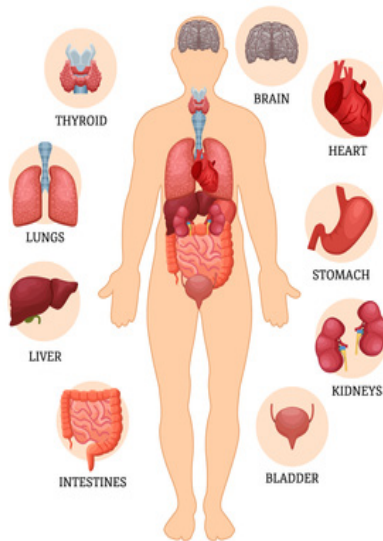


# WORKPLACE STRESS

## INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON UNDERSTANDING AND COPING WITH STRESS

Work can provide purpose and have significant positive impacts on a person, however when the workplace is stressful, unsafe, unhealthy or inequitable, work can have a negative impact on the mental and physical health of workers. Health care expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress.<sup>1</sup> Depression and anxiety have a significant economic impact; the estimated cost to the global economy is one trillion dollars per year in lost productivity. However, the return on investment for treatment for common mental disorders, has a rate of four times of every dollar in improved health and productivity. As health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, a healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones.<sup>2</sup> Organizations and managers that implement stress assessment and reduction programs will increase productivity, morale, longevity and reduce lost work days and improve the overall physical and mental health of their workforce.



There are three main types of stress, acute (short-term), episodic acute (frequent short-term) and chronic (long term). Employees will react to stress differently based upon the number and severity of stressors they must cope with both acutely and chronically and based upon previous experiences and trauma. Managers should never “diagnose” or label workers based upon their stress responses particularly if they could be suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. If an employee confides in a manager, employee assistance coordinator or human resources professional, and asks to receive assistance, confidentiality must be maintained. Blame the worker policies and practices should be avoided and employer work practices should be evaluated prior to evaluating employee performance.

Stress in the workplaces has been proven to cause cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, psychological disorders and phenomena such as depression and burnout, suicide and digestive issues such as ulcers.<sup>3</sup> Working in disaster response and pandemics can cause an even greater level of stress due to the urgency, increased workloads, uncertainty and fear.

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine; <sup>2</sup> World Health Organization <sup>3</sup> Encyclopedia of Occupational Safety and Health

# WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO

- Provide a safe and healthy workplace with attention to workplace violence and bullying prevention.
- Provide management coaching and training on stress, trauma and conflict resolution.
- Avoid one size fits all solutions. Stress responses are based upon each individual's experience and past cumulative trauma.
- Continually evaluate work policies and practices.
- Assess and control environmental stressors, such as noise, heat and lighting.
- Regularly assess workloads and keep appropriate staffing levels. Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
- Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
- Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities.
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
- Conduct anonymous surveys to determine stress felt by workers.
- Review work policies and practices to ensure compatibility with the changing workplace.
- Improve communications.
- Reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.
- Establish work schedules that are compatible with demands and responsibilities outside the job.
- Create and regularly evaluate employee assistance programs and resources.
- Keep sensitive and personal information confidential and judgement free.
- Provide access to mental health professionals and counselors.
- Encourage taking breaks, lunches and vacations.
- Provide training for employees on codes of conduct and provide proper outlets for resolving workplace issues.
- Add Wellness and Peer Support Programs in addition to safety and health programs-not in place of.

For more information and resources visit:

[www.cseany.org/safety](http://www.cseany.org/safety)



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At CSEA, transforming knowledge into action is central to our mission of protecting workers. When hazards and close calls are documented and reported, they can be addressed before they cause harm. That's how we prevent injuries and illnesses—by making sure problems don't get ignored. Your voice and vigilance are essential. Now more than ever, we need your help to ensure every workplace is safe, healthy, and accountable.

***THE LIFE YOU SAVE COULD BE YOUR OWN!***