

Managing Pressure Effectively

A stress management white paper from Impact Factory

The problem

Stress is an unavoidable, indisputable, very serious employment issue that often results in reduced staff efficiency, reduced profits and essentially resignations from competent employees. Defined by ISMA UK, stress is **'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.'** It has never been more prevalent than it is today. In fact, according to recent research carried out by Insurance Company **AXA**, stress levels have **doubled** over the past 4 years.

*Stress has become the **most common cause of long-term sickness absence** for both manual and non-manual employees, according to the CIPD Absence Management survey.*

(CIPD Survey, October 2011)

The sharp increase in stress is most likely a result of the additional pressure on people thanks to this year's government budget cuts and the on-going recession, making it ever more important to know how to manage pressure effectively. The irony is that **admitting to being stressed** and needing help to manage pressure effectively is a stressful thing to have to do in the first place! As an individual you may worry that your boss could consider you inadequate for suffering such problems when we all live such hectic lives. As a company you could be rightly concerned about the HR and legal implications of absenteeism due to stress. The key thing to remember is that **the consequences of stress are not ones that should be ignored or ridiculed**. Worrying can provoke a wide variety of unpleasant symptoms, including;

Disturbed sleep & eating patterns
Feelings of inability to cope
Loss of confidence and Headaches
Difficulty concentrating & Making decisions

Stomach Upsets or Feeling Sick
Butterflies & Emotional Distress
Depleted Immune System
Irritability & Feeling De-Energised

*British businesses lose an estimated **£26 billion** each year in sickness absence and lost productivity. With greater awareness and mental health support, they said businesses could save one third of these costs – 'a mammoth **£8 billion** a year'.*

(Mind, June 2011)

When recognised in its earliest stages, stress can easily be managed to avoid damaging consequences to businesses. At **Impact Factory** we pride ourselves on our professionalism, confidentiality, and extensive experience dealing with stress across a wide variety of industries.



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The signs

Psychological signs

- Inability to concentrate or make simple decisions
- Memory lapses
- Becoming rather vague
- Easily distracted
- Less intuitive & creative
- Worrying
- Negative thinking
- Depression & anxiety

Don't ignore the signs of stress! If you address the problem early on, you have more chance of overcoming it. There are a variety of different ways in which stress manifests itself and many of these are listed here.

Emotional signs

- Lack of confidence
- Lack of self-esteem
- Feeling out of control
- Lack of motivation
- Anger
- Frustration
- Feeling defensive
- Being overly sensitive to criticism
- Easily becoming tearful
- Irritable
- Mood swings

Behavioural signs

- No time for relaxation or pleasurable activities
- Prone to accidents or forgetfulness
- Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine, recreational or illegal drugs
- Becoming a workaholic
- Poor time management and/or poor standards of work
- Absenteeism

- Self-neglect/change in appearance
- Social withdrawal
- Relationship problems
- Insomnia or waking tired
- Reckless
- Aggressive/anger outbursts
- Uncharacteristically lying

Physical signs

- Frequent colds/infections
- Allergies/rashes/skin irritations
- Constipation/diarrhoea/IBS
- Weight loss or gain
- Indigestion/heartburn/ulcers
- Hyperventilating/lump in the throat/pins & needles
- Dizziness/palpitations
- Panic attacks/nausea
- Physical tiredness
- Menstrual changes/loss of libido/sexual problems
- Heart problems/high blood pressure
- Aches/pains & muscle tension/grinding teeth



The solution

At **Impact Factory** we know how to ease sticky relationships to create better work boundaries and how to help your company adjust to difficult change, allowing your people to see where they are best placed to be most effective.

Allow us to become part of your solution in the times ahead; **speak to one of our specialists** about our confidential open courses on stress management, assertiveness, change management or time management (stress can often be provoked largely by ineffective management of change or time, or by not being able to say no when you know you should).

We can also help your team in house if you are going through a particularly significant change or are experiencing difficulties causing stress which should be addressed as a group.

Stress affects 1 in 5 of the working population from the newest recruit in the post room to the board of directors. With increasing pressures, challenges and frustrations being put on our already busy lives, there is bound to be an effect on performance, health and revenue.

In the meantime, here are a few tips to help you manage stress and keep it away as much as possible:

Manage your time more effectively

Try to avoid unimportant tasks when you're stressed, prioritise your working day and do the most important jobs first, the rest can wait.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

A healthy diet, regular exercise and plenty of sleep are a recipe for relieving stress.

Don't take on too much

We often take on more than we can handle in order to feel as though we're not letting anyone down. Learning to be assertive & say no are key skills for all aspects of life.

Find out what causes you stress

Take the time to recognise what is causing you to suffer from stress and try to change the specific things you can pinpoint to reduce it.



Avoid unnecessary conflict

Try to find middle ground with people instead of arguing, ask yourself whether fighting is worth the hassle.

Accept the things you cannot change

Try to recognise and accept things which you have no influence over and concentrate on the things you *can* control in your life. This will make you feel empowered and less stressed.

Take time out to relax and recharge your batteries

Try to take a short break once every hour from your screen as too much time in front of the computer takes its toll on the eyes. If you can, take a holiday to give yourself some time out to reflect in a calmer state of mind.

Find time to meet friends & loved ones

Spending time with friends and loved ones can help you to see a different point of view as well as get you relaxing & laughing, which stimulates hormones that will make you feel better straight away. It also boosts the immune system which is often depleted during periods of excessive stress.

Think positive

It seems simple but if you can find the silver lining in a stressful situation, it will make you feel better! You can also employ various breathing techniques to help you stay calm and positive. Alternatively, getting a massage is a great way to feel re-energised and positive.

Avoid alcohol, nicotine and caffeine as coping mechanisms

As with anything, if you consume too much of these substances over a long period of time, they will begin to add to the problem. Caffeine & nicotine are stimulants; too much & the body reacts to this with the stress response increasing or even causing anxiety symptoms. Alcohol is a depressant so steer clear when you're feeling blue!

*If you would like any more information or advice, don't hesitate to call us on 0207 226 1877 or email enquiries@impactfactory.com
We've already helped lots of people from a variety of industries including; Investment Banking, Social Services, Fire & Police Services & Consultancy.*



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