

Updates. . .

Feeling Burned Out?

You aren't alone. Each one of us is dealing with circumstances far outside of our control and simply functioning normally may seem to take a lot of effort!

Worker burnout is often a function of how you react to large amounts of stress. You may react to negative stress by feeling overwhelmed, irritable and worried. The key to preventing burnout and developing workplace resilience is to find ways to neutralize the stress or turn it into positive stress (where you feel motivated and excited).

Understanding Stress

Stress is a normal response to life changes. An ability to react to stress is crucial for human survival. Each of us possesses an innate "fight or flight" response mechanism to potentially harmful or dangerous situations. When faced with stress, the adrenal glands secrete stimulating hormones; extra glucose is burned for energy; the heart rate accelerates; blood is channeled to working muscles; and your brain releases epinephrine, cortisone and other hormones to get you ready for the challenge.

Causes of Work-related Stress

Causes of stress vary from person to person, and not everyone feels anxiety from the same stressors (causes of stress). For example, some people thrive in work environments where they have to meet fast-approaching deadlines each day. Other people find working under these conditions to be extremely stressful.

Sources of work-related stress commonly cited by employees include:

- Long or difficult commutes to work
- Disagreements with co-workers or supervisors
- Having disagreeable or difficult co-worker
- Experiencing verbal abuse
- Feeling overworked
- Feeling unappreciated
- Having difficult deadlines to meet
- Feeling underpaid
- Job insecurity

- Feeling tasks are monotonous, repetitive or redundant
- Diminished benefits
- Working long hours
- Having to take work home to complete
- Fear of physical violence in the workplace

Impact of Stress

While stress can keep you sharp and alert, prolonged stress can strain the body. Unrelieved tension builds up, causing an array of physiological and psychological symptoms that may include:

- A weakened immune system (lower white blood cell count)
- Headaches and migraines
- Stomachaches and ulcers
- Back and muscular pain
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Concentration difficulties
- Chronic fatigue
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Dizziness and lightheadedness
- Depression
- Panic attacks

Job stress also may lead to:

- Deterioration in work relationships
- Decreased productivity
- Low workplace morale
- Work absenteeism
- Substance abuse

Signs of Stress

Stress can manifest itself in a multitude of different physical or emotional changes in a person.

Physical signs of stress include:

- Headaches and migraines
- Stomachaches and ulcers
- A weakened immune system (making it harder for the body to fight viruses and bacteria)
- Back and muscle pain
- Grinding teeth
- Feeling lightheaded
- Trouble sleeping

- Fatigue
- Poor appetite
- Panic attacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Rashes, itching and hives
- Weight gain or loss

Emotional signs of stress include:

- Forgetfulness
- Excessive nervousness, anxiety and worry
- Increased anger and hostility
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Difficulty communicating
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Withdrawal from social interaction

Ways to Manage or Eliminate Stress

For people who feel stress, there are things to do to minimize the stress and anxiety. Here are some suggestions for coping with job-related stress:

- **Change how you view work:** Eliminate negative words, such as "I cannot do this," "No way" and "I hate this." When you get the urge to use negative words, try to stop yourself and think of positive words instead, such as "Yes," "I will/can," "Certainly" and "I want to succeed." Also, being bored can be just as stressful as being overworked. If you are bored or spend your time on repetitive tasks, try throwing yourself into whatever you are doing, and give it all of your concentration. You will find that time passes more quickly the more you are engaged with what you are doing and are improving the quality of your work. Another possibility is to volunteer for a new task that will challenge you.
- **Learn to manage your workload:** If your position allows you to decide which projects and tasks to undertake, try tactfully saying no to some requests. It is important to pitch in and help out when asked, but do not overextend yourself. For those tasks for which you are responsible, be sure to prioritize them and schedule them on a calendar. Plan each day so that you set realistic goals for getting your work done and meeting your deadlines. You can accomplish this by breaking bigger projects into smaller tasks. Also, try doing unpleasant tasks first so you can get them out of the way.
- **Seek out the positives in any situation:** If your responsibilities change or you find yourself in a negative situation, try to look on the bright side. What lessons can you take away from the situation? It may not sound easy, but if you can do this, your mood and your outlook at work will improve.
- **Change your work environment:** Is your workspace arranged in a way that prevents you from getting your work done? Perhaps you need

more sunlight, more space, more privacy or a more comfortable work wardrobe. Come up with a list of reasonable suggestions for change, and ask your supervisor if he or she will allow you to pursue them. You can also hang a favorite art poster or bring a plant to change your environment.

- **Take better care of yourself:** You can improve your attitude by improving your health and nutrition habits. Ways to do this include eating healthier lunches and snacks (more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and less saturated fats and refined sugars); drinking water; and exercising, even just a few minutes each day. Simple stretches and deep breathing at your desk can leave you feeling refreshed and ready to tackle more challenges. If you can, take short breaks to let off steam, or go for a walk at lunch to change your surroundings.
- **Make the most of your time away from work:** It can be a challenge, but do not think about work when you are not there. Try to spend a few minutes each day doing something just for you: exercising; reading; watching a movie; working on a craft or project; or exploring new parks, shops and restaurants in your neighborhood.
- **Try to make work as fun as possible:** Make a day special by bringing in treats or a special lunch for you and/or your co-workers. Turn monotonous tasks into a game.
- **Vary your routine:** We all can get in ruts, such as taking the same route to work, having lunch at the same time every day or attending the same meetings every week. If your job allows for it, change your daily routine so you take in new scenery, meet new people and pass your time differently.
- **Exercise before going to work:** Physical exertion is a great way to relieve or reduce stress. Even a walk in the morning helps.
- **Smile:** It seems too easy, but simply having a smile on your face helps reduce stress levels. Think about how it is more enjoyable to be greeted by a smiling person than by somebody who is frowning or who looks mad. Give other people a smile when you see them.
- **Avoid confrontational situations:** Ask if it is possible to work on a different team or on different tasks if constantly stressed out by the same co-workers. If there is one person causing the conflict, see if it is possible to include other co-workers in interactions with that person; this may help defuse the situation.
- **Delegate tasks:** Many people try to do too much, even though they work in a "team" environment. Allow other people to do tasks appropriately.
- **Talk with your supervisor:** Employers do not want to have a burned-out workforce. High job-related

stress levels lead to high job turnover rates. Job turnover cost employers money. Your supervisor or HR department may have some suggestions for minimizing the stress you feel at work.

- Take a vacation: If you have accumulated vacation days, make a point of using them. During vacation time, leave work behind and spend time doing things for yourself. During COVID it may be hard to travel; but taking a day off here and there for a staycation may be just the refresh you need.
- Seek the assistance of a therapist or mental health counselor: These professionals have ideas and possible solutions to help reduce and eliminate work-related stress.

Article from ComPsych Guidance Resources — Your EAP



Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

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You can also talk to a confidential counselor any time of the day. This is a benefit you'll definitely want to check out. Talk to a confidential counselor available 24/7: 877-533-2363

Register online by going to guidanceresources.com
Your company Web ID: MY5848i
Your company Name (first 5 letters): The N

If you have any trouble registering, contact HR or call Guidance Resources at: 877.533.2363

Gratitude Challenge Winner

Remember that time—long, long ago (February)—when we had a gratitude challenge? Well, three grateful employees completed the challenge: Donna Hessel, Veronica Cenicerros, and Camden Ross. Of the finishers, we drew a name, and Camden Ross is the winner of a \$25 Amazon gift card. Way to be grateful, Camden! —Wellness Committee

What to Watch for On My Advice Slip

Every payday you receive an advice slip stating how much you have just been paid and how much paid time off you have available, but what else should you be looking at on your advice slip? Here are just a few suggestions:

- Are the expected amount of taxes being withheld?
- Is your mailing address correct?
- Are the hours you are being paid for correct?

For any changes or questions, contact HR



Dateline . . .

August

| | |
|----|--------|
| 12 | PAYDAY |
| 26 | PAYDAY |

September

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| 7 | LABOR DAY, PPPA Holiday |
| 9 | PAYDAY |
| 23 | PAYDAY |

