Stress in the Workplace
Meeting the Challenge
Workplace Strategies and Solutions

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Health Advocate, Inc.
and the National Women’s Health Resource Center
Overview

- Incidence of stress doubled from 2006-07; economy major factor
- ¾ of Americans report job stress
- Costs U.S. businesses $200-300 billion/year
- Stress management, a sound business strategy
Outline

- What is job stress?
- Health consequences
- Women employees, work/life stress
- Costs to businesses
- Workplace strategies
- Questions
- Resources
Stressed Workers = Stressed Bottom Line

- Healthcare costs double for workers who report stress
- Costs business $200-300 billion/year
  -- half due to presenteeism: employees are at work, but impaired
- Liability, disability growing concern
- Absenteeism, recruiting, rehiring, retraining
What is Stress?

- A biological event
  *Protective, Automatic...and Primitive*

- A psychological experience
  *Response to a threat-real or perceived*

- A self-perpetuating process
Stress and its Impact

- Event
- Reaction
The Stress Reaction

thoughts

emotions

sensations
Does it Really Matter? hostility & cynicism

“A cynical and untrusting view of mankind, the frequent experience of negative emotions when dealing with others, and the frequent expression of overt anger and aggression when faced with frustration or problems.”

- Barefoot et al.: Hostility, CHD
- Incidence and total mortality
- A 25 year follow-up study of 255 physicians
Stress Enhances Performance

But only up to a point...

Yerkes, R. M., & Dodson, J. D. (1908) The relation of strength of stimulus to rapidity of habit-formation. *Journal of Comparative Neurology and Psychology, 18*, 459-482
What is Work Stress?

Useful two-dimensional model of job strain

**Job Demand**
- Pace
- Time Pressure
- Heavy workload
- Interruptions
- Noise level, distractions
- Conflicting demands

**Job Control**
- Decision authority
- Decision latitude
- Skill discretion
Two Dimensional Job Strain Model

Karasek 1979

Demand (stress)

High Demand
High Control
Research Manager
High School Teacher

Low Demand
High Control
Forest Ranger
Dentist
Repairman

High Demand
Low Control
Nurses Aid
Assembly Line

Low Demand
Low Control
Night Watchman
Mail Delivery

Low Decision Latitude (no control)
Other Important Factors

- Poor support from supervisors or co-workers
- Lack of clarity about work role
- Difficult relationships
- Absence of recognition or reward
- Poor change management
- Work/life issues
- Economy, finances, job security
Stress and Women

- Work-family conflict more intense
  -- The ‘second shift’
  -- Much more likely to miss work for family

- Women’s major work stressors:
  -- Lack of autonomy
  -- Interpersonal conflict
Stress Makes People Sick

- Heart and cardiovascular problems, High BP
- Anxiety, depression
- Substance abuse
- Infectious diseases
- Impaired immune function
- Back pain
- Conflicts
- Injuries
- Diabetes
- Mild cognitive impairment
- Certain cancers
- Ulcers
...and Other Health Consequences

- Irritability
- Short temper
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Chest tightness
- Headaches

- Teeth grinding
- Muscle tightness
- Upset stomach
  …and more!
How Stress Plays Out at Work

- Presenteeism:
  -- Mistakes
  -- More time on tasks, poor quality work
  -- Impaired social functioning
  -- Burnout
  -- Depression, anger, resentment
  -- Fatigue
  -- Job dissatisfaction, low morale

- Injuries, accidents
- Poor customer evaluations
What’s the Price to Pay?

- Presenteeism can lead to costly disability
- Higher absenteeism, medical costs
- Higher claims
- Turnover; retention, recruitment, retraining
- Lower customer satisfaction
- Unhealthy coping leads to *more* costs --smoking, drinking, gambling, etc
Now is the Time for Action

- Presenteeism today can turn into disability tomorrow
- Growing aging workforce, more prone to disability
- Elderly caregiving will grow, added stress
Dual Strategy: Organization and Individual

- There is no single simple solution...so look for all the simple solutions
- For the organization: values and orientation comes first
- For employee: stress is inevitable, distress is optional
- Cultivate proactive stress management and positive coping
Step #1: Realistic Evaluation

- How does your company value health and productivity?
- What resources are available?
- Form a wellness committee
- Ask employees
  -- surveys
  -- focus groups
  -- HRAs
- Consultants (usually last resort!)
Where to Focus?

- Work/life balance
- Management style
- Define workers roles, workloads
- Work schedules
  -- flex time, telecommute
- Environmental issues
  -- noise reduction, etc.
One-Size-Does-Not-Fit-All

- Health Advocacy
- Wellness programs with stress component
- EAP
- Exercise/stress breaks built in to the day
- Concierge solutions, work/life balance
Individual Stress Management

- Education: easy and effective
  -- recognize causes and symptoms
  -- offer coping strategies
- Individual stress management training
- Simple, brief respites built into schedule
- Physical activity when possible
Emerging Approach: Mindfulness

- Simple stress reduction technique
- Widely utilized in health care to enhance quality of life; cultivate coping
- Teaches individuals to find internal balance, stillness
- Taught in more than 200 U.S. medical schools, hospitals
With everything else I’ve got on my mind, now you’re telling me I have to think about breathing?
Try Something Different:
don’t go somewhere else
put yourself right in the center

- Event
- Reaction
New Age mumbo jumbo? Not for millions of Americans who meditate for health and well-being. Here's how it works.

THE SCIENCE OF MEDITATION
How to Sharpen Your Mind

- The Perils of Multi-Tasking
- The Power of the Midlife Brain
- The Magic of Meditation
- Ways to Keep Alzheimer's at Bay
- How Coffee Perks Up Your IQ
Mood after Mindfulness-Based Worksite Program

Profile of Mood States Before-After Measures
Scheie Eye Hospital, Philadelphia n=52
Mindfulness and Emotional Exhaustion
Maslach Burnout Inventory

Scheie Eye Hospital, Philadelphia n=52
Mindfulness Training and Patient Satisfaction with Nurses

I\text{ntervention}

\textbf{Nursing staff concern for patient needs}

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Stress Management

Does Work at Work

- GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)
- Bank of America
- Delnor Community Hospital
Lower Stress = Lower Costs

Keys to success include:

- Ongoing management commitment
- Customized
- Multiple approaches
- Incentives, rewards for small changes
Questions?
Helpful Websites

- The American Institute of Stress: [www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)
- International Foundation of Education, Benefits and Compensation: [www.ifebp.org](http://www.ifebp.org)
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)
- The American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [www.4women.gov](http://www.4women.gov)
Health Advocate, Inc

Health Advocate is the nation’s leading independent healthcare advocacy and assistance company, providing personalized help to resolve healthcare and insurance-related issues. The company offers a spectrum of advocacy, wellness and HR solutions to save time and money.

www.HealthAdvocate.com

National Women’s Health Resource Center

The not-for-profit NWHRC is the leading independent health information source for women. The NWHRC develops and distributes objective women’s health information based on the latest advances in medical research and practice.

www.healthywomen.org
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