

Embracing Change

Supporting NHS Staff in the West Midlands through Transition

2. Supporting Your Team

A Manager's Guide to Managing Stress

Developed by:

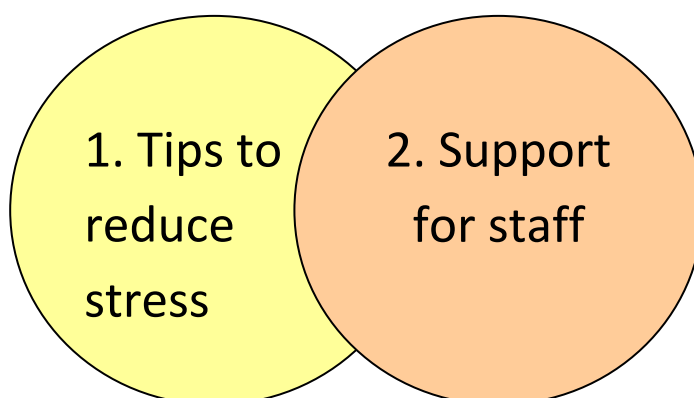


Using information and materials provided by:



A Manager's Guide to Managing Stress

(Source: Sandwell Primary Care Trust)



1. STRESS AT WORK

How to reduce and manage workplace stress – In this difficult climate, you may find it harder than ever to cope with challenges both at work and home. Both the stress we take with us when we go to work and the stress that awaits us on the job are on the rise – and employers, managers, and employees all feel the added pressure. While some stress is a normal part of life, excessive stress interferes with your productivity and reduces your physical and emotional health, so it's important to find ways to keep it under control. Fortunately, there is a lot that you can do to manage and reduce stress at work.

2. WARNING SIGNS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS

When people feel overwhelmed, they lose confidence and become irritable or withdrawn, making them less productive and effective and their work less rewarding. If the warning signs of work stress go unattended they can lead to bigger problems. Beyond interfering with job performance and satisfaction, chronic or intense stress can also lead to physical and emotional health problems.

3. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS

- Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed
- Apathy, loss of interest in work
- Problems sleeping
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Stomach problems
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of sex drive
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

4. COMMON CAUSES OF EXCESSIVE WORKPLACE STRESS

- Fear of losing your job
- Pressure to perform to meet rising expectations but with no increase in job satisfaction
- Pressure to work at optimum levels – all the time!

5. WHAT MANAGERS OR EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO REDUCE STRESS AT WORK

It's in a manager's best interest to keep stress levels in the workplace to a minimum. Managers must act as positive role models, especially in times of high stress. All of the tips mentioned in this article are twice as important for managers to follow. If someone that we admire remains calm, it is much easier to remain calm ourselves – and vice versa! There are also organisational changes that managers and employers can make to reduce workplace stress.

Improve Communication

- Share information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures.
- Clearly define employees' roles and responsibilities (where possible, this may be difficult in some circumstances, but should not be the norm).
- Make communication friendly and efficient, not mean-spirited or petty.

Consult/Engage with your employees

- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their roles.
- Be sure the workload is suitable to employees' abilities and resources; and avoid unrealistic deadlines.
- Show that individual workers are valued.

Offer rewards and incentives

- Praise good work performance verbally and institutionally.
- Provide opportunities for career development if possible.
- Promote an "entrepreneurial" work climate that gives employees more control over their work.

Cultivate a friendly social climate

- Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- Make management actions consistent with organisational values.

Refer to Occupational Health – if available

- Offer staff support externally if possible.

6. CONCLUSION

At some stage in our lives the majority of us will suffer from stress in relation to our home life or work, however, just following some of the simple guidance provided within this document may help you to manage your stress effectively.

You may find the following link to NHS Employers: health, work and well-being useful.

The site provides advice and information on well-being at work, stress, sickness absence and health and safety.

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/HealthyWorkplaces/Pages/Home-Healthy.aspx>