

# Managing Stress

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# Cost of Stress

- Workplace stress costs the UK in excess of £530 million.
- The number of employee claims are also currently on the increase.

## Example costs – Case Law

### **Barber V Somerset County Council 2004**

Estimated cost to the employer of “Management failure” was over £100,000.

This included:

- Damages
- Sick pay
- Ill health pension

# Stress

## What is stress ?

Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way.



## Effects of chronic stress

Pain

Heart Disease

Digestive Problems

Sleep problems

Depression

Obesity

Autoimmune diseases

skin conditions

# What is too much Stress ?

This differs from person to person.

What one person would thrive on another would crumble.

Things that influence your stress tolerance level

- Your support network
- Your sense of control
- Your attitude and outlook
- Your ability to deal with your emotions
- Your knowledge and preparation

# Causes of Stress

## **Common external causes of stress**

- Major life changes
- Work
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial problems
- Being too busy
- Children and family

## **Common internal causes of stress**

- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations
- Perfectionism

# Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

## Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying

## Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds

## Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

## Behavioral Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

# Causes of Stress

## What's Stressful For You?

- What's stressful for you may be quite different from what's stressful to your best friend, your spouse, or the person next door.

For example:

- Some people enjoy speaking in public; others are terrified.
- Some people are more productive under deadline pressure; others are miserably tense.
- Some people are eager to help family and friends through difficult times; others find it very stressful.
- Some people feel comfortable complaining about bad service in a restaurant; others find it so difficult to complain that they prefer to suffer in silence.
- Some people may feel that changes at work represent a welcome opportunity; others worry about whether they'll be able to cope.

# How you cope with Stress

## Unhealthy ways people use to cope with stress:

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Over eating or under eating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)



# How you cope with Stress

## Dealing with Stressful Situations:

### The Four A's

#### **Change the situation:**

- Avoid the stressor.
- Alter the stressor.

#### **Change your reaction:**

- Adapt to the stressor.
- Accept the stressor.

# How you cope with Stress

Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

# How you cope with Stress

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

- **Exercise regularly**
- **Eat a healthy diet.**
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.**
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.**
- **Get enough sleep.**

# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

## What is SAD?

- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that has a seasonal pattern.
- The episodes of depression tend to occur at the same time each year, usually during the winter.
- As with other types of depression, the two main symptoms of SAD are a low mood and a lack of interest in life. You may also be less active than normal and sleep more.

**NOT TO BE MISINTURPRETED AS STRESS!**

# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

## Symptoms Include:

- Lethargy, lacking in energy, unable to carry out a normal routine
- Sleep problems, finding it hard to stay awake during the day, but having disturbed nights
- Loss of libido, not interested in physical contact
- Anxiety, inability to cope
- Social problems, irritability, not wanting to see people
- Depression, feelings of gloom and despondency for no apparent reason
- Craving for carbohydrates and sweet foods, leading to weight gain
- It is always important to consult your doctor if you believe you have SAD as it may be another condition

# **Employees Assistance Programme**

Support is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We aim to answer your questions Immediately, or refer you to the most appropriate advisor, counsellor, or source of information.

Tel : 0800 282 193