress and how it can be effectively managed.

Signs and symptoms

The following are examples of the symptoms that people suffering with stress can display.

1. Behaviour – Finding it hard to sleep, being quiet and withdrawn, and avoiding difficult situations.
2. Physical – Tiredness, headaches, nausea, indigestion and chest pains.
3. Mental – Being indecisive, finding it hard to concentrate, loss of memory, and feelings of isolation.
4. Emotional – Being irritable, angry, anxious, losing their sense of humour and being hypersensitive.



**Do you know who to talk to if you think that you are suffering from work-related stress?
What can you change in order to lower stress levels?**



Further guidance on signs, symptoms and support for work-related stress can be found on the MIND website: www.mind.org.uk



Around 0.4 million working days every year are lost through stress-related absence.

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Stress - the problem

1. Anyone can suffer from stress, in any role and at any level of an organisation. If stress is not addressed it can lead to some common mental health conditions (such as anxiety and depression).
2. Work-related stress and common mental health conditions are closely linked, with similar signs and symptoms. For people with mental health conditions, work-related stress can also trigger or worsen an existing mental health condition.
3. The biggest barrier to obtaining support is the stigma associated with the condition.
4. People who work alone, or who may have particular responsibilities that set them apart from their work colleagues, can be particularly vulnerable.
5. Work-related stress accounts for around 37% of all work-related ill health cases.
6. Suicide is the single biggest cause of death in men aged 20-45 in the UK.

Causes of stress

Six main causes of work-related stress have been identified and the HSE describes them as follows.

1. **Demands.** Issues that should be considered include work patterns, workload and working environment.
2. **Control.** How much control the individual has over the way they do their work and, in particular, their work patterns and workload.
3. **Support.** Whether workers feel that adequate encouragement and resources are provided by the company, managers and colleagues, and if any systems are easy to access for concerned individuals.
4. **Role.** Workers at all levels must understand their role and how they fit into the organisation, and have the skills, experience and support to deliver, with no conflicting elements to the role.
5. **Change.** People (particularly vulnerable people) can be suspicious of the motives behind organisational change which, whether large or small, must be well managed and effectively communicated.
6. **Relationships.** Workers must not be subjected to unacceptable behaviour by anyone at work. Conflicts must be dealt with promptly and effectively. Bullying can take many forms; light-hearted banter to one person may be perceived as bullying by another. Both personal and work-related bullying behaviour may be experienced within a workplace.

Dealing with stress

If an individual feels that they may have symptoms of stress, they can do a number of things in order to address the challenges that are facing them.

1. Talk to someone they trust, with whom they can share issues and challenges.
2. Talk to their line manager about modifying their role, task or hours of work and any training or development required for an early resolution.
3. Practise relaxation techniques (these might include meditation or mindfulness, which research has shown can benefit individuals suffering from stress and depression).
4. Improve their diet; avoid foods high in refined sugars and cut down on alcohol, smoking and caffeine.
5. Avoid long, irregular working hours if at all possible.
6. Take regular breaks from the workplace and incorporate frequent moving and stretching exercises.
7. Take regular exercise.
8. Seek additional support and guidance (such as human resources or occupational health) if work is impacting your health.