

Is Your Job Stressing You Out? Welcome to the Club

By Holly Culhane



Is your job or workplace stressful? If it is, you aren't alone.

A recent study by the American Psychological Association concluded that too much work, too little money and not enough opportunity for growth are stressing workers out. One-third of the employees surveyed reported experiencing chronic work-related stress.

Fifty-four percent of the 1,501 employed adults surveyed said they are paid too little for the work they do and 61 percent said their jobs do not offer adequate advancement opportunities. Women surveyed reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with both pay and advancement.

The good news is that these bleak stress factors are improving slightly as the nation's economy climbs out of the Great Recession of 2008-2009.

But the fact remains that chronic workplace stress is affecting employees' health and companies' bottom lines. Stressed-out, burned-out employees simply are neither healthy, nor productive.

The problem is so prevalent that it is being recognized in April with a nationwide "Stress Awareness Month" campaign that was kicked off by congressional resolutions urging companies to establish workplace wellness programs.

Americans work longer hours, take fewer vacations and retire later than workers in most other industrialized nations. Researchers have discovered that this pace is causing health problems.

Consider the recent study by researchers at Tel Aviv University. They were stunned to discover that the most stressed-out, unhappy workers developed heart problems at a 79 percent higher rate than their less-stressed-out colleagues. Other studies have linked stress to obesity, insomnia and anxiety.

Tel Aviv researchers asked workers to respond to the following five questions with "never," "sometimes," "often," or "always." Responding with two or more "often" or "always" was a dangerous red flag.

How often are you tired and lacking the energy to go to work in the morning?

How often do you feel physically drained, as if your batteries were dead?

How often is your thinking process sluggish or your concentration impaired?

How often do you struggle to think over complex problems at work?

How often do you feel emotionally detached from coworkers or customers, and unable to respond to their needs?

If the red flags are flying, what should you do?

You can always quit your job and remove yourself from the stressful situation. But for many of us this radical move is unrealistic. There are bills to pay and responsibilities to meet.

Other helpful actions:

- Identify “stressors.” Can work schedules or duties be adjusted? Can supervisors address concerns? Can the impact of “stressors” be modified?
- Set limits. With all the new technologies, many workers seem to be “on the job” 24/7. Set limits. Unplug. Give priority to personal time and activities. Take vacations. While that may be easier said than done when coping with a demanding boss, workers who have “balanced lives” are more productive. A demanding boss should recognize and reward that.
- Develop coping skills. Bring personal items, such as family photographs, into your work space to remind you of priorities. Drink lots of water. Eat well. Physically get up from your desk and take breaks. Breathe deeply. A one-minute meditation can head off a hot-tempered response.
- Use wellness programs. An increasing number of companies are providing “wellness” services to their employees. These range from on-the-job health fairs to gym memberships. Take full advantage of all the programs your company offers.

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How does your job rate?

CareerCast.Com, a Carlsbad, Calif.-based online job placement and career counseling company, has issued its 2013 list of 10 least- and most-stressful jobs. The company used 11 “stress factors” to rate jobs: travel amount; growth potential; deadlines; working in the public eye; competitiveness; physical demands; environmental conditions; hazards encountered; own life at risk; life of others at risk; and meeting the public.

In their order of ranking, with 1 being the most or least stressful, the company concluded:

Most Stressful

- 1 Enlisted Military Personnel
- 2 Military General
- 3 Firefighter
- 4 Commercial Airline Pilot
- 5 Public Relations Executive
- 6 Senior Corporate Executive
- 7 Photojournalist
- 8 Newspaper Reporter

- 9 Taxi Driver
- 10 Police Officer

Least Stressful

- 1 University Professor
- 2 Seamstress/Tailor
- 3 Medical Records Technician
- 4 Jeweler
- 5 Medical Lab Technician
- 6 Audiologist
- 7 Dietician
- 8 Hair Stylist
- 9 Librarian
- 10 Drill Press Operator

Source: www.CareerCast.com

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