



Stress: What's it costing you?

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There are as many versions of stress management do's and don'ts as there are individuals. I, for one, will not tell you that there is one single method, or diet, or some form of exercise that will solve your problems or your stress levels. I *can* tell you from firsthand experience, however, that ignoring the signs of stress can have you end up in a hospital bed!

This article is not intended to outline the symptoms of stress, or how to battle workplace stress, or even tips and tricks on how to avoid stress. This article's *entire* intent is to make employees and manager/supervisors aware of how serious this problem has become. Without fully understanding and admitting the impact stress has on us, stress management training is like spitting into the wind.

Take a look at this:

Statistics and Stress in the Work Place

Source: The ADD ADHD Help Center

Statistics can be rather telling especially when it comes to stress in the work place. Stress in the work place costs the United States business segment more than 300 billion dollars every year. Awareness of stress in the work place is important to employees because stress can cause both physical and emotional problems. Stress in the work place can lead to migraines, tense muscles, heart attacks, insomnia as well as problems with relationships.

As stress in the work place grows, an employee may be less motivated to work or come to work in the first place. Some of the costs for companies associated with stress in the work place include workers' compensation awards as well as tort and FELA judgments. Also, there are costs related to absenteeism, accidents, medical, legal, and insurance costs and training costs related to employee turnover.

Just how much of a financial burden does stress in the work place have on companies? A 1990 study by the firm of Foster Higgins & Company in New Jersey showed corporate health benefits cost the average company a stunning 45 percent of its after-tax profits.

A 2000 Integra Survey found 10 percent of respondents said they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred due to stress in the work place. Of the people surveyed in this particular group, 42 percent said yelling and other verbal abuse is commonplace.

The survey also revealed the following:

1. Fourteen percent said they work where machinery or equipment has been damaged because of work place rage. In addition, 2 percent said they had personally struck someone.
2. Thirty-four percent reported difficulty in sleeping because they were too stressed-out.
3. Sixty-five percent of workers confided stress in the work place had caused difficulties.

4. Twelve percent had called in sick because of job stress.
5. Almost one in four have been driven to tears because of work place stress.
6. Nineteen percent had quit a previous position because of job stress.
7. More than half said they often spend 12-hour days on work-related duties.
8. Sixty-two percent routinely find that they end the day with work-related neck pain.
9. Forty-four percent reported stressed-out eyes, 38 percent complained of sore hands.
10. Twenty-nine percent had yelled at co-workers because of workplace stress.

According to surveys by Princeton Survey Research Associates, Northwestern National Life Insurance Company, St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company, The Families and Work Institute and Yale University, stress in the work place is epidemic.

More than 40 percent of employees describe their careers as very or extremely stressful.

Stress in the work place is a real concern for the 25 percent of employees who view their jobs as the No. 1 stressor in their lives – more stressful than their marriage, credit card debt and difficult neighbors.

Compared to individuals in the past who devoted more time to family and leisure activities, the majority of employees felt they have more stress in the work place. More than one-fourth of those surveyed said they were often or very often burned out or stressed by their work.

One of the reasons employees feel more stress in the work place is because they have more demanding hours. According to a 1999 government report, the number of hours worked increased 8 percent in one generation to an average 47 hrs per week with 20 percent working 49 hours per week.

Other statistics also back up the fact that stress in the work place has become epidemic. The 2000 annual "Attitudes In The American Work place VI" Gallup Poll found 14 percent of respondents had felt like striking a co-worker in the past year, but didn't do it. Also, 80 percent of workers feel stress on the job with nearly half saying they needed help in learning how to manage stress in the work place. Furthermore, 42 percent say their co-workers need help managing stress in the work place.

I can't give a routine answer or solution to treat this growing ailment. As stated before, it's a matter of understanding, accepting and acting on the deeply rooted corporate cultures that have, in essence, created this monster.

If you do nothing, you know the situation will continue to get worse. On the other hand, if you start acknowledging the problem and follow up with training for all employees, you will surely lessen the impact of workplace stress, and create a better working environment for all.

For those really interested in the cost, \$300 billion in the USA. How many dollars do we spend in Canada? Look it up. Not too many of us have not known someone who has been on stress leave.

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