

# ***Stress – An Organizational Perspective: We Don't Stress Alone***

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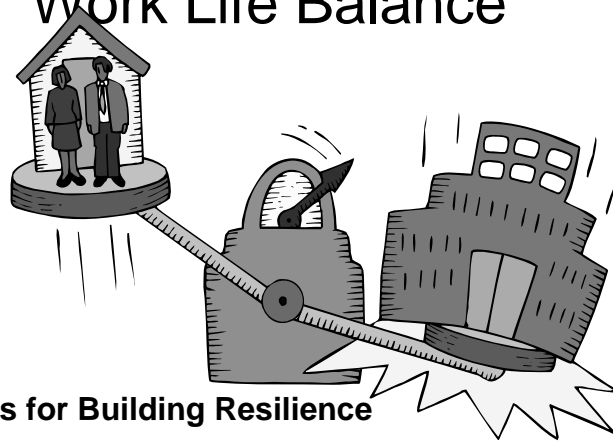
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## **Agenda**

- Stress Resilience, Balance and Burnout
- The Economic Impact of Stress at the Workplace
- Stressors and Organizational Coping Patterns
- Strategies to Enhance Stress Resiliency

## Work Life Balance



### Strategies for Building Resilience to Stress

- People do not react the same
- People use varying strategies
- Resilience involves flexibility and balance

## Stress Can Wear Down Your Health

- Immune system weakens; > symptoms
  - Fast-paced lives get faster – 24/7 world
  - Information overload
  - More to do, less resources to do it with
  - Communication and understanding suffer
  - With burnout, first to go is compassion (bad manners)
  - Poor stress resiliency
- = Businesses are feeling it



How one handles Stress: Eustress v.s. Distress

Most experience symptoms of distress everyday... often we accept it as part of the day

➤ **Physical skeletal muscles:**

- tension headaches, frowning, grinding teeth, jaw pain, stuttering, neck aches, back pain

➤ **Physical autonomic system:**

- migraines, ringing in ears, enlarged pupils, blushing, dry mouth, hives, rashes, difficulty breathing, heart pain, cold hands and feet, nervous diarrhea

➤ **Mental:**

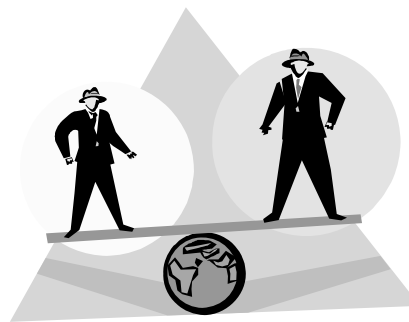
- anxiety, worry, guilt, increased anger/frustration, nightmares, racing thoughts, forgetfulness, loneliness, frequent crying, disorganization, concentration problems

➤ **Behavioral:**

- frequent lateness, inattention to grooming, rushing around, pacing, edginess, perfectionism, drugs, smoking, overuse of alcohol, sleep problems



## Demands on Your Energy



DEMANDS - Drains on your time and energy

SUPPLIES - Sources of energy and renewal

**Resilience** involves maintaining flexibility and balance in your life as you deal with stressful circumstances and traumatic events.

## The Overworked Employee

- People out of “work-life balance” suffer more stress-related problems
- Employees who tend to work long hours reach burnout faster, often losing their jobs as a result
- Data shows that employees who “have no life” outside of work are less productive
- People who feel they have to make job or family sacrifices end up too exhausted to manage everything they want to accomplish



University of Michigan data

## Symptoms of Burnout

- Occasional frustration, anger, depression, dissatisfaction, anxiety are normal; with **burnout**, these become chronic / enlarged
- Emotional fatigue or depletion; even despair
- Withdrawal & interpersonal problems
- Declining performance
- Substance abuse in attempt to self-medicate
- Feelings of meaningless or a “why bother?” attitude
- Illness and absenteeism (1998) Dr. Beverly Potter
- Presenteeism: At work, but not very productive



## Causes of Burnout

- **Feeling Powerless:** Believing you can't control what happens to you is very threatening



- **Rewards are missing:**
  - Lack of praise, feelings of satisfaction, challenge, high esteem, raises, bonuses, promotions, recognition, credibility, adventure, fun
  - No way to avoid the punitive and unpleasant, e.g. criticism, loneliness, debt, fear, guilt, bad relationships
- **Learned Helplessness:** Having no control undermines motivation; handicaps ability to adapt or learn (Martin Seligman)

## Women and Stress

### Stress affects women differently than men:

- Women who work full-time and have children under the age of 13 report the greatest stress worldwide
- Women react to stress differently than men
  - Men: Fight or flight
  - Women: Fight or Flight **and** "Tend and Befriend"
- Oxytocin: A natural sedative



Taylor, UCLA

## Racial / Ethnic & Cultural Disparities



Stress-related diseases affect people of various populations disproportionately:

- > stroke (3-4x), hypertension and diabetes among African American
- > diabetes among Hispanic/Latino
- > suicide among Mexican immigrant
- > mental health disorders among refugees and people with low economic status

>= greater incidence

## The Economic Impact of Stress at the Workplace

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has declared **stress a hazard of the workplace**



**\$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the U.S. due to stress:**

- Stress-related compensation claims
- Reduced productivity and “presenteeism”
- Absenteeism
- Health insurance costs
- Direct medical expenses (nearly 50% higher for workers who report stress)
- Employee turnover

Centers for Disease Control and  
the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



## The Economic Impact of Stress at the Workplace



- 60 to 90 percent of doctors' office visits are for **stress related problems** (Herbert Benson, M.D., Harvard Medical School)
- If you are under stress, you had **46% higher health expenditures**
- Stress costs companies in terms of employees' health and vitality, capacity for critical thinking, innovative competencies, and competitiveness.

## Workplace stress continues to grow.

- Stress is linked to physical and mental health, *and* decreased willingness to take on new and creative endeavors.
- Job burnout experienced by 25% to 40% of U.S. workers is blamed on **stress**.
- More than ever before, **employee stress is being recognized as a major drain on corporate productivity and competitiveness.**
- **Depression, only one type of stress reaction, is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21st century, responsible for more days lost than any other single factor.**

Centers for Disease Control and  
the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

## Major Depression: Stress Related Illness



- As common as high blood pressure, or arthritis
- Consumes \$12 billion direct cost and \$31 billion indirect cost
- Affects 11 million people annually –
- Affects 1 in 8 persons over a lifetime
- Estimates say by 2020, only heart disease will contribute a larger worldwide economic burden than depression

Claxton JOEM 1999

## Stress increases Depression and Lowers Productivity

- “Persistent or severe stress is a risk for depression, an untreated disorder with profound personal and societal costs including productivity.”
- “With productivity demands rising and technology quickening the pace of life, there is no question that emotional health is on the minds of employees and employers alike.”

Business and Health (2000)  
“The Best Defense,” Vernarec

## Gender and Depression

- Females lifetime prevalence 21.3%, annual 12.9%
- Males lifetime prevalence 12.7%, annual 7.7%
- Overall lifetime prevalence: 17.1%, annual 10.3%

Business and Health Briefings 1999





## Sources of Employee Stress



Bellingham, Cohen, Edwards, Allen. (1990) The Corporate Culture Sourcebook

### Organizational Environment

- Constricted Communication
- Flip Flops, Inadequate Planning
- Crisis Climate, Short Term Thinking
- Decisions Pulled Up, Overcontrolling
- Coordination Issues; Vision Unclear
- Politics, Turf or Go It Alone Mentality
- Poor seating or ergonomics
- Bad lighting or air, little healthy food
- Parking

### Personal Arena

- Commute and Traffic
- Home / social stressors & irritations
- Financial
- Health challenges
- Mismatch of values and actions

## What results: Employee Stress Symptoms

- Unhealthy Behaviors
- More Illness & Injury
- Lower Energy
- Less Work Done (Presenteeism)
- “Negative” Communications
- More Defensiveness
- People Leaving / Turnover



Bellingham, R., Cohen, B., Edwards, M., Allen, J. (1990) The Corporate Culture Sourcebook

## So, What's the Solution?



## What can worksites do?

- Provide opportunities for awareness and behavior change
  - Large group Seminars and small group workshops
  - In-depth multi-session stress resiliency & communication training
  - Wellness / Health coaching
  - Referrals to EAP, financial counseling, skills training
  - Behavior change support groups
  - Wellness–on–Wheels, Water Cooler Programs
- Create stress resilience supporting environment
  - Stress Buster Stations, Fitness Breaks
  - Designated space to stretch, meditate, relax
  - Walking trails, yoga and Tai Chi classes
  - Healthy food choices, “bring-in habits,” birthdays, parties and catering
- Devise policies & a culture that promote stress-resiliency
  - Reasonable, flexible work hours, take vacation time
  - Value sleep and rest
  - Stress-resilient attitude and positive self talk
  - Physical activity, nutrition, adequate hydration, non-smoking
  - Communication skills, respect for differences



## What can leaders and employees do at the Individual Level?

### Well Balanced Employees:



- Use long-range planning, goal setting and a positive attitude to help organize “life”
- Evaluate priorities and focus on “big picture” ...and let go of perfectionism
- See warning lights go off when demands on work intrude on family time or when family responsibilities distract from job
- Model: Take care of themselves (relaxation, physical activity, nutrition, sleep)
- Understand that leisure / private time is essential for energy rejuvenation
- Develop a solid support system

## Well-being Partnership

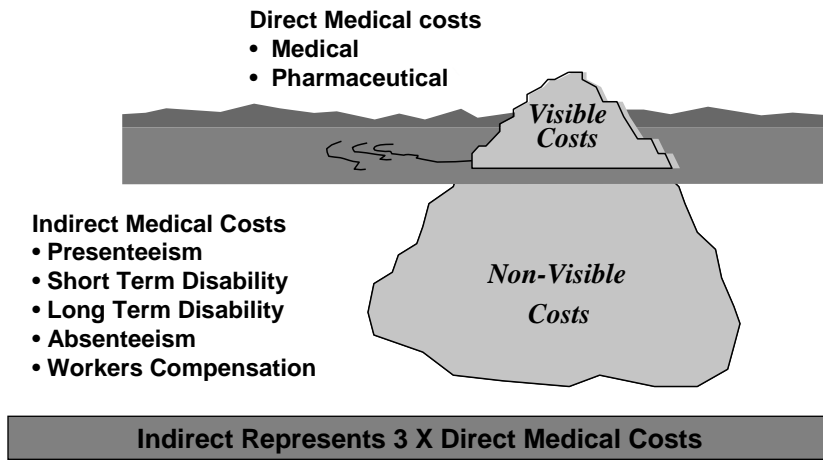
### 5 key principles

1. Both parties commit to **employee wellbeing** as a core value
2. Open communication forms the foundation for the day-to-day relationship
3. Employees manage their own careers
4. Employees gain “employable” security by building critical skills
5. Accountability for performance extends to all levels of the organization



Pasternack and Viscio (1999) in *The Centerless Corporation*

## Health & Productivity Costs Iceberg Phenomenon

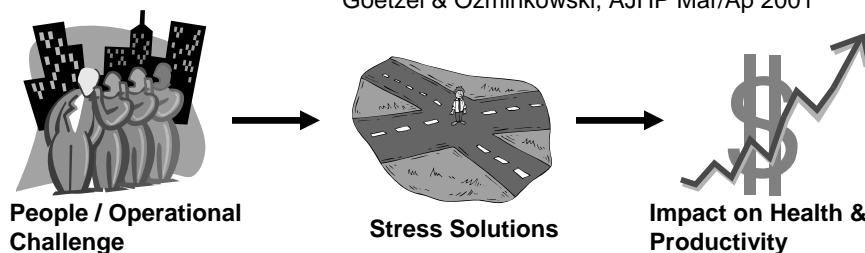


Anderson, Absolute Advantage (2003)

## Health & Productivity Management

“How to best leverage the human assets of an organization so that improvements in the individual and organizational health lead to improvements in organizational productivity and for commercial enterprises, bottom-line profitability.”

Goetzel & Ozminkowski, AJHP Mar/Ap 2001



## Resources

- Mark Tager, M.D., Stephen Willard (2001) **Power Source: How People and Organizations Can Transform Stress and Manage Change**, [www.workskills-lifeskills.com](http://www.workskills-lifeskills.com), 1-877-967-5567
- Mark J. Tager, M.D., Harry L. Woodward, Ph.D. (2002) **Leadership in Times of Stress and Change**, [www.workskills-lifeskills.com](http://www.workskills-lifeskills.com), 1-877-967-5567
- Beverly Potter (1998) **Overcoming Job Burnout: How to renew Enthusiasm for Work**, Ronin Publishing, [www.docpotter.com](http://www.docpotter.com)
- R. Bellingham, B. Cohen, M. Edwards, J. Allen (1990) **The Corporate Culture Sourcebook**, Human Resource Development Press