

Workplace Stress

Numerous surveys and studies confirm that occupational pressures and fears are far and away the leading source of stress for Americans. U.S. workers put in more hours than the labor force of any other industrial nation, where the trend has been just the opposite. Below are some statistics from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the American Psychological Association and the American Institute of Stress:

- 62% of Americans are deeply affected by stress levels at work
- 33% of Americans suffer job burn out thought to be due to workplace stress
- About 70% of workers are unhappy in their current employment due to work related stress
- 66% of Americans would seriously welcome help in dealing with stress in their lives

Some stress is not necessarily bad, but for the most part stress is a negative aspect of our lives that damages productivity, keeps us from performing at peak levels and decreases the chances of living a long life. Many blame

stress on external forces (“We are living in stressful times.” “This is a stressful job.” “My boss [husband, wife, co-worker, customer, client, kid, etc.] is really stressing me out.”).

Actually the world is not really a stressful place per se because while some people are certainly legitimately stressed, the same situations may not stress out someone else. There are many stress reduction programs, seminars and courses. Most of these are quite effective. But rather than treat the symptoms, what if we treated the disease and rid ourselves of the causes of the stress?

Most stress is internal, caused by the ways in which we relate to the world, events and people around ourselves. Stress is caused when an expectation and reality don't line up. When this shortfall occurs, it creates a disappointment and that causes stress. For example, let's say you drove your car to work and parked in the nearby parking lot. You have an expectation that your car will be right where you left it, but what if you were to discover at 5 p.m. that your car had been stolen? As you would probably imagine, this

event would cause stress. Most days however, you return to your car, and it's exactly where you left it. Do you experience stress? No, because expectation and reality match up.

While many will experience large disappointments in life, they are typically few and far between, and our bodies have a chance to cope and recover. Rather, it is all the little disappointments — which seem inconsequential individually, but added together throughout a day — that can really build up (e.g., dealing with the morning rush hour, not getting things done on time, tasks piling up, personal errands not attended to, etc).

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What are Teens Doing Online?

Today's young people are increasingly online — no surprise there — but they're shifting their focus a little. Their biggest interest is social networking: 73 percent go online for Facebook, MySpace or some other Internet meeting place.

Blogging, meanwhile, has lost their interest: In 2006, 28 percent of teens and young adults on the Internet were bloggers; in the Fall of 2009, only 14 percent of teens were still blogging. Only 8 percent use Twitter, possibly because texting and social networking sites are filling their need to chat online.

Is a Pet Right for You?



Did you know that about 60 percent of U.S. households have at least one dog, cat, bird or other companion animal? There are many benefits to owning a pet. The CDC reports that pets can decrease your blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, as well as stress and feelings of loneliness! They also provide opportunities for exercise, outdoor activities and socialization.

Veterinarians say that people are often “crazy” about their pets because they provide a sense of fun, safety and love for the people they live with.

If you’re considering adding an animal member to your family, the American Veterinarians Medical Association (AVMA) advises that you take a little time to consider what kind of pet will suit your family best and do a little research. If you’re considering a dog, for example, websites like www.dogbreedinfo.com can help you determine an appropriate breed for you and your family. The AVMA also recommends considering the following:

- Does anyone in your family suffer from allergies? This may mean that you steer toward certain types of pets or hypoallergenic breeds.
- Who will be responsible on a daily basis for pet care? Having a pet is an excellent opportunity to teach responsibility to children; but sometimes it’s a slow learning process, and the responsibility may fall back on the parent’s shoulders.
- How much room will you share with your pet? Some pets require more space than others — a young Labrador Retriever, for example, will need a lot more space than a cat.
- Because the amount of time we *want* to spend with a pet sometimes differs from the time we can *actually* spend with it, be realistic about your availability and choose a pet that will fit in your lifestyle.
- What do you and your family like to do? Will your new pet be able to participate?
- Are you away from home a lot? If so, who will care for your pet while you are gone? If you will need to board your pet when you’re away, be sure to set money aside in your budget to cover that expense.
- If you rent, check to see if your lease contains a no-pets clause or requires a pet deposit.
- Pets don’t need just your time and love - they need food, shelter, health checkups and vaccinations. Sometimes these provisions are costly, so you may need to evaluate your budget and set money aside monthly for your new pal’s needs.

If you think that a pet is not suitable for you and your family right now, consider those reasons and search for solutions. Pets do come with additional work and responsibility, which can bring its own stress. However, for most people, the benefits of having a pet outweigh the drawbacks. Carefully considering how your life will mesh with a pet will help ensure a long, healthy and happy relationship for everyone. ♪



“Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don’t turn up at all.”

~ *Sam Ewing, professional baseball player*

Low-Fat Cornbread

1 cup all-purpose flour
 1 cup cornmeal
 2 tablespoons sugar
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 ½ teaspoon salt
 2 egg whites
 1 cup skim milk
 ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce

Instructions: In a bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, combine egg whites, milk and applesauce. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Pour into a 9 in. square baking pan coated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Serve warm.

Prep time: 15-30 min

Calories: 100

Cook time: 15-20 min

Fat: 2 g

Servings: 10+

Carbs: 21 g

*For variety, add chilies and peppers

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Who's Packing Your Parachute?

During the Vietnam War, Navy pilot Charles Plumb was shot down and held prisoner for six years in a Vietnamese prison. Today, as a motivational speaker, he often tells the story of one man he met years later at a restaurant.

"I know you!" the man said, walking up as Plumb and his wife were sitting down to dinner. "You used to fly jet fighters off the Kitty Hawk during Vietnam." Plumb didn't recognize him. "How did you know that?" he asked. "I used to pack your parachute," the man said.

Plumb still didn't recognize the man, but he thanked him. "If that chute hadn't worked when I got shot down," he said, "I wouldn't be alive today."

But that night Plumb couldn't sleep. "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat, a bib in the back, and bell-bottom trousers. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said, 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."

At this point in his lectures, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute? Who provides you with what you need to survive every day? Do you recognize them? Do you thank them enough?"

Plumb's message: Start paying attention to the people who "pack your parachute" today. ♡

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What Can You Do To Reduce Job Stress?

Get Organized. Getting your priorities straight will help you plan your day and provide you with a road map of where you're going. By doing this, you won't feel so overwhelmed.

Remember Time Limits. The average person works eight or nine hours a day. Trying to fit 12 hours of work in a nine-hour day doesn't work – it's like trying to put a square peg in a round hole. Make sure your reality matches your expectations.

Leave Perfectionism at Home. Stop trying to make every project, situation and decision perfect. This leads to a lot of stress. Do your best certainly, but then leave it at that.

Maintain a Positive Attitude. Negative thinking drains energy and motivation. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done even if your boss fails to recognize your work. Celebrate successes and accomplishments – they're important!

We will never eliminate stress, but with more effective planning, we can stabilize it. This information is only part of the info that is available on job stress and ways to reduce it. If you've tried any of the stress-reduction methods described in this article and still cannot find relief, call your EAP at 800-245-1150 and talk to a Care Coordinator. Ψ



A Colorful Test

Can you match these words or phrases with their "colorful" definitions?

1. Faithful _____
2. Award given for excellence _____
3. Discovered in the act _____
4. Jealous _____
5. Flushed with embarrassment _____
6. Appearing scared _____
7. Optimistic viewpoint _____
8. Having a negative frame of mind _____
9. Owing money _____
10. Chatting excessively _____
11. Angry _____
12. An ambivalent issue _____

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| A. Wearing rose-colored glasses | G. In the red |
| B. Gold star | H. Caught red handed |
| C. In a black mood | I. True blue |
| D. Red as a beet | J. Green with envy |
| E. A gray area | K. White as a sheet |
| F. Talking up a blue streak | L. Seeing red |

Tension Relief at Work

Stress can cause physical problems on its own, but if you sit at a desk or in front of a computer all day, you're bound to feel more aches and pains from extra tension in your muscles. When your muscles need some relief, try these exercises:

- Stretch your neck by flexing your head side-to-side and forward and backward (don't roll your head around your neck or let your neck "pop," as this could cause joint damage in your neck).
- If you're doing a lot of typing, roll your wrists regularly to prevent Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.
- If you hunch at your desk (which we often do without realizing), your body needs to move in the opposite direction. Open your arms wide like you're going to give someone a big hug and rotate your wrists – rolling your thumbs up and down.
- While sitting, lift your legs up on the balls of your feet and onto your toes (pointing your toes). Then go the other way, and point your toes up with your heels on the ground.
- Try the seated stretch: sitting in your chair with your feet on the floor, lower your head, slowly curl your body forward and reach out to touch the floor. Hold for 10 seconds and slowly uncurl.

While stretching is a healthy recommendation for most people, do not engage in any stretching or physical activity if you have a bone, joint or muscle condition that could be adversely effected by stretching. Consult your physician if you have concerns about your body's response to stretching or physical activity.

1-1, 2-B, 3-H, 4-J, 5-D, 6-K, 7-A, 8-C, 9-G, 10-F, 11-L, 12-E