

# EmployeeCare News

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## Stress in the Workplace

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The impact of stress has serious consequences on a company's bottom line. Both time and money are often lost due to workplace stress and anxiety, two of the most common threats, as well as compromised productivity.

Many people feel that their job is one of the most stressful things in their life. That is why it is essential for supervisors, managers, and employees to recognize the signs and take steps to reduce work-related stress and anxiety.

### What is Stress?

Stress is a feeling of being tense, overwhelmed, worn out, or exhausted. A small amount of stress can be motivating, but too much stress can make even small tasks seem daunting. Everyone experiences stress at some time. Stress can stem from problems with family, health, work, or school. Stress is often caused by life events, such as a change in responsibilities, job loss or promotion, death of a loved one, or illness.

### Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress can have a significant impact on your physical and mental health which may ultimately affect your productivity. The following are signs that stress is negatively affecting your productivity:

**Lack of energy:** Stress can leave you feeling physically and mentally drained.

**Lack of focus:** Stress can consume your mind, making it extremely difficult to focus on the task at hand.

**Constant worry:** Stress can make you constantly worry about something that may or may not happen.

**Reduced creativity:** Stress consumes your mind, preventing your ability to come up with new and creative ideas.

**Negative effects on personality:** Stress may cause you to snap at your peers without even realizing you are doing it. This can affect teamwork and the productivity of peers, as well.

If you notice any of these signs in yourself, consider how recent life events or changes in responsibilities may be causing you stress. Addressing the root of your stress can help reduce its effects on your productivity and health.



### Acute Symptoms

Symptoms that occur before or during a stressful situation

Physical	Emotional/Cognitive	Behavioral
Asthma	Worry	Nail biting
Headaches	Irritability	Constant thoughts about stressors
Migraines	Anger	Restlessness
Back pain	Loss of motivation	Teeth grinding
Sweating	Difficulty concentrating	Disrupted sleep, diet, and exercise
Nausea	Mood instability	Interpersonal conflict
Indigestion	Decreased sex drive	Social withdrawal
Chest pain	Memory problems	Substance use
Fatigue		Procrastination

### Chronic Symptoms

Symptoms and consequences of long-term stress

Heart disease	Depression	Sleep disorders
Anxiety disorders	Memory impairment	Weakened immune system
Skin diseases	Substance use	Poor diet and exercise habits

### Stress and Productivity

One of the most common ways stress affects the overall production of a company is through absenteeism. Stress-related symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping, high blood pressure, and headache take a toll, causing even those with good attendance to miss more work.

These are some other ways stress may affect your company's productivity:

**Staff turnover:** Stress may lead employees to find a less stressful job.

**Tardiness:** When employees who are typically punctual begin to have an increase in tardiness, it may be an indication of stress. Stress and anxiety often interrupt sleep, making it more difficult to wake up in the morning.

**Peer relationships:** Stress can cause employees to isolate and become deprived of the energy needed to make small talk.

**Quality of work:** Stress can lead to fatigue, personality changes, withdrawal from others, and a decrease in enthusiasm.

## EmployeeCare

Keeping you informed from EmployeeCare, your employee assistance program, a benefit extended by your organization to all employees and their household members. Some exceptions related to the terms of each individual company contract may apply.

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### Services Include:

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- Substance abuse and wellness education groups
- In-service for sexual harassment, diversity, violence in the workplace
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## How to Reduce Stress

It is not only important to be aware of how stress can affect you and your employees, but also how to change it. The following are some helpful ideas.

**Get physical:** Exercise can release endorphins and have a positive impact on stress. It can also help you sleep better and aide in relaxation.

**Try a creative outlet:** Focusing on a creative, not work-related project is a great way to stimulate your brain.

**Make your workspace more comfortable:** Add a few cozy elements to your workspace to make it feel like home.

**Focus on positives:** Stressed thoughts often focus on the negatives. Set aside time each day to write down at least three positive things from your day.

**Speak with a qualified professional:** You may not be able to change the events that cause stress, but you can change the way you think about them. Your EAP counselor can help you find ways to address and cope with stress.

## Stress Management Tips

**Keep in mind that stress is not a bad thing:** Stress motivates us to work towards solving our problems. Reframing thoughts to view stress as an acceptable emotion, or as a tool, has been found to reduce many of the negative symptoms associated with it. The goal is to manage stress, not to eliminate it.

**Talk about your problems, even if they will not be solved:** Talking about your stressors releases hormones in your body that reduce the negative feelings

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associated with stress. Time spent talking with friends and loved ones is valuable, even when you have a lot on your plate.

**Prioritize your responsibilities:** Focus on completing quick tasks first. Having too many “to-dos” can be stressful, even if none of them are very big. Quickly knocking out the small tasks will clear up your mind to focus on larger responsibilities.

**Focus on the basics:** Stress can start a harmful cycle where basic needs are neglected, which leads to more stress. Make a point to focus on your basic needs, such as eating well, keeping a healthy sleep schedule, exercising, and other forms of self-care.

**Do not put all your eggs in one basket:** People who are over-involved in one aspect of their lives often struggle to deal with stress when that area is threatened. Balance your time and energy between several areas, such as your career, family, friendships, and personal hobbies.

**Set aside time for yourself:** When personal time is neglected, everything else tends to suffer. Set aside time to relax and have fun every day, without interruptions.

**Keep things in perspective:** In the heat of the moment, little problems can feel bigger than they are. Take a step back and think about how important your stressors are in a broader context. Will they matter in a week? In a year? Writing about your stressors will help you develop a healthier perspective.