

KWORDS *from* KWORC

Stress!

Time magazine's June 6, 1983 cover story called stress "The Epidemic of the Eighties" and referred to it as our leading health problem; there can be little doubt that the situation has progressively worsened since then. Numerous surveys confirm that adult Americans perceive they are under much more stress than a decade or two ago.

A 1996 *Prevention* magazine survey found that almost 75% feel they have "great stress" one day a week with one out of three indicating they feel this way more than twice a week. It has been estimated that 75 - 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress related problems. Job stress is far and away the leading source of stress for adults.

Why is stress now different and more dangerous?

Contemporary stress tends to be more pervasive, persistent and insidious because it stems primarily from psychological than physical threats. Stress causes:

- heart rate and blood pressure soar to increase the flow of blood to the brain to improve decision making,;
- blood sugar rises to furnish more fuel for energy as the result of the breakdown of glycogen, fat and protein stores;
- blood is shunted away from the gut, where it is not immediately needed for purposes of digestion, to the large muscles of the arms and legs to provide more strength in combat, or greater speed to flee from potential peril;
- clotting occurs more quickly to prevent blood loss from lacerations or internal hemorrhage.

These responses have been exquisitely honed over the course of evolution as life saving measures to facilitate primitive man's ability to deal with physical challenges. However, the nature of stress for modern man is not an occasional confrontation with a saber-toothed tiger or a hostile warrior but rather a host of emotional threats like getting stuck in traffic and fights with customers, co-workers and family members that often occur several times a day. Unfortunately, our bodies still react with these same, archaic fight or flight responses that are now not useful and potentially damaging and deadly. Repeatedly invoked, it is not hard to see how they can contribute to hypertension, strokes, heart attacks, diabetes, ulcers, neck or low back pain and other "Diseases of Civilization".

Job Stress

Numerous surveys and studies confirm that occupational pressures and fears are far and away the leading sources of stress for American adults and increasingly so. The 2000 annual "**Attitudes In The American Workplace VI**" Gallup Poll found that:

- 80% of workers feel stress on the job; nearly half say they need help in learning how to manage stress, and 42% say their coworkers need such help;

- 14% felt like striking a coworker in the past year;
- 25% felt like screaming or shouting because of job stress;
- 10% fear that an individual could become violent;
- 9% are aware of an assault or violent act in their workplace, and 18% experienced some sort of threat or verbal intimidation in the past year.

A subsequent **2000 Integra Survey** similarly reported that:

- 65% of workers said that workplace stress caused difficulties, and more than 10% said these have major effects;
- 10% said they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred because of job stress, and in this group, 42% report that yelling and other verbal abuse is common;
- 29% had yelled at co-workers because of workplace stress;
- 14% said they work where machinery or equipment was damaged because of workplace rage and 2% admitted that they had struck someone;
- 19% had quit a previous position because of job stress and nearly 25% have been driven to tears because of workplace stress;
- 62% routinely find that they end the day with work-related neck pain, 44% reported stressed-out eyes, 38% complained of hurting hands and 34% reported difficulty in sleeping because they were too stressed-out;
- 12% called in sick because of job stress;
- Over half said they often spend 12-hour days on work related duties, and an equal number frequently skip lunch because of the stress of job demands.

These findings are supported by other studies:

Occupational pressures are believed responsible for:

- 30% of workers suffering from back pain;
- 28% complaining of stress;
- 20% feeling fatigued;
- 13% with headaches.

Job stress is also very costly with the price tag for U.S. industry estimated at over \$300 billion annually as a result of:

- Accidents
- Absenteeism
- Employee turnover
- Diminished productivity
- Direct medical, legal and insurance costs
- Workers compensation awards as well as tort and FELA judgments

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Welcome
Scott County!

700 SW Jackson • Suite 200
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 Toll Free 1-877-357-1069
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CLAIMS REPORTING

For assistance with on-the-job injuries, contact IMA at 1-800-333-8913. Questions on claims should be directed to Susan May. All correspondence, bills or other documentation for your claims can be mailed to Susan's attention at: 8200 E 32nd Street North, Wichita, Kansas 67226.

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Consider the following statistics:

- 40% of job turnover is due to stress.
- Xerox estimated that it cost \$1 to \$1.5 million to replace a top executive, and that was two decades ago.
- Replacing an employee today costs between \$3,000 and \$13,000.
- 60% to 80% of accidents on the job are stress related.
- In California, the number of workers' compensation claims for mental stress increased by almost 700 percent over eight years, and 90% were successful with an average award of \$15,000 compared to a national average of \$3,420.
- In 1987, California shelled out almost \$1 billion for medical and legal fees alone, which is more than most states spend on indemnity awards.
- Double digit increases in workers compensation premiums every year as a result of mental stress claims threaten to bankrupt the system in several states.
- A jury in New York awarded nearly \$6 million in 1996 to three women for repetitive stress injury allegedly due to faulty computer keyboards.
- Repetitive musculoskeletal injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome have become the nation's leading workplace health cost and account for almost a third of all workers compensation awards.
- Studies show that keyboard entry operators who are under stress (because they are uncertain as to whether their activities are being monitored for performance evaluation) have a significantly higher incidence of carpal tunnel injuries.



Violence has become an increasingly serious problem

According to two studies the United States has the dubious distinction of having the highest violent crime rate of any industrialized nation. An average of 20 workers are murdered on the job each week in the U. S., making homicide the second highest cause of workplace deaths. 18,000 non-fatal violent crimes such as sexual and other assaults also occur each week while the victim is working, or about a million a year, not counting those not reported. Certain dangerous occupations like police officers and cab drivers understandably have higher rates of homicide and non-fatal assaults. Nevertheless, postal workers who work in a safe environment have experienced so many fatalities due to job stress that "going postal" has crept into our language. "Desk rage" and "phone rage" have also become increasingly common terms.

Americans are working longer and harder

A 1999 government report found that the number of hours worked increased 8% in one generation to an average 47 hrs/week with 20% working 49 hrs/week. U.S. workers put in more hours on the job than the labor force of any other industrial nation, where the trend has been just the opposite. According to an International Labor Organization study, Americans put in the equivalent of an extra 40-hour work week in 2000 compared to 10 years previously. Japan had the record until around 1995 but Americans now work almost a month more than the Japanese and

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Welcome Marla Dipman!

Marla has been employed with IMA for 8 years as a workers' compensation claims adjuster handling several of their self-insured clients in both Kansas and Oklahoma. In her new position as the claims supervisor, she will continue to service her current clients as well as manage IMA's TPA department. Prior to her employment with IMA she worked at CMI, a division of Wal-Mart Corporate, as a claims adjuster and manager handling claims in a number of states.

three months more than Germans. We are also working harder. In a 2001 survey, nearly 40% of workers described their office environment as “most like a real life survivor program.”

Absenteeism due to job stress has escalated

According to a survey of 800,000 workers in over 300 companies, the number of employees calling in sick because of stress tripled from 1996 to 2000. An estimated one million workers are absent every day due to stress. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work reported that over half of the 550 million working days lost annually in the U.S. from absenteeism are stress related and that one in five of all last minute no-shows are due to job stress. If this occurs in key employees it can have a domino effect that spreads down the line to disrupt scheduled operations. Unanticipated absenteeism is estimated to cost American companies \$602.00 per worker per year and the price tag for large employers could approach \$3.5 million annually. A 1997 three year study conducted by one large corporation found that 60% of employee absences could be traced to psychological problems that were due to job stress.

Highly Personalize Phenomenon

Stress is a highly personalized phenomenon and can vary widely even in identical situations for different reasons. One survey showed that having to complete paper work was more stressful for many police officers than the dangers associated with pursuing criminals. The severity of job stress depends on the magnitude of the demands that are being made and the individual’s sense of control or decision-making latitude he or she has in dealing with them. Scientific studies based on this model confirm that workers who perceive they are subjected to high demands but have little control are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease.

Stress Reduction, Stress Relievers

Just as stress is different for each of us, no stress-reduction strategy is a panacea. Jogging and other aerobic exercises, different types of meditation, prayer, yoga and tai chi are great for many people but when arbitrarily imposed on others, prove dull, boring and stressful. There is certainly no shortage of stress relievers and in addition to the above, various progressive muscular relaxation exercises, autogenic training, deep breathing, massage therapies, visual imagery and self hypnosis practices are popular.

Other Stress-releiveing techniques include acupuncture, acupressure, biofeedback, Alexander, Reiki, Feldenkrais and other bodywork and postural stratagies. Some people find that listening to music, hobbies, volunteer work, keeping a daily journal of events and feelings, laughter, playing with pets, taking short breaks or shopping help them to relax. Others find relief for their stress related symptoms from aromatherapy, nutritional supplements. There are prescription tranquilizers, sedatives, hypnotics, antidepressants and beta-blockers for specific complaints. In addition, a variety of cranioelectromagnetic stimulation devices have been found to be effective and safe for anxiety, insomnia and drug resistant depression. Strong emotional support from group therapy, family or friends is a powerful stress buster.

We sometimes create our own stress because of habits and traits that can have harmful effects that can be reduced using cognitive restructuring techniques such as behavioral modification,

assertiveness training, time management and stress inoculation. Others turn to smoking, alcohol or drugs to relieve their stress but these short-term solutions eventually cause even more stress. Long-term use of prescription medications can result in dependency or adverse side effects and some supplements can have similar problems or interact with other drugs. St. John’s wort has been shown to interfere with numerous medications and kava kava is banned in the UK because of liver damage.

The focus in recent years has been on preventing such problems, which makes more sense. This involves identifying the sources of stress in your life and finding ways to avoid them or reduce their impact. Getting enough sleep, a proper diet, avoiding excess caffeine and other stimulants and taking time out to relax may be helpful. Many stress relievers work because of the power of the placebo effect that comes from having faith in the procedure or the therapist. Other very different approaches can achieve the same results because they reduce feelings of helplessness and provide a sense of control over the problem.

Stress is an unavoidable consequence of life. There are some stresses like the loss of a loved one that you can’t avoid and others that you can prevent or influence. The trick is in learning how to distinguish between the two. Try to follow the advice in Reinhold Niebuhr’s, serenity prayer, “Grant me the courage to change the things I can change, the serenity to accept the things I can’t change, and the wisdom to know the difference.”



Excerpted from www.stress.org; please visit their website for more information on stress and your health.



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Workplace Violence for Employees	G-48
Homicide in the Work Place	G-49

Email Nicole at nicole@kworcc.com or give her a call at 877-357-1069 to order these or any of the many other helpful safety videos in our library today.

2010 Board Meeting Dates

- ✓ January 14th
- ✓ February 18th
- March 11th
- April 22nd
- May 20th
- June 17th
- July 16th
- August 19th
- September 9th
- October 21st
- November 15th – Annual Meeting
- December 16th