



## STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION TRAINING SECTION 7





## **7.0 STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION TRAINING**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section considers a proactive approach that raises awareness of the symptoms of stress and enables individuals to develop coping skills.

Training to employees and managers will enable people recognise the nature of stress, identify areas that need improvement and ensure that risks are properly controlled.

This section contains a stress management awareness training presentation and background notes. This can complement and support the council's stress management policy and will also provide a mechanism for raising awareness of the support available, such as flexible working practices and employee counselling services.

It is important to be clear stress management training can and can not achieve or whether the training is provided on a voluntary or compulsory basis.

This section also includes a leaflet used by Lisburn City Council to raise awareness of work related stress with employees. It can be used to advise employees that you have introduced a Work Related Stress Policy and it sets out the basics such as a definition of stress, statistics recognising stress, the legal position, duties of line managers and employees.

It could be adapted to suit the needs of your own organisation. In terms of distribution it can be printed as an A5 double sided leaflet and attached to payslips and made available on the Council's intranet.

The effectiveness of the stress management training should be evaluated and reviewed to ensure that it is achieving its aims.



## 7.2 Work Related Stress Awareness Training



**Course Tutor**  
**Company Name**



### Why Tackle Stress?

- About 1 in 5 people say that they find their work stressful.
- Over half a million people report experiencing work-related stress at a level that they believed was making them ill.
- Each case of stress-related ill-health leads to an average of 29 working days lost.
- In 2001 an estimated 13.4 million working days were lost to stress, depression and anxiety.

### What is Stress?

Occupational or work-related stress is defined by the HSE as:

“The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”

### The Mechanics of Stress:

- Relates back to the time of the hunter-scavenger.
- Stress helped us survive danger.
- When a threat is perceived the brain sends message to stand and fight or run to escape the danger - ‘fight or flight’.
- Cardiovascular and respiratory overdrive.
- Increased blood circulation and oxygenation.
- Blood sugar levels increase.
- Moves us into ‘attack’ mode.
- Also affected is the part of the brain that regulates emotion and in this state of alert it becomes difficult to be rational.
- In the modern world we have to ‘control ourselves’ and ‘deal with it’.
- If this is excessive or prolonged it can lead to illness.



### Three Important Definitions:

1. Stress – the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.
2. Stressor – stressful events/situations that produce a reaction in the individual that is unpleasant.
3. Stress reaction – physical and emotional response to a stressor (anxiety, depression to serious emotional disability).

### Cause and Effect:

#### Stressors:

- Physical – heat, cold, pain, fatigue, injury, hunger etc.
- Psychological – job security, money, relationships etc.
- Stress Reaction:
  - Physical – heart, stomach, tension etc.
  - Psychological – anxious, apprehensive, annoyed, depressed etc.





### **Nature of Stress:**

- Pressure itself is not necessarily bad.
- Most people need some level of pressure in order to function/remain motivated.
- When the pressure experienced is perceived as excessive by an individual that ill-health can result.

### **Is it an illness?**

- It is not a disease or illness.
- It can lead to increased problems with ill health if it is prolonged or particularly intense, including heart disease, back pain, anxiety and depression.
- It can also lead to unhealthy practices such as drinking too much caffeine, alcohol or smoking cigarettes.



### **Who Can it Affect?**

- It is not a sign of individual weakness.
- It can affect anyone.
- When someone feels that they cannot cope with what is being asked of them at work.
- Some groups are considered to be at a higher risk such as the young (movement into long term employment), single parents, elderly workers and the disabled.
- No-one is immune.

### **When?**

#### **Times when employees are more vulnerable can result from:**

1. Personal circumstances which may include bereavement, marital problems, financial problems, etc.
2. Work circumstances which may include significant changes in workplace structure and/or role, increased workloads, etc.

#### **Eliminate Hard Work Then...?**

No – rather to help to identify the areas that need improvement and ensure that risks are properly controlled.

- HSE Management Standards Framework (based on good management practice).
- Evidence shows that management of specific aspects of work can be linked to ill health.

### **Legislation**

The standards are intended to help employers meet the existing legislation:

- The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000.



### **Possible Signs of Stress:**

- Excessive smoking, drinking or use of drugs.
- Rushing, hurrying doing several jobs at once.
- Feelings of not being able to cope.



- Missing breaks, taking work home with you.
- Having no time for exercise and relaxation.
- Health complaints headaches, trouble sleeping, heart problems, upset stomach.
- Changes in mood or behaviour, irritability, short temper.
- Deteriorating relationships with colleagues.
- Loss of interest in work, indecisiveness, reduced concentration.
- Absenteeism, poor time keeping or reduced performance.
- Delayed recovery and return to work from illness.

#### **Possible Causes of Stress:**

- Poorly organised work.
- Changes at work.
- Poor working relationships.
- Poor communication at work.
- Lack of personal control over work.
- Ill defined work roles.
- Machine/process paced work.
- Dull repetitive work.
- Highly demanding tasks.
- The threat of violence.



#### **Potential Consequences for an Organisation:**

- Increase in sickness absence.
- Reduced staff morale.
- Reduced staff performance/efficiency.
- Low motivation.
- Faulty decision making.
- Staff seeking alternative employment.
- Poor industrial relations.

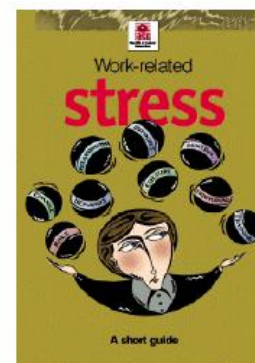
#### **HSE Management Standards:**

Six broad categories:

1. Demands.
2. Control.
3. Relationships.
4. Change.
5. Role.
6. Support.



1. Demands – workload and exposure to physical hazards.
2. Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
3. Relationships – covering issues such as bullying and harassment.
4. Change – how organisational change is managed and communicated.
5. Role – whether the individuals understand their role(s) and ensuring that they do not have conflicting roles.
6. Support – includes training and other factors to enable the person to undertake the core functions of the job and to cater for individual differences.





### **Demands:**

- Employees should be given sufficient resources (time, suitable training, etc.) to cope with their workload.
  - The demands of the job should not exceed the employees' ability to carry out the work, but they should be suitably challenged.
  - The physical and psychosocial environment should be looked at for potential problems areas such as excessive noise or the threat of aggressive behaviour.
  - There should be mechanisms available to enable concerns to be reported.
- 
- Have you too much work to do in too little time?
  - Is your work too difficult?
  - Is your work satisfying?
  - Does your work make you bored?
  - Is it noisy, too hot, too cold, well ventilated and sufficient lighting?
  - Are you worried about hazards such as use of chemicals?
  - Do you feel at risk from violent customers?



- Prioritise your work, if there is too much suggest what could be dropped, put on hold or passed.
- Tell your manager if you are beginning to feel that you cannot cope.
- Make suggestions as to how the situation could be improved.
- Identify new tasks you could do if you want more variety.
- Ask for information about hazards in your workplace if you are worried.
- Make sure you follow relevant company policies procedures where they exist.
- If you feel you need to develop your skills, suggest how you could do this.

### **Control:**

- Employees who have no say in how work is done may be at risk from work-related stress.
  - Should have the opportunity to have a say in the way their work is undertaken and use their skills and initiative to complete tasks.
  - Encouraged to develop new skills and make suggestions to improve their work environment.
  - Able to exert a degree of control over when breaks can be taken.
- 
- Can you influence the way your job is done?
  - Are you involved in making decisions?

- Ask for more responsibility in planning your own work.
- Ask to be involved in decision making about your work area.

### **Relationships:**

- Poor relationships at work can lead to stress-related illnesses.
- This may include bullying (persistent unacceptable behaviour or a single grossly unacceptable act) and harassment (unwanted conduct based on sex, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic or national origin or disability).
- It is important to have a means of quickly resolving conflict at Work.





- All employees should be aware of the consequences of unacceptable behaviour at work!
- Is your relationship with your boss OK?
- How about your relationship with colleagues or your staff if you are a manager?
- Are you bullied by anyone in your workplace?
- Are you harassed because of your colour, sex, ethnic origin, disability, etc.

- Take action by talking to your manager.
- If your manager is the problem talk to their boss/employee counselling.
- Be prepared to give evidence to back up your claim – keeping a record of when you feel you have been bullied with details.
- Make sure your behaviour to others always sets a good example.

### Change:

- New technology, changing customer expectations, central government requirements, and the pursuit of continual improvement are just some of the factors that result in local authorities being in an almost constant state of change.
- Poor management of change can lead to stress.
- Employees should be involved in, and apprised of, change as early as possible. Must be given suitable support and new developments should be communicated.
- Are you given information about changes in your workplace?
- Are you involved in making changes to your job?
- Are you given support during changes?
- Does it feel like there is too much change or maybe not enough?

- Ask for information about any proposed changes.
- Ask how they will affect you.
- Find out what the timetable is.
- Ask what the likely advantages and disadvantages are.



### Role:

- Employees' roles should be clearly defined (problems arise when employees are required to carry out tasks which they do not believe are part of their job) and understood (clearly explained by management).
- There should be systems in place to enable employees to raise any concerns they have.
- Are you clear about what your job is and your responsibilities?
- Do you have to do tasks which you think are not part of your job?
- Do you ever have conflicting roles?

- Talk to your manager if the responsibilities of your new job are not clear.
- In exceptional circumstances there may be a need to review job description.



### Support:

- Training should be provided to ensure employees are equipped to carry out their job including for example induction training for new employees.
- Employees producing work of a poor standard should be provided with constructive advice.
- Employees should know how to call upon support from their line managers and/or seek independent support if they feel unable to cope.
  
- Do you have the support of your boss and colleagues?
- Are you praised when you do a good job?
- Do you receive constructive comments or do you feel you only get criticism?

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask for feedback on how you do your job.</li><li>• If you get criticism, ask for suggestions instead.</li></ul> |
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### Line Managers:

- Show that stress will be taken seriously and that line management will understand.
- Encourage open and understanding attitudes – line manager first port of call.
- Look for signs of stress in employees.
- Ensure all employees have the training and skills necessary/organise training as required.
- Ensure employees understand the requirements of their job, including any changes.
- Where practicable provide scope for varying working conditions.
- Ensure people are treated fairly and consistently.
- Ensure two-way communication.
- Develop skills necessary to deal with stressed and distressed employees.
- Do not be panicked by emotion, be calm and reassuring.
- Don't be afraid to listen/talk to someone.
- Do not penalise employees for feeling the effects of too much pressure.
- Encourage staff to manage their own well-being.
- Provide them with support.
- Respond helpfully to employees who are going through stressful times.
- Ask people how they can help instead of making assumptions.
- Make notes of agreed action points.
- Explain the type of support available in your organisation.
- Discuss possible changes in workload and/or workplace procedures.
- Offer any resources available to help – employee counselling, use of flexible working hours etc.
- Try to create a culture and structure where staff can seek help and manage and support their needs.



### All Employees:

- Talk to your line manager, employee representative, safety representative, etc. - if they don't know what the problem is, they cannot help.
- If you can't talk directly to your line manager ask an employee representative to raise the issue on your behalf.



- Support other colleagues who may be experiencing work related stress.
- Encourage them to talk to their line manager.
- Use any services provided such as employee counsellors if available.
- Discuss the solution with Occupational Health or Employee Counselling if available.
- Speak to your GP if you are worried about your health.
- Identify problems and solutions.
- How they could be implemented.
- Get involved.
- Help check the solutions work.



- Try to channel your energy into solving the problem rather than just worrying about it.
- Be realistic, if your job is causing you distress and/or making you ill it is a problem that needs to be resolved.

### Practical Measures:

- Informal talks to employees – on the job talks, team meetings, or one to ones, to determine employee ‘happiness’ and identify any relevant workplace issues.
- Personal development plans/interviews.
- Focus groups – 8-10 persons, can select particular topics for discussion.
- Managing attendance – conduct return-to-work interviews to find out if there is a work related problem. However if the person does not want to share their concerns their decision must be respected, suggestions can be made to allow the person to speak to someone else, including Employee Counsellors.
- Analysis of data – including sickness/absence data, productivity data, turnover and questionnaires.

It is a good idea to use a combination of these methods to formulate an overall picture.

- Health and wellbeing included in team meetings, unit/section meetings, Health and Safety Committee Meetings etc. Consider adding it as an agenda item.
- Report to Line Manager, Health and Safety Representative, Health and Safety Committees,
- Employee Counselling/Occupational Health Services, etc. if available.
- Identify the sources of stress, stress diary (2-3 weeks) or stress mapping (visual representation of perceived sources of stress).

### Practical Measures – Modification of Behaviour:

- Be more assertive.
- Improve time management.
- Manage behaviour.
- Indulge in humour and laughter.
- Take ‘time out’.
- Develop better strategies for travelling and commuting.
- Use external help.
- Develop a healthier lifestyle.





### **Practical Measures Out Of Work:**

- Eat healthily.
- Stop smoking – it doesn't help even if you think it does.
- Try to keep within government recommendations for alcohol – it is a depressant, it will not help you tackle the problem.
- Watch your caffeine intake.
- Get adequate sleep.
- Be physically active/take exercise – it stimulates you and gives you more energy.
- Learn relaxation techniques – they can help cope with pressures in the short term.
- Talk to friends and family about what you are feeling – they may be able to help.
- Accept your own limitations – watch out for your personal warning signs.
- Prepare and plan for stressful situations.



### **Rehabilitation:**

When persons suffering from work-related stress return to work the following arrangements should be made:

- Ensure there are arrangements for a return to work interview and during the interview focus on the person, not the problem.
- Make sure the person feels welcome back.
- Ensure the person is not placed in a situation which contains the same factors which led to stress in the first place.
- If their work was part of the cause, the problems should have been addressed and alterations made.
- Take care not to make the person feel as if they are being singled out.



## 7.3 Mental Well-Being At Work Working Safely Together

### **The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978**

states that employers have a duty, so far as reasonably practicable, to protect the health and safety of employees, and that employees have a duty to co-operate with reasonable policies and procedures.

This includes taking steps to manage work-related stress.



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**The Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000** places a duty on employers to assess all significant risks from work, including those associated with work related stress and to ensure that appropriate control measures are identified and implemented.

**The HSE Management Standards** set out guidance for managing work related stress.

### **Line Managers Have A Duty To:**

- Carry out risk assessments, identify and implement appropriate control measures;
- Ensure there is due consultation where appropriate;
- Ensure that effective, two-way, lines of communication are maintained at all times, and that all employees know how to report any concerns, and who to report them to;
- Ensure that all employees, are suitably trained;
- Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workloads are not excessive over prolonged periods;
- Ensure that other relevant Council Policies such as those addressing bullying and harassment, etc. are all effectively applied and appropriately communicated.



### **Employees:**

The individual nature of mental well-being places an *even greater responsibility on individual employees* to raise any concerns they may have in a timely manner, other duties include:

- Complying with the Mental Well-being Council Health and Safety Procedure (CHaSP);
- Raising any concerns they have with the appropriate line manager or in cases of perceived harassment one of the Council's Harassment Advisors;
- Utilising and accepting appropriate Council support and intervention mechanisms and working with the Council to seek agreed actions and solutions.

### **What Can I Do Next?**

- All employees can use the self-assessment tool on the Intranet. This is divided into a number of areas enabling you to easily raise the appropriate concerns with your line manager;





- Line managers can contact the Health and Safety Section for the HSE questionnaire and analysis tool, which can be distributed throughout your section;
- Line managers can use the generic risk assessment on the intranet as a *basis* for an assessment for your section.

**Contact The Health And Safety Section For Further Information**

The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with information on mental well-being at work in Lisburn City Council. It tells you what procedures are in place to assist in the management of stress and where to get more advice and assistance



## 7.4 Case Study – The Mechanics of stress

Philip worked in an advertising agency creating promotional copy for various account executives who would make formal presentations to clients, at meetings arranged at his firm's offices. One day, just a few hours prior to a scheduled presentation with a major client, the wife of the particular Account Executive called in to say her husband had been involved in a car accident. The Sales Director asked Philip to stand in to stage the presentation, as there was no one else available that afternoon.

Philip, who was not used to meeting clients and certainly not major ones, had no option but to prepare the presentation. There was little problem with the slides that needed just two more hours work for the finishing touches, but he had no experience of how to speak about the product and the proposed promotion. Having been informed that the client would be attending at 2pm with his two sales managers, and that they would already be on the plane from Frankfurt, he started to feel extremely nervous.

The more he thought about it the more nervous he became, until half an hour before the appointed time, he actually felt sick. Drinking a glass of water, after returning from the washroom, he could feel his collar becoming damp with perspiration. As the minutes went by towards 2pm, the sweat started to pour down his face and he could feel his heart thumping.

Knowing there was no alternative, he tried to focus on what he had to do, but his mind refused to clear and he was reduced, to wiping his head every few seconds to take away the sweat. No matter what he tried, to concentrate on, his body simply ignored his wishes.

It was less obvious to anyone else, who merely took the impression that he seemed rushed and maybe had too much work to do and insufficient time to finish it. Philip, himself, however, felt as if he was in the hold of a ship rolling about on top of the ocean in a force eight gale, with no power. His shirt by now was soaking wet as his body was in the grip of a vicious circle of perceived threat, acute anxiety, stress reaction, hormonal response leading to further fear and the resultant physical manifestations.

The client's party arrived on time at 2 pm. Philip welcomed them into the conference room, and hesitatingly started the presentation. After a few minutes, he forgot his apprehension and became completely engrossed in describing the slides and extolling the virtues of the product. Without any conscious action by Philip, the sweating ceased, his heart rate returned to normal and his face to its usual colour.

The presentation went well and the client expressed delight with the proposed campaign. When they had left, Philip tried to understand what exactly it was that had brought him to such a nervous and stressed condition. He now felt confident and relaxed, only his damp collar and slightly matted hair, reminded him of his previously anxious state, one and a half hours before.



## 7.5 Sample Training Presentation on Work-Related Stress



**Tutor Name**

**Organisation Name**



# Objectives

- To define stress.
- Discuss who it can effect and when.
- Outline consequences for an organisation.
- Provide detail on the legislation applicable and the HSE Management Standards.
- Discuss responsibilities – line managers and employees.
- Discuss practical solutions.
- Suggest options for rehabilitation.



# Why Tackle Stress?

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# Cause And Effect

## Stressors:

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- Psychological – job security, money, relationships etc.

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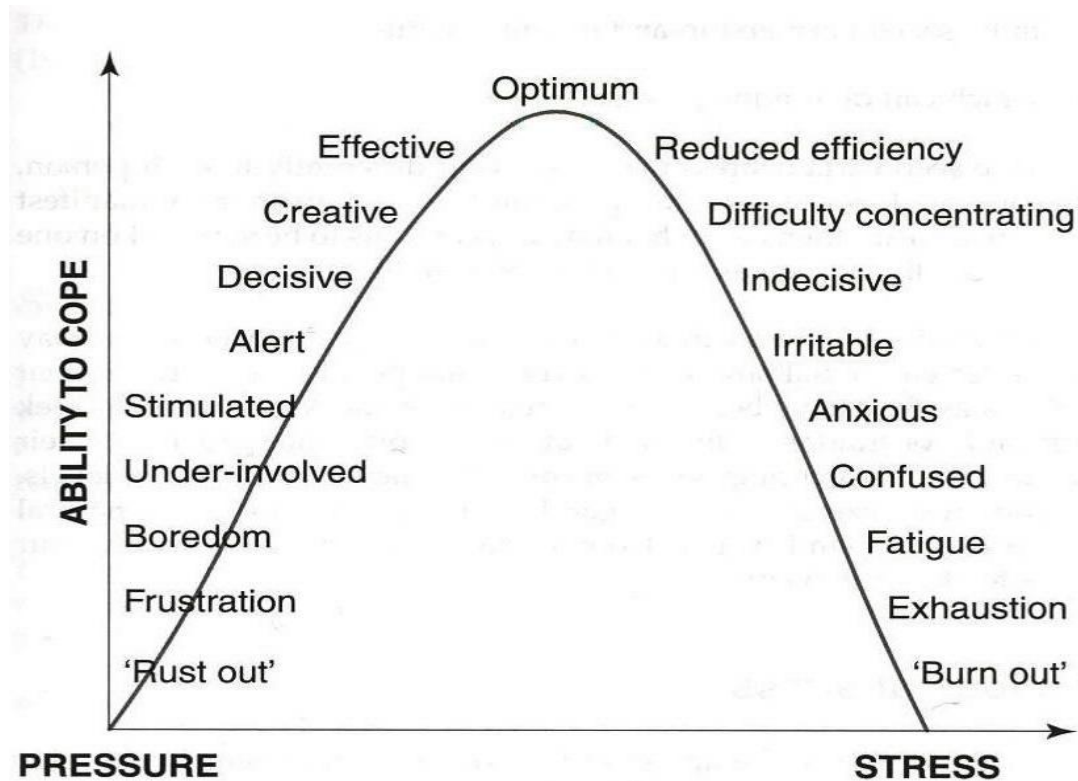


# Nature Of Stress

- Pressure itself is not necessarily bad.
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# Nature Of Stress



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# Possible Causes Of Stress

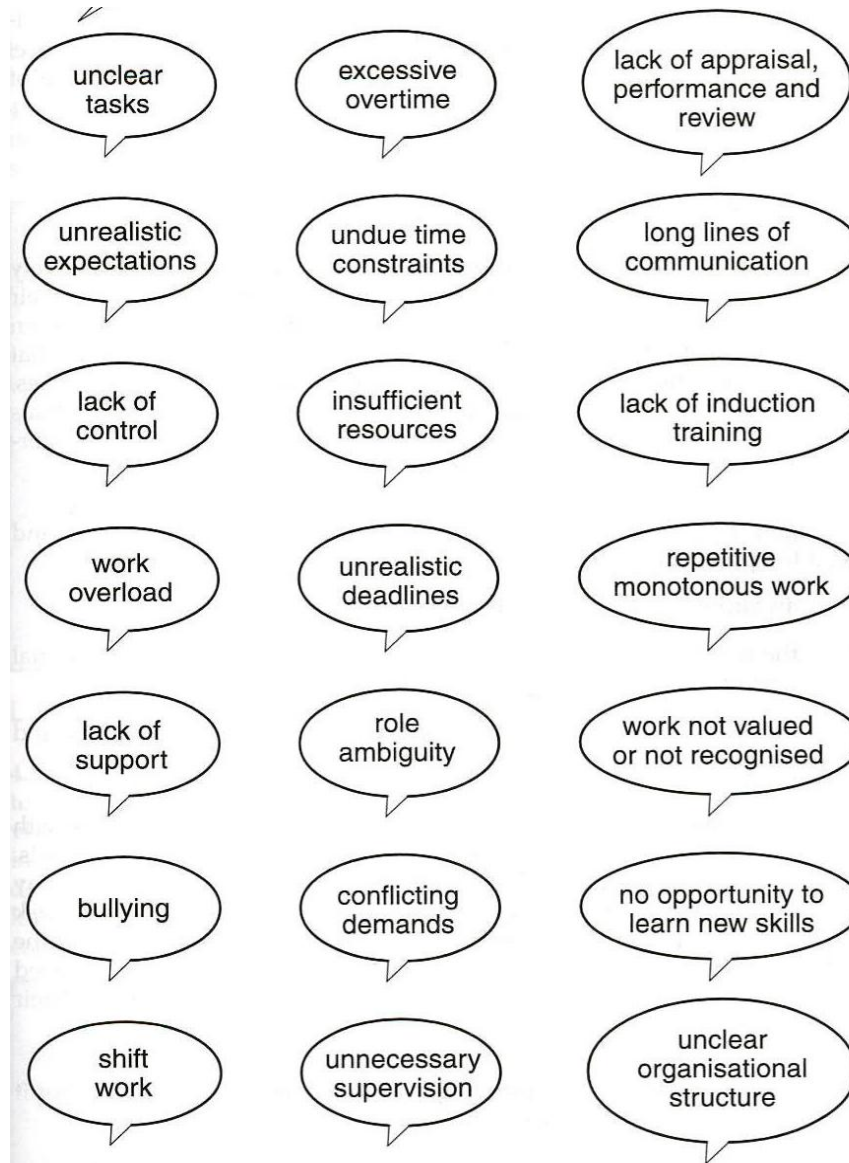
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# Potential Consequences For An Organisation

- Increase in sickness absence.
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- Staff seeking alternative employment.
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# Organisational And Management Related Stressors



# HSE Management Standards

Six broad categories:

1. Demands – workload and exposure to physical hazards.
2. Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
3. Relationships – covering issues such as bullying and harassment.
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- Able to exert a degree of control over when breaks can be taken.



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# Control

- Ask for more responsibility in planning your own work.
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- Employees should know how to call upon support from their line managers and/or seek independent support if they feel unable to cope.



# Support

- Do you have the support of your boss and colleagues?
- Are you praised when you do a good job?
- Do you receive constructive comments or do you feel you only get criticism?



# Support

- Ask for feedback on how you do your job.
- If you get criticism, ask for suggestions instead.



# Line Managers

- Show that stress will be taken seriously and that line management will understand.
- Encourage open and understanding attitudes – line manager first port of call.
- Look for signs of stress in employees.
- Ensure all employees have the training and skills necessary/organise training as required.
- Ensure employees understand the requirements of their job, including any changes.



# Line Managers

- Where practicable provide scope for varying working conditions.
- Ensure people are treated fairly and consistently.
- Ensure two-way communication.
- Develop skills necessary to deal with stressed and distressed employees.
- Do not be panicked by emotion, be calm and reassuring.



# Line Managers

- Don't be afraid to listen/talk to someone.
- Do not penalise employees for feeling the effects of too much pressure.
- Encourage staff to manage their own well-being.
- Provide them with support.
- Respond helpfully to employees who are going through stressful times.



# Line Managers

- Ask people how they can help instead of making assumptions.
- Make notes of agreed action points.
- Explain the type of support available in the organisation.
- Discuss possible changes in workload and/or workplace procedures.
- Offer any resources available to help – employee counselling, use of flexible working hours etc.
- Try to create a culture and structure where staff can seek help and manage and support their needs.



# All Employees

- Talk to your line manager, employee rep, safety rep, etc.  
- if they don't know what the is problem they cannot help.
- If you can't talk directly to your line manger ask an employee representative to raise the issue on your behalf.
- Support other colleagues who may be experiencing work related stress.
- Encourage them to talk to their line manager.
- Use the services provided such as the employee counsellors.
- Discuss the solution with Occupational Health or Employee Counselling.
- Speak to your GP if you are worried about your health.



# All Employees

- Identify problems and solutions.
- How they could be implemented.
- Get involved.
- Help check the solutions work.
- Try to channel your energy into solving the problem rather than just worrying about it.
- Be realistic, if your job is causing you distress and/or making you ill it is a problem that needs to be resolved.



# Practical Measures

- Informal talks to employees – on the job talks, team meetings, or one to ones, to determine employee ‘happiness’ and identify any relevant workplace issues.
- Personal development plans/interviews.
- Focus groups – 8-10 persons, can select particular topics for discussion.



# Practical Measures

- Managing attendance – conduct return-to-work interviews to find out if there is a work related problem. However, if the person does not want to share their concerns their decision must be respected, suggestions can be made to allow the person to speak to someone else, including the Employee Counsellors.
- Analysis of data – including sickness/absence data, productivity data, turnover and questionnaires.
- It is a good idea to use a combination of these methods to formulate an overall picture.



# Practical Measures

- Health and wellbeing included team meetings, unit/section meetings, Health and Safety Committee meetings etc. Consider adding as an agenda item.
- Report to Line Manager, Health and Safety Representative, Health and Safety Committee Meetings, Employee Counselling/Occupational Health Services.
- Identify the sources of stress, stress diary (2-3 weeks) or stress mapping (visual representation of perceived sources of stress).



# Practical Measures

Modification of behaviour:

- Be more assertive.
- Improve time management.
- Manage behaviour.
- Indulge in humour and laughter.
- Take 'time out'.
- Develop better strategies for travelling and commuting.
- Use external help.
- Develop a healthier lifestyle.



# Practical Measures Out Of Work

- Eat healthily.
- Stop smoking – it doesn't help even if you think it does.
- Try to keep within government recommendations for alcohol – it is a depressant, it will not help you tackle the problem.
- Watch your caffeine intake.
- Get adequate sleep.
- Be physically active/take exercise – it stimulates you and gives you more energy.



# Practical Measures Out Of Work

- Learn relaxation techniques – they can help cope with pressures in the short term.
- Talk to friends and family about what you are feeling – they may be able to help.
- Accept your own limitations – watch out for your personal warning signs.
- Prepare and plan for stressful situations.



# Rehabilitation

When persons suffering from work-related stress return to work the following arrangements should be made:

- Ensure there are arrangements for a return to work interview and during the interview focus on the person, not the problem.
- Make sure the person feels welcome back.
- Ensure the person is not placed in a situation which contains the same factors which led to stress in the first place.
- If their work was part of the cause, the problems should have been addressed and alterations made.
- Take care not to make the person feel as if they are being singled out.



# Summary

- Definitions, causes and effect.
- Who it can effect and when.
- Consequences for an organisation.
- Legislation and HSE Management Standards.
- Responsibilities – line managers and employees.
- Practical solutions.
- Rehabilitation.

